

ANGEL MOON



Book 2

BLOOD
and
SUNLIGHT



Jamie Wasserman

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Kirsten Tyler has been obsessed with angels since she was a child. When she was just a baby, her mother died. When she was five years old, her father and older brother were violently murdered while she was hiding in the house. Although she hadn't been harmed, she'd been treated in the hospital for severe and unexplained blood loss, and the details of what happened that horrible night always remained fuzzy in her mind.

Soon after she went to live with her aunt and uncle in a neighboring town, the angels came to visit her. Every night they would tuck her in and read her bedtime stories. She lived a quiet, protected life with her loving aunt and uncle, but she couldn't wait for the secret of the nighttime – when her mysterious angels would come through the open window to see her. They promised they would always be there for her. But then, suddenly, they were gone, and she was alone.

For the next ten years, Kirsten studied everything she could about angels, in hopes of finding her guardians again. During that time, she always had the feeling someone was watching over her ... or maybe just watching her.

In college now, she continues her search for the truth about angels, but every obscure text, every clue, leads to a dead end. She's ready to give up until the people closest to her start turning up dead. Again. These bloodless unexplained murders will force Kirsten to deal with the terrible truth about her past – and who the angels really are.

ANGEL MOON
Book 2: Blood and Sunlight
by
Jamie Wasserman

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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

~OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR~

Blood and Sunlight **A Maryland Vampire Story**

A young woman feels trapped in the doldrums of small hometown life as the reluctant girlfriend of a wannabe vampire - until she meets the real thing.

Holding Back the Day

Claire's best friend and inspiration is her courageous and forthright grandmother, Millie. Claire wants to be like her, but that's not such an easy task. When a charismatic boy named Jack comes to town, Claire realizes there's more to her grandmother than she'd ever guessed. Millie's harboring a big secret, and Claire suspects that secret is perennially mysterious Jack.

~PRAISE FOR BLOOD AND SUNLIGHT~

There is no allure of Bram Stoker's Transylvania or London; not a hint of the New Orleans or Paris of Anne Rice. In Jamie Wasserman's book, the narrative takes place in Ellicott City, Maryland [and] presents an astute glimpse into the dichotomy of youthful female sexuality. "Giving her fangs and immortality was like giving a shark an Uzi and malice." In Jamie Wasserman's first novel, there is triumph in opening up to what is extraordinary. Even when it occurs in the vicinity of one's own backyard.

—Sheila Merrit, *Hellnotes*

All I can say is, I certainly hope that the author is working on a sequel, because I for one didn't want this story to end. I hope Keenan and Melanie's story has just begun! On a scale of one to five, I would give this book a six, it's just that good!

—*Wine Voice*, Reader's Favorites Column

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Every angel is terrifying.
And yet, alas, I invoke you,
Almost deadly birds of the soul.

—Rainer Rilke, ‘The Second Elegy,’ *The Duino Elegies*
(translated by Stephen Mitchell)



Prologue

“What do you remember?”

“Everything.”

“That’s impossible.” Keenan crossed his arms. “Prove it.”

Kirsten recounted the night her brother and father were killed, and the way the angels had appeared just in time to save her. From who or what, she still didn’t know — she had been hiding in a closet when the worst had happened. But of the night itself, she remembered every detail, even the part about how one of the angels drank her blood. Sure, it was gross, but what did it matter if she got to live forever? To never die — that’s what Kirsten wanted more than anything now.

“Yes, I guess you do remember everything,” Keenan said sadly.

Sitting on the open windowsill, Angel Melanie choked back tears. “Why are you so sad?” Kirsten asked her.

Melanie wiped her eyes, then stood up. “It’s nothing, sweetheart.” She took a deep breath and walked over to the bed. “I’m going to say goodnight to you now. Okay?”

Kirsten held out her arms and wrapped them around Melanie’s neck.

“I love you, little girl,” Melanie whispered.

“I love you, too, Angel Melanie.”

Melanie touched Kirsten's cheek lightly, then stopped in front of Keenan. She started to say something, but he held his hand up stopping her. "Three years. We agreed. Not a day longer."

"Goodbye Kirsten," she called over her shoulder.

"Goodbye."

And, in the next instant, she was gone.

"Am I ever going to get to learn how to do that?" she asked.

"Perhaps. Someday," Keenan said. He sat on the bed next to Kirsten and pulled the sheets up to her neck. "Remembering isn't always a wonderful thing, is it? I'll bet there's a lot you'd like to forget."

"I guess."

"I know there's a lot I wish I could pretend never happened. People I've lost, that I'd like to forget entirely. To save myself the pain. I can give you that, if you'll let me."

"Oh, I'd never want that!"

"Why?" Keenan asked surprised.

"I miss my daddy and brother. But thinking about them is all I have left."

"I was thinking more about Melanie and me."

"No way! I'll never forget you. I'd never want that."

Keenan stared at her for a long time.

She reached out and touched his cheek. "You're sad, too."

"I am," he said and put his hand on top of hers. "We have to go away now."

"Away? Like ... for how long?"

"Forever."

"What? Why?" She yanked her hand away from him and sat up.

"There are things you haven't learned yet. Things you're probably better off not knowing. If we stay any longer, then ... well, I

wouldn't know where to begin. Maybe, in the future—

"But I still need you!"

"You don't need us," he said calmly. "You have two people downstairs who love you very much. Your Aunt Sophie and Uncle Martin. It's time you stopped living for the dark."

"You promised! You said you'd stay with me always."

"I'm sorry." Keenan stared at his feet. "We're only holding you back—"

"That's not true."

"This is for the best."

"You're a liar!"

He reached out to take her hand again, but she pulled it away.

"I can make this easier for both of us, if you'll just let me," he said.

"Liar! Liar! Liar!"

"Kirsten, you have to keep your voice down."

She kicked and hit the bed and started to cry.

"Just look at me, darling. Please. I can make all of this seem like just a terrible dream."

"No!" She buried her head under the pillow.

"Kirsten—"

"I hate you!"

She continued sobbing into her bed until her voice cracked and she couldn't breathe. She hiccupped and kicked at the bed and bit down on her hand.

When she was finally done, when she'd practically exhausted herself, a long moment of silence followed. So long, that Kirsten sneaked a peek from under her pillow just to make sure Keenan was still there.

"I guess we've taken enough from you already," he finally said.

“I know it doesn’t seem like it now, but leaving is the best gift we can give you. I love you. Melanie loves you. But don’t hold on too tightly to the past. Your future, at least, is bright and waiting for you.”

Kirsten sat up and was about to say, ‘No! Don’t leave! Take me with you!’ but Keenan was already gone. They were both gone. Forever. And she was more alone now than when her mother died. Than when her father and brother died too. “Come back!” she shouted. “Come back, come back, *come back!*”

From the crack under her door, she saw lights being switched on in other parts of the house. She heard footsteps moving quickly toward her room. Her aunt and uncle.

How long until they left her, too? Just like everyone else. Nothing was permanent. Everyone died. But the angels – they were supposed to be forever. What was left for her to hold onto?



Chapter 1

10 years later...

“Fallen Angels ... Irin, Grigori. Watchers. Whatever you want to call them, their presence is noted throughout both the Old and New Testament, as well as in the Apocrypha. They are neither good nor evil. In fact, their biggest crime seems to be imparting celestial knowledge to mankind. And maybe enjoying a few canoodling sessions with human females.”

The class giggled.

“Does this sound familiar to anyone?”

“The canoodling part?” a boy in the back asked.

The professor grinned and tied up his long brown hair with a rubber band.

Kirsten rolled her eyes. *So transparent.*

Her friend Laura nudged her arm and raised her eyebrows.

Yes, I get it, he has long hair and teaches literature. Kirsten was one of the few girls who took this class to actually learn a little bit about angels in literature, not just to gawk at Dr. Hollis.

“I was thinking more of the forbidden knowledge,” he said.

“Satan,” a mousy girl in glasses muttered from the front row.

“Exactly!” Dr. Hollis touched her shoulder, then walked down the aisle of the lecture hall. “And Satan is nothing more than another fallen angel. So is he inherently evil? Who do we trust? God or the devil?”

“The canoodlers!” the boy in the back shouted, and the bell sounded, drowning out the class’s laughter.

"Next week," the professor shouted over the din, "Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. Go on, get out of here."

The class filed out.

"Not bad, huh?" Laura winked. She was taller than Kirsten, with her brown hair cut in a bob. Today, Laura was taking full advantage of the warmer weather and wore a flimsy top with spaghetti straps and, of course, no bra. She had on a flowery skirt that billowed around her tan legs.

"I guess he's okay."

"Are you going to the party tonight?"

"I was about to ask you both the same thing." Dr. Hollis stood in front of them, scratching at the beginning of a goatee. "Ms. Tyler, Ms. Stutts."

"Can't," Kirsten mumbled and packed up her stuff quickly. Professor Hollis's annual fall semester party was the stuff of urban legends. Although she'd only been at Mary Todd for a few weeks, Kirsten had already heard some pretty shocking rumors about what went on there. Orgies, drugs, satanic rituals. And a girl who played her cards right had a good chance of locking into an A for the semester. Or so they said. Kirsten always got straight A's, so she had no use for Dr. Hollis or his party.

"Aw, c'mon. I don't want to go by myself."

"I'd love to have you." Dr. Hollis smiled.

"Please," Laura mouthed to her.

"We'll be discussing the *Book of Enoch* a little further," he said. "I heard that was of particular interest to you."

"How did you know that?" Kirsten scowled at Dr. Hollis, then turned to her friend.

Laura shrugged. "Sorry, I didn't think it was a secret."

Kirsten wavered. She had read the English translation, of

course, and the text seemed pretty straightforward, but she learned from her work with the Bible that translations couldn't be trusted. Something always got lost in the process. And Dr. Hollis had actually translated the *Book of Enoch* from the original Aramaic. If it weren't for her workload this semester, maybe she could teach herself Aramaic like she had with Latin, but for now, she'd have to rely on someone else, something she positively hated doing.

"I guess," she said, trying to hide her enthusiasm. "For a little while, at least."

"Wonderful!" Dr. Hollis clapped his hands together. "I promise not to pass on any carnal knowledge." He winked, tapped his fingers on Kirsten's desk and walked out of the lecture hall.

"Gag." She made a choking noise as she pointed a finger down her throat.

"God, Kirsten. Isn't there anyone you find attractive?"

She blushed and gathered up her books. "Sure."

"Jesus?" Laura whispered like it was a swear word.

"Stop it. I'm not a religious freak."

"Please, you're practically a nun. So who is it? Who gets Kirsten's panties all moist?"

"You're disgusting." She headed out the door and into the main hall of the English building. Laura followed a few steps behind. A couple of students were hanging out on the couches that lined the wall. The door to the outside was open, and a warm afternoon breeze blew inside, rustling the papers on the bulletin board.

"Disgusting, but satisfied," Laura purred. "Tell me." She caught up to Kirsten and gave her a playful nudge.

"It's no one in particular."

"Jeff likes you."

"What?" Kirsten stopped in the middle of the quad. Students

were hurrying off in front of her to beat the afternoon rush to the cafeteria. On the grassy field in the center of campus, people were lying on blankets and playing Frisbee. Her dorm, Wilkes Hall, was just to the left.

“He told me at the Brass Rail the other night.”

“Shut up.” Kirsten started off toward her dorm again and picked up her pace, but there was no point. Laura was her roommate, so there was no getting away from her.

“He’s cute.”

“I don’t even know him.” That wasn’t exactly true. She had kissed Jeff at the freshman orientation party a few weeks back. Too many tequila shots and margaritas – she would’ve kissed anyone. That’s why she hadn’t touched a drop of liquor since.

It wasn’t that Jeff wasn’t nice or cute. He was on the rugby team, and his skin was always brown from being outside. And he smelled nice. There just didn’t seem to be anything more to him. No mystery. No depth. Nothing tragic. She didn’t trust anyone who hadn’t gone through something terrible at least once. *How can you ever discover who you really are until you’ve been tested? How do you know what really matters until you’ve lost everything?*

“He knows you.” Laura grinned. “I’d do him,” she added helpfully.

“You’d do anybody.”

They walked up the steps of their dorm, past the sign-in desk, which was never manned, and down the hall to their room. There was a pad stuck to the right of the door filled with messages for Laura. Kirsten’s side was empty.

“Seriously, what are you saving it for?”

“I’m not ‘saving’ it for anyone.”

“Except *Jesus*.” This time Laura said it like a swear word, and

she meant it. She unlocked the door, and they went inside.

“I am not some religious—”

“Really? Look at this place, Kir.” She waved her arm at the walls and ceiling. Every inch, every space was covered with pictures of angels. Biblical angels descending from Heaven on a column of smoke and light. Cartoon angels on stubby wings. Postcards of angel paintings by all the masters. Halos. Harps. Hosannas.

“I can’t even bring boys back here anymore. It’s like a goddamn convent in here.”

“Don’t swear.”

Laura raised her eyebrows at her.

“Just because I don’t like swearing doesn’t mean I’m in love with God.” Kirsten bit down on her lip. She knew she’d been overdoing it lately with her private studies, but she felt like she was getting close. To what, she didn’t know, but it didn’t matter. Angels were real, and she would find them again. And she was convinced the *Book of Enoch* was the key. She was ready. If they wouldn’t come to her, she’d go to them.

Shipping her off to school in Gettysburg was her uncle’s idea — ‘To get some distance from the past,’ he’d said. She supposed he was hoping she’d replace her obsession with angels with boys and studying. But the distance had the opposite effect. A hundred miles away from home, and she felt like the angels were still watching over her. That had to mean something.

She sighed and glanced around. “I’ll take everything down, okay?”

“It’s not even that.” Laura flopped on her bed. She had the bottom bunk. “I just want you to have fun. Lord knows, if anyone deserves it, it’s you.”

“Right.” *Pity the poor orphan girl.* Out of habit. Kirsten turned

on their CD player. Throwing Muses kicked in with a soft cacophony of crazy guitar. Celestial music for the damned.

“Say you’ll come to the party. Jeff said he might drop by.”

“I’ll think about it.”

Laura smiled like she knew she’d won. “You can borrow my black skirt. It’ll look awesome on you.”

“Thanks,” Kirsten muttered and slipped into the bathroom and shut the door. She looked at herself in the mirror. Her face was pale. Too much time spent cooped up at the library lately. She had bags under her eyes, and her thin blonde hair looked stringy and messy. She felt tired all the time. God, she was a mess.

She liked Laura. Some days she even wished she *was* Laura. All she cared about was drinking and boys. And they made her wildly happy.

But those were temporary pursuits. Someday, those boys would become men. Their sweet cologne would give way to musky aftershave. Their backs would break after a lifetime of work. Their skin would sag, and their hair would fall out. They would die. *Everything changes. Nothing stays the same. Nothing except for them.*

She remembered the angels’ perfect faces and bright eyes watching over her so many years ago. The way they moved so gracefully and how they could remain still for hours. The velvety sound of their voices. Their cool fingers stroking her hair. How could she ever be expected to settle for anyone else? So she spent her time reading, studying, preparing ... someday the angels would return for her, and this time she would be ready.

She threw some water on her face. Dr. Hollis was a tool, but he knew more about angels than anyone she’d ever met. If anyone could get her one step closer, it would be him. Maybe the party was just what she needed after all.

Refrain – Ten Years Ago

Kirsten heard a noise and sat up quickly. “Who’s there?” she asked, clutching her pillow to her chest.

“Are you scared?” a silky voice asked.

“Yes.”

The bedroom light came on. Next to the bed, in her usual chair, was Angel Melanie.

“You came back!” Kirsten girl leaped up and hugged her. “I knew you would!”

“Hi, sweetie.” Melanie held her tightly and stroked her hair, then helped her back into bed. “You know, you shouldn’t be afraid of the dark,” she said.

“Why?”

“There’s nothing in the dark that doesn’t already exist in the light. Does anything here frighten you?”

Kirsten looked around her familiar, brightly lit bedroom. Her dolls were all tucked away in the tiny wooden bed that her uncle had made for her. Her closet door was securely shut. Her dresser with its faded red flowers stood against the far wall. To her right, a shelf next to the window held all her treasured fairytale books. The window was open now, just as it was every time the angels had visited. She’d never asked how they got into her room on the third floor of the house. They just arrived like they’d stepped off a beam of moonlight, carrying with them the scent of night ... and lilacs ... and vanilla and cedar. “No. There’s nothing scary here.”

“Good.” Melanie smiled, then reached over and turned off the small bedside lamp. The room fell into darkness. “How about now?”

“Still no.”

“Really?” the angel asked, her perfect white face looking at Kirsten with curiosity.

“Yes, but I’m not scared, just because you’re here.”

“Well, then, I guess I can never leave.”

“But Angel Keenan said—”

“Forget what he said, and listen to me.” Angel Melanie took hold of Kirsten’s hand. “No matter where you go, no matter what you do, I will be there with you. Even if you can’t see me.”

“Okay. I guess.” Kirsten frowned, then rolled on her side, turning her back to Melanie.

“You don’t believe me?”

She shook her head and fought back tears.

“Watch.”

Kirsten turned around, but the angel was gone. “Come back!” she called out and sat up. “I’m sorry.”

“I never left, princess.” The angel’s voice came from the other side of the room now. Kirsten turned and saw her step out of the darkness, as if she’d been made from the shadows themselves. “And I never will. Understand?”

Kirsten nodded, but the tears wouldn’t stop. The angel bent down and kissed her forehead. “I have to go now. It’s getting late.”

“Can’t I come with you?”

The angel smiled and brushed away a tear from Kirsten’s cheek. “Someday. That’s a promise. But right now, you need to forget about angels and monsters and things that go bump in the night. Enjoy your time in the sun. Go to sleep,” the angel cooed.

Kirsten watched the angel’s impossibly green eyes fade to gray and then white as she felt herself grow heavy with sleep.

* * * * *

When she opened her eyes again, the room was bright and airy, and the smell of bacon drifted into the room.

“Kirsten! Breakfast,” her aunt called from downstairs. “Chop, chop. The bus is going to be here in thirty minutes!”

Everything was just as she left it from the night before. *There’s nothing in the dark that doesn’t already exist in the light*, she remembered the angel saying to her. She might have thought it was all a dream, but sunlight spilled in through the window that was still open.

Kirsten smiled, ready at last to face the day.



Chapter 2

Dr. Hollis's house was within walking distance from campus. *Perfect for a leech like him*, Kirsten thought. *Easy access to all the coeds*. She and Laura walked down the winding path that cut through the center of the school, past the computer lab and the rest of the freshman dorms, until they reached a quiet side street.

Newly planted pine trees intermingled with gnarled legacy oaks left over from the Civil War. Another block down was Gordon Cemetery, where many of the Confederacy's officers lay buried. Even further was Main Street with its coffeehouses and antique stores and trendy restaurants. Gettysburg was in a state of transition, of modernization, and Kristin didn't care for it one bit.

As they walked, Laura talked non-stop. "Remember Keith? Well, he called me yesterday and said he might come up to visit. So I'm torn, you know. I didn't officially break up with him, and I still like him. I'm just not ready for him and all his emotional BS. Anyway, he promised to take me to Cancun for winter break."

Kirsten tuned her out and thought about when the angels first arrived, the night her father and brother were murdered – by whom, she still didn't know. Most of what had happened was a blur. A lot of her memories of that night, she admitted, were most likely based on the police report she found many years later.

She was asleep in the house and then something woke her. A crash maybe. She heard shouting. A scream. She remembered hiding in her closet ... she must have been scared, but of what, she couldn't imagine. Her dad was the strongest man she knew. She never felt afraid around him.

She distinctly remembered scooting into the darkest corner of her closet next to an oversized stuffed bear her dad had won for her that summer at the local carnival. She remembered sitting on the sharp edge of her old tap shoes, but being too frightened to move. The door opened, and then ... nothing. Just a flash of white.

The next thing she remembered, and she saw this all too clearly, was the bodies of her father and brother splayed out on the floor like gingerbread cookies. Blood everywhere. And in the middle of it, an angel – wounded. He had no wings, but his skin was so pale, he almost seemed to glow. She wanted to scream, but there was something holding her back. He needed her, and she had never experienced that before. She often wondered if she'd ever experience that again.

“Kirsten!”

She looked up. Laura had a scowl on her face.

“Sorry, was I doing it again?”

“Where do you go?”

“Just remembering something. Sorry.”

Laura put her hand on Kirsten's shoulder. “We don't have to do this. We can go to the Hyperion and get coffee instead. Just talk.”

“No.” She forced a smile. “I'm good.”

“Let's not get carried away. C'mon, we're here.”

They walked up the steps to Dr. Hollis's house. It was more rundown than Kirsten had imagined, with two dingy pillars propping up a warped balcony that didn't look safe for anyone. There was a porch that wrapped around half the house. From several open windows, she heard glasses clinking, jazz music, and low conversation.

“This is going to be awesome!” Laura said and opened the door, then immediately frowned. Kirsten looked around. There couldn't have been more than a dozen people there – a few professors from the English department, including Dr. Sanchez, the Chair of Religious

Studies, as well as a few grad students. Aside from Laura and herself, there was only one other undergrad there, the shy, mousy girl who sat in the front row of Dr. Hollis's 'Angels in Literature' course.

Kirsten smiled to herself. *So much for drunken orgies.* The only liquor she saw in sight was a box of wine that sat untouched on a small fold-out table in the middle of the dining room next to some chips and dip. Dr. Hapsworth, her advisor, was smoking a cigarette and sipping a cup of coffee in the kitchen, but that was the closest anyone got to mind-blowing drugs. *My kind of party,* she thought. *Maybe I'll actually learn something here, after all.*

Dr. Hollis was holding court on a dingy couch in a small living room just to the left of the door. Dr. Sanchez and the girl from class were listening as he talked animatedly. He stopped immediately when he saw them come in.

"My prize pupils! Come, sit."

"We should bail," Laura whispered.

"You're the one who wanted to come."

"And we did. It sucks. Let's go."

"We can't just leave. He called us his prize pupils."

"We've only had one class."

"And it's going to be a long semester if we leave now."

"You girls coming?" Dr. Hollis smiled.

"Yep." Kirsten grabbed Laura's hand and dragged her over to the group.

Dr. Hollis introduced them. "Dr. Sanchez, this is Laura and—"

"Kirsten Tyler. Of course." Dr. Sanchez's weathered face was partially obscured by his tangled mess of black hair. He smiled broadly when he saw Kirsten. "Best entrance essay I've ever read."

"Oh?" Dr. Hollis asked.

"Well, the essay itself wasn't the best, but it was written in

Latin. Is it true you're self-taught?"

Kirsten nodded and blushed. Laura looked at her like she'd grown a third head.

"Amazing," Dr. Hollis added and looked at Kirsten, obviously impressed. "I'm glad you two could make it. Kirsten and Laura are enrolled in my 'Angels in Literature' course."

"And they still came?" Dr. Sanchez laughed.

"Are we early or something?" Laura interrupted. Kirsten nudged her hard in the side.

Dr. Hollis looked at his watch. "Late, actually. Party started a couple of hours ago. Have a seat. Do you know Tracey?" He pointed to the shy girl with flat brown hair and thick glasses sitting on the far corner of the couch. She's my aide this semester."

"Hi," she said quietly.

"Seriously, though, sit. You're making me nervous."

Kirsten pulled up a footrest and was about to sit down when Dr. Hollis said, "Over here," and patted the cushion next to him. "I don't bite."

"I'm going to get some wine," Laura said.

"Are you over twenty-one?" Dr. Hollis asked, but she was already making a beeline for the table.

Kirsten tried to make eye contact with Laura, but she wouldn't look back.

"Kirsten?"

"Yes?" she asked and turned to Dr. Hollis.

"I was just telling my colleague that you were interested in the *Book of Enoch*."

"Oh, yes." She grinned. This was what she had come here for.

"Rubbish. Codswallop," Dr. Sanchez said.

"What Raul is trying to say is that the book isn't heavily

regarded by religious scholars.”

“Heresy is what it is.”

“Did you know Dr. Sanchez was nearly a priest?” Dr. Hollis announced. He turned to Kirsten and whispered, “It was a hard habit to break.” He winked.

She stifled a smile.

“Mention of the book is scant, at best, until the fifteenth century,” Dr. Sanchez railed. “An actual copy isn’t produced until the seventeenth century. It’s another of King Henry’s bogus scriptures, if you ask me.”

“A regular Protestant conspiracy.”

“Don’t mock me, John.”

“Carbon-dating on the scrolls—”

“There you go again. You want to discuss religion, but you keep dredging science into the discussion. You either believe, or you don’t.”

“Oh, I believe. Angels are real. For once, we’re on the same side.”

Kirsten instantly warmed to Dr. Hollis. The only people with whom she’d been able to discuss angels as living, breathing creatures were zealots from her aunt and uncle’s church, most of whom claimed they were visited daily. *The angels I know*, she thought, *don’t care a thing about your gout or transmission problems.*

“Had a spiritual awakening then?” Dr. Sanchez taunted.

Dr. Hollis regarded him for a moment, then said, “Transformed by the power of the written word, I suppose.” He turned to Kirsten. “I’ve been studying Enoch for close to ten years. It’s a very powerful biblical—”

“Enoch is not part of the Bible! It is not the word of God!” Dr. Sanchez shouted much louder than he probably intended. His face was red. The few people at the party glanced over.

“It was, for over fifteen hundred years, until your priests decided it was too dangerous.”

“It’s nonsense.”

“Then why does it upset you so much?”

“The text has been appropriated by every crock-pot, new-ager, and conspiracy theorist around, to account for everything from astrology to end of world theories – not to mention UFOs and vampirism.”

“Who’s to say they’re wrong?”

“Tell me why I keep coming here.”

“Nobody else will have you.”

“Well, tonight my wife promised to have me. I’m leaving.”

“Good for you, Raul.” Dr. Hollis reached over and slapped his friend on the shoulder. “Try not to think of anyone else while you’re doing it. That’d be a sin.”

“You’re a disgusting pig. Leave while you can,” he said to the girls, then got up with a struggle. “You want my advice? Hash out your lunatic ramblings *after* you get tenure.” He grabbed his coat, then shut the door behind him.

“Sorry about that,” Dr. Hollis said. “Dr. Sanchez thinks I’m a Satanist out to corrupt the nation’s youth. And, by his narrow definition, I guess I am.”

Over in the dining room, Laura was waving an empty cup in the air, finally getting Kirsten’s attention. ‘I’m going to go now,’ she mouthed and pointed to the door. Kirsten shook her head in mock disgust, then nodded.

“Looks like your friend is sneaking out.”

“I think she has a study group to get to.” She watched Laura tip-toe to the door and walk out.

Tracey snorted, and Kirsten shot her a nasty look.

"You've read Schodde's translation, I'm sure," Dr. Hollis continued unfazed. "What did you think?"

"I didn't understand the stuff about the planets and stars—"

"But that's the most incredible part." Dr. Hollis smiled. "Enoch was imparting astrological knowledge he simply could not have had without some sort of divine assistance. He predicted everything from the flood, to Christ, to Cain and Abel, all the way to man's modern-day understanding of the galaxy. It's proof of the validity of the document."

"You really believe that?"

"Without a doubt. What else?"

"The end of days stuff didn't interest me."

"The *Book of Revelations* author would probably sue for copyright infringement today. Go on."

"And the *Parables*—"

"Probably added centuries later. Let's discount them entirely. You're a freshman taking a seminar course on angels. Tell me what you're really interested in."

"The *Book of Watchers*."

Dr. Hollis smiled at her. "We're going to be good friends." Without looking over at her, he said, "Tracey, have you read Enoch?"

"Um..."

"It's only my dissertation. No pressing need or anything." Tracey folded her arms and scowled as Dr. Hollis turned to Kirsten and urged, "Educate my assistant about the book."

Kirsten noticed Dr. Hollis had green eyes. Not as bright as ... she stopped short of saying her name. "It's about a group of angels who willingly fell from Heaven in order to, um..."

"Canoodle." Dr. Hollis winked.

"That. With the daughters of man. They had children together. Giants. And the angels taught their wives and kids all of the secrets of

Heaven.”

“I don’t think they were literal giants. I think it really refers to their power. You getting all this, Tracey?”

Kirsten was caught up in the telling and didn’t bother to gauge Tracey’s reaction to Dr. Hollis’s jab. “And the giants, the children, wreaked havoc on earth, so God stepped in and—”

“The children didn’t just wreak havoc. They enslaved man. They forged wars. They devoured the earth. And when they were done, they devoured man himself. Ate his body. Drank his blood.”

“Blood?” She remembered the Angel Keenan sucking at her wrist. He drank enough of her blood that she landed in the hospital for nearly a week. But she had survived, just as he had promised. That had to mean something.

“We’re talking Christ territory here. Eat my body and drink my blood. Continue.”

“So God punished the Watchers. He let their children die and buried the Watchers alive.”

“That’s where the translation confuses things. Their punishment wasn’t just to be buried alive. It was darkness. Darkness and everlasting life. Everlasting suffering. We’re talking Old Testament God-stuff very firmly rooted in New Testament theology. It’s just wonderful.”

The door opened and shut a few times. More people leaving.

“What is it you wanted to know about, Kirsten?”

“Well, Dr. Hollis—”

“John,” he corrected, smiling. “If you can sit still while I talk for longer than five minutes, you get to call me John. Tracey still has to call me Dr. Hollis.”

“Do you still need me, Dr. Hollis?” Tracey asked sharply.

“Not tonight. Thanks.”

“Uh-huh. Guess I’ll see you Monday.”

Dr. Hollis waved his hand dismissively in the air.

Tracey looked as if she was about to say something else, then stormed out the door. It was only then that Kirsten realized most of the party guests had gone. There were just two grad students left, and they were milling around by the door. “I should be going, too,” Kirsten said.

“Nonsense. Tracey’s gone. We don’t have to dumb down the conversation anymore. What’s your fascination with the text? I haven’t had a student ask me about Enoch in ... I don’t know how long.”

She heard the door open and shut once more and realized they were now alone. That made her nervous. Of course, she had noticed that Dr. Hollis was attractive. Although he must’ve been in his thirties, he could’ve passed for twenty-five. And his open-collared shirt made him look a little ... intense. Plus, she was talking sex. With an adult. Albeit celestial sex. And that was a little weird. Still, she was excited to be able to speak to someone else about angels. To be taken seriously, to boot. She swallowed hard and tugged at her collar. “Mount Hermon. I want to know about Mount Hermon.”

“Where the Watchers resided?”

“Yeah. I was wondering if anyone had ever discovered its location.” That’s where, Kirsten thought, she might find her angels.

“I did some initial research into that, but it’s a dead end. It’s probably in what’s now Turkey, near Lake Van. The desert where they were buried is also nearby, but none of that matters.”

“Why?”

“They’re not there. They escaped years ago.”

“What?”

A dark smile crossed his face. “The children of the Watchers, too. Nowhere in the text does it say God killed them. He left them to destroy themselves. I think some of them survived and then freed the

Watchers. I think that was part of God's ineffable plan. All evil can be traced to them and, without evil, there can be no good. It keeps the game going."

"So you think they're still here but ... evil?"

Dr. Hollis moved closer to her on the couch. "The Watchers were described as having blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair skin. Like you." He reached over and picked up a strand of her hair. "That would have been unheard of in the Middle East. Evidence that they stuck around is in the gene pool."

"But they're not evil!" Kirsten snapped.

"You seem pretty sure."

She almost said, 'They saved me!' but stopped herself. "They're angels. Angels don't do any harm."

"The Watchers didn't do any real harm in Enoch. They brought with them knowledge that man was ill-prepared to handle. Just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Makes you wonder why God put that tree there to begin with. Don't think of them as evil. Think of them as vessels of power. And just imagine what someone could do if they could control that power." Dr. Hollis had a far-off look in his eye.

"So what are they doing here now?"

"I don't know. Maybe searching for the right person, the right vessel, for their knowledge."

She remembered jumping off the roof with Angel Melanie, almost flying as they fell to earth.

"But why?"

"I don't know. To create a leader for an all-out war on God? To give purpose for their transgressions. Maybe they're just looking for their next snack. Or maybe..." Dr. Hollis – John – smiled. "Just maybe ... they're looking for someone to canoodle with."

Getting weirder now, Kirsten thought. "I should go." She stood

up.

Dr. Hollis caught her arm. “You don’t have to.” He looked up at her from the couch. His hand was warm, but not wet or shaky like most boys her age.

She could smell his cologne; a leathery musk. He had soft black hairs along his arms. She wondered if his lips were soft. What it would be like to kiss him. Would he be slow and tender, or desperate and sloppy like the boys her own age?

Just then someone banged hard on the door, and Kirsten jumped. “Shoot,” she said and pulled her arm away. “I’ll get that.” She ran over to answer it before Dr. Hollis could protest.

It was Jeff.

“What are you doing here?” She touched her cheeks. They felt warm, and she worried she was flushed and how that might look.

“I was looking for you. Laura said you were here.” He looked over at Dr. Hollis on the couch and at the now empty room. “I’m not interrupting anything, am I?”

“No.” Kirsten let out a breath. “Thanks for the talk, Dr. Hollis,” she called over her shoulder. “I totally forgot I was supposed to meet my boyfriend. See you Monday.”

“Sure.” He shrugged and flicked an invisible speck off his shirt. “Monday.”

“See ya, prof.” Jeff gave him a salute, then shut the door behind them.

It was well after dark, and the moon was out now, bathing the quiet street in cool blue. Everything looked still, and the air was sweet with lilac, even though it was fall and far past the blooming time. She wondered about the scent ... she’d smelled it every night *they* had come to visit her, when she was a child. Tonight was the kind of night Kirsten imagined they would return – her heavenly saviors.

“What was that all about?” Jeff asked.

“Just keep walking.” Kirsten sneaked a glance behind her. Dr. Hollis stood at the window now, watching them. Kirsten reached out and took Jeff’s hand.

“So ... boyfriend, huh?” He smiled at her.

“Yeah, sorry about that. I don’t know what was—”

“You don’t have to explain. He’s got a rep. I would’ve been here earlier, but practice ran late. And you don’t have to apologize. Being your boyfriend wouldn’t be the worst thing in the world.”

Kirsten managed a weak, embarrassed smile and looked ahead. Jeff was leading her through the short patch of woods that separated the end of campus from town. Make-out Alley. She heard that, in the summer, a person couldn’t take two steps through there without tripping over two people going at it. She slowed down.

“Shortcut,” he said, obviously sensing her apprehension.

“You can let go of my hand now. We’re out of sight now.”

“Sorry.” Jeff laughed and waved her forward.

The path was narrow and strewn with crumpled cans, cigarette butts, and broken beer bottles. In winter, the leafless trees made the area more visible, but it was early fall, and the leaves and bushes were still in full bloom, so the dark was impenetrable.

“Hey, wait,” Jeff said and grabbed Kirsten’s shoulder.

Her body stiffened, but all Jeff wanted was to hand her a Zippo. “It’s a little tricky to light,” he said. “Let me do it for you.” He flicked it on, and the path lit up in a hazy orange glow.

“Thanks.”

“Watch out for the poison ivy.” He pointed to his right.

“I usually don’t go this way.”

They passed through the woods in silence, then tromped onto the brick pathway that ran the length of campus. Jeff finally broke the

quiet as they walked past the first set of dorms. "So we haven't really talked since the party, huh?"

I'm going to freaking kill Laura. I know she put him up to this. "Guess not," she said and hoped that was the last of that conversation.

"You were probably wondering why I came out here to see you."

"I just figured you were being nice." She smiled sweetly. It was the same smile she gave her aunt and uncle when she got caught borrowing the car without asking.

"Well, yeah, but I also wanted to know if maybe we could hang out some more. My first game isn't for a while, and my practice schedule is pretty light right now so I thought—"

Kirsten stopped. "Jeff, you seem like a real nice guy," she recited. She had given a variation of this speech so many times, she almost had it memorized. "It's just that I'm here on a full scholarship," she lied. "And if my grades slip, I'm out. My aunt and uncle can't afford to send me to school any other way." Also a lie. Her uncle owned seven used car lots and could have paid her full tuition if she hadn't gotten some supplemental scholarship money. "I just don't think I could give myself completely to a relationship right now like you deserve." Guys liked that. She wasn't rejecting them per se. She was just in a tight spot. It also left the door open, just in case, down the road, she ever changed her mind. Unlikely, but Kirsten wasn't one to let go of things easily.

"That's cool."

"You sure?"

"Yeah. I get it. We can still hang out though."

"Yes, but it wouldn't—"

"Kirst, I get it. C'mon." He hooked her arm with his. "I'll walk you back."

The campus was nearly deserted. Most kids were off campus at

house parties where nosey resident assistants wouldn't hassle them, or downtown dancing at the Brass Rail. On an ordinary night, Kirsten would be at the library doing research or reading in her room. She was actually glad to have Jeff to walk with. She didn't realize just how spooky campus could be after dark.

They reached Lincoln Circle and walked past the English Department building with its stone white face and gothic exterior. Kirsten felt like she was being watched, like somehow Dr. Hollis was standing in one of the highest windows. She couldn't be certain if that thrilled or frightened her.

"Hey," Jeff whispered, and Kirsten snapped to attention. "You're here." He had an amused grin on his face.

"Geez," Kirsten said. The level of her obliviousness often surprised even her.

He walked up the stone steps with her to the building. "Jeff, I told you, nothing's going to happen. Okay? Thanks for walking me."

"I was just gonna say hi to Kyle. He's working the desk tonight."

Nobody ever works the desk, she thought, but sure enough, as they entered the brightly lit main hall, Kyle was there talking to Sam, the dorm's resident assistant. She could smell beer on their breath as she passed.

"See ya around, Kirst," Jeff called.

Feeling like an ass, she half-waved her hand and walked quickly down the hall to her room. She could hear Jeff and Kyle laughing as she opened the door. "Genius, Kirsten," she said to herself.

She locked the door and flicked on the lights. As usual, Laura was still out, even though she was supposed to catch an early train back home tomorrow morning.

I don't know how she does it, Kirsten thought. *Without my eight hours sleep, I'm useless.*

She got ready for bed and thought about Dr. Hollis. She didn't like his theories about angels and the *Book of Enoch* one bit. And she especially didn't like the part about drinking blood. That hit a little too close to home. But the rest, she was relieved to say, just didn't fit. Her angels weren't Aryan creatures driven by sex and power. They had read goodnight stories to her and tucked her in, for Pete's sakes. They were closer to fairy godmothers than Enoch's version of the angels. And they only took her blood the one time. She had to admit to herself that she'd hit another dead end.

Every text she stumbled upon, every poem or fragment or illuminated manuscript, brought with it some new hope. But the angels she found there rarely resembled the ones she knew. And each disappointment brought her closer to the realization that she might never find them again. Just thinking about it made her tired. She closed her eyes and she could almost smell the sweet vanilla, lilac, and cedar scent that drifted off their skin. Their soft, flawless faces. The intense color of their eyes. And that made her smile, gave her the strength to keep searching.

Dr. Hollis had raised some troubling questions though. What had they really wanted from her? And why did they leave?

She crawled into bed and stared at the ceiling. It had been an eventful night. Between getting some distinct vibes from her professor and the weirdness with Jeff, Kirsten was feeling keyed up and antsy. She rubbed her belly and thought that it might be nice to be asleep in someone's arms for once, but she wasn't ready to settle. She knew where she belonged. She just had to keep searching. And waiting.

She fell asleep thinking about the last time she'd seen them. Or, rather, just *her*: She held on to every word, committing it to memory like scripture, afraid to get even a single syllable wrong. That was her gospel, and she would be a believer until the end.

Refrain – Nine Years Ago

“You’re staring again.”

“Am I?”

“And you’ve got that goofy grin on your face.”

“How would you know?” Keenan asked. He leaned over and kissed Melanie’s bare shoulder. “You’ve had your eyes closed for the last two hours.”

Melanie rolled over and touched his chest. “Just trying to catch up on my beauty sleep. My boyfriend hasn’t let me get much rest.”

“You couldn’t be any more beautiful if you tried.”

“Thanks. I think.”

He took her hand and kissed it, then kissed his way up her arm.

“Again?”

Keenan grinned. “If it’s not too much trouble.”

“You’re like a kid with a new toy.”

“I’ve been celibate for over two hundred years.” He worked his way toward her neck.

Melanie ran her fingers through his hair. “Lucky for me, it’s like riding a bike, huh?”

He kissed her mouth deeply and rolled on top of her. “I wouldn’t know. I try to stay away from modern conveniences.”

Melanie laughed. It was easy to forget sometimes just how old Keenan was because, in so many ways, he was no different than any other man.

He slid inside her easily, and she let out a gasp. And in other ways, he was much, much more gifted.

“Slower this time,” she breathed.

“I can’t help it. It feels so good to be with you. Nothing

compares to it.”

She dug her nails into his back and let out a groan. “Maybe one thing.” Melanie pushed Keenan to the side, then climbed on top of him, controlling his frantic rhythm. She’d been thinking about something for weeks, waiting for the right moment to bring it up without angering him. She was curious and, although she knew all about the effect of curiosity on cats, self-control was never her strong suit. Her favorite saying was ‘The heart wants what the heart wants’ and *damn everything else that stands in the heart’s way*.

“What could be better than this?” he asked, pulling her closer, bringing himself deeper inside.

A small orgasm shook through her body. Little aftershocks from the mammoth earthquake from earlier. She was glad she had convinced Keenan to buy another house after the first one burned down. If they were in an apartment, the neighbors would have surely called the police a year ago. “You know,” Melanie said, answering his rhetorical question as she slid a finger into her mouth and then Keenan’s. He let out a moan.

“No. Tell me.” He sucked on her finger, then kissed her palm.

She felt her muscles tense and then sank against him.

“Ready?” he asked.

But all she could manage was a grunt.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” He pulled her tighter just as her body began to shake. First her legs, then arms. She could feel her own wetness mixing with his.

“So what could possibly compare to this?” he asked again.

Melanie could barely manage the syllables. In between a final shriek, she wrapped her arms around his head and whispered in his ear, “Blood. Human blood.”

