

A man with extensive tattoos and large black wings is wearing a black gas mask with two circular lenses and a filter. He is holding a golden trumpet. The background is a textured blue.

THE  
*Archos:*  
Gabriel: Book One

Trumpet vs.  
Horns

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## **Dedication & Thanks**

This book is dedicated to the concepts of creativity, imagination, storytelling, courage, and love. These are some of life's finest ingredients — especially when used together.

This book is in appreciation of Khelsey Jackson, a fellow author. Thank of you being the first friend in the author world and part of the motivation for trying my hand at fantasy writing.

The book is fist bump to myself. Yup, myself. I do the things I say I 'm going to do — eventually.

# Prologue

Thank goodness it's Friday, right? Wrong! It's the precursor to one hellish weekend ahead for Gabriel Townsend. The public relations practitioner and trumpet playing phenom soon assumes another identity that comes with a whole new set of demons. But, these demons have actual names, magical powers and death wish for the archangel descendent.

With the coronation of a new Archo, the world resets — and power is up for grabs. Will it turn evil or remain on the side of good?

This pivotal moment in time is set to then backdrop of modern day life in the Pacific Northwestern City of Seattle. Gabriel must use his wings, imagination, quick wit, charm and sarcasm to defend against demon attacks. But he must also master his trumpets. new magical powers of Hertz, Hark, and Herald to send a powerful message to the demons.

Additionally, Gabriel must balance his human side and all the challenges, joys, obstacles and lucky breaks that pop up in the real world. He gets zero sympathy as he navigates. both lives and a journey that pits duty against freedom and love against heartache as good and evil duke out.

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# Chapter 1

## Don't Touch That Dial

**T**he tires squeal as Gabriel slams on the brakes. Coffee from the cup in the holder splashes onto the center console.

“Fuck! Does everyone always have to drive like an asshole,” shouts Gabriel.

Just as traffic starts up again, his phone rings. “Great,” he says as he scrambles to answer it.

Gabriel (acting cheerful): “Hey good morning, Maddie!”

Maddie: “Gabriel, where are you? Jack Arlington from Remcorp is here and we’re ...”

Gabriel: “I know, I know, I’m so sorry. There was a crash holding everyone up. I’m just a few minutes away.”

Maddie (stern voice): “Gabriel, you’re late to work on a regular basis lately. This is the BIGGEST potential PR client we’ve ever...”

Gabriel (apologetic): “Maddie, I know, I know. I’m so sorry – I left early today but this crash is really...”

Maddie (annoyed) “What is your ETA?”

Gabriel: “Like 12 minutes, maybe 10.”

Maddie: “I will stall. But you and I will have a conversation later. Please come right into the conference room when you get here.”

Gabriel: “Yes, ma’am. I’ll see you soon...again..i’m...hello? Maddie are you there? Great, there’s no way I’m not going to get fired,” he thinks to himself

He stops for a red light noticing the Space Needle off in the distance. He cracks a smile. It’s where he and Sage spent an afternoon shortly after they met four months ago. Four months ago, he was on a date with Sage, a woman he’d met at Bimbo’s Bitchin’ Burrito Kitchen on Pine St. The two spent the afternoon looking out from observation deck — sharing bits about their outlook on life, what it all means and the purpose.

*“It’s so beautiful up here, said Sage. It makes you feel as if any problem you have in life really isn’t all that big.”*

*Gabriel’s natural wit kicked in. “Ha, then we’ll need to build a Space Needle twice as tall.” he said.*

*Sage giggled and grabbed his hand.*

*Sage: “You’re stupid,” she said playfully.*

Gabriel: “Maybe,” he smirkingly replied.

Sage (blushing): “Come on, you’re smart, successful and, uh...handsome...”

Gabriel (Interrupts): “Go on, go on, he said”

Sage (laughing) and charming..at least so far. What kind of problems could a guy like you have?”

Gabriel: “Attend a Thanksgiving dinner at my parents house. You’ll learn a lot.”

Sage: “So I’m going to need a wing and a prayer to survive that day! Awesome.”



Gabriel: “What did you just say?”

Sage: “That I’m going to need a wing and a prayer to survive that day. It’s just a funny way of saying it’s going to take a lot to survive.”

Gabriel: “Hmm. I’ve never heard that before.”

Sage (self-deprecating): “Oh, I’m not even sure why I said that, I...”

Gabriel: “No, it was cute. You know what? I smell corn dogs.”

Sage: “I’m certain you can’t smell those corn dogs from way up here, but I can see the stand way down there. Is that the cue to grab..”

Gabriel: “Absolutely! My treat.” Suddenly, honking horns penetrate the airspace startling

Gabriel. “Shit. Ok, Ok...I’m going,” he yells defensively. “Calm the fuck down!”

As his nerves settle, he lets out a sigh and moves his hand toward the radio knob to turn the music up louder. Just before his hand makes contact with the knob, the radio starts scrambling as if it’s going from channel to channel quickly but the dial isn’t moving.

“Da fuck is happening right now?,” exclaims Gabriel.

He pushes buttons in attempt to get it to stop, but it doesn’t let up. “What is happening with this stupid thing,” he says in a concerned voice.

As he goes for the volume knob again he gets a startling but harmless shock to his finger. “Whoa, What the fuck is this?”

Suddenly, he starts to hear chatter but can barely make out what he’s hearing.

“Apron gel aorli imp ur dentt mansion iskom eek euro wuh ave,” says the radio voice.

Gabriel, still startled and confused replies “What? Are you talking to me?”

The radio immediately stops scrambling returning to the song that was playing. “Ok, I’m not going crazy — that radio was, like talking to me or something,” he says out loud.

He reaches for the volume knob again but cautiously. As he makes slight contact with it he pulls away and repeats this a few times until he’s sure he won’t get shocked again.

The volume works as it should. He pushes other radio buttons and notices all controls are working properly.

“I don’t get it, he says to himself. “Guess it’s going to be one of those days!”

Finally at work he parks his card and makes a mad dash to the front door, then bee line to the bathroom.

“Ok, you got this, you got this, you got this — don’t forget to play up the relationship-based content,” he says out loud as he zips his pants up and flushes the toilet.

In the bathroom mirror he stares at himself for a few seconds and forces a more confident pose.

He stands at the door for a second pausing again to comply with his boss’s instructions. As he leans in to pull open the door, it hits him pushing him backward. He loses his balance, falling on his behind.

As he continues in a backward motion, he cracks his head against the wall and comes to a stop. “Oh Fuck, he says faintly as he looks up to see two very large 10-year-old boys half laughing and half serious. “Sorry, mister” says one of the

boys as both are fighting laughter. A man appears in the doorway

Jack Arlington: “Boys, I’ve had it with you two today, when we get home...”

He sees Gabriel out of the corner of his eye on the floor against the wall.

Jack: “Oh my goodness — are you alright sir? I’m so sorry about my kids.”

Gabriel: “Yeah, I think so,” he says as he starts to get up.”

Jack: “My wife had to go out of town on business last-minute and kids are off from school today. I had no choice but to bring them,” says the gentleman.

He helps Gabriel up from the floor. Gabriel starts to wobble a little and vomits on the floor.

Twin 1: “Gross,” says one of the boys.

Jack: “Boys you apologize to this man immediately!”

There’s a knock on the door and muffled voice from the other side “

Maddie: “Mr. Arlington is everything ok in there.”

He pulls the door open.

Jack: “Yes, Maddie, I’m so sorry about my kids. They pushed the door open so hard they knocked this poor man to ground.”

Maddie: “Gabriel are you throwing up?”

Mr. Arlington (in embarrassment): “You’re Gabriel? Oh man, I’m so sorry. He grabs some paper towels from the dispenser and also turns to his his boys

Jack: “You two - go get in the car NOW.” He hands the paper towel to Gabriel.

Gabriel: “I think i was just dizzy from the fall. I’ll be ok.” Mr. Arlington:

Jack: “You might have a concussion. Vomiting is a sign.”  
(Looking at Maddie) “He might have a concussion. He should see a doctor. We can reschedule this. I need to get these boys home. They’re a handful.”

He starts to leave the bathroom.

Maddie: “Uh, ok, why don’t we say Thursday or Friday or any day next week works too.”

Mr. Arlington (hurried) “That won’t work. I leave for France on Thursday. But I’ll only be gone until the end of May or so.

Maddie and Gabriel both speak at the same time.

Maddie (surprised and annoyed) “May?”

Gabriel: “Shit!”

Mr. Arlington: “Yes. May. That is if all goes well. These kinds of trips are never predictable. Sorry, those boys will cause mayhem if I let them out of my sight for too long. I’ll be in touch.

Jack: “Au Revoir,” he says as he quickly leaves.

Maddie: “Do you need to see a doctor?”

Gabriel: “Well, May isn’t so....”

Maddie: “Just don’t. I”m so pissed off right now. I need to walk away before I say or do something that will get me fired” She turns toward the door and starts to leave.

Gabriel: “Maddie, come on.. You saw those wonder bread twins. They’re beasts...do you know how hard and fast they came through door?”

Maddie: “The point is Gabriel, had you been on time, none of this would have happened. We could’ve signed Remcorp. today had Mr. Arlington seen the pitch. But the only pitch you care about is that of your trumpet and the orchestra. We’ll be lucky if we get him at all now.”

Gabriel: “We can sign him in May when he comes back in May”

Maddie: (with her arms crossed, and irritated): “And there’s the proof you didn’t read the directional briefs I emailed you last week.

Gabriel: “Ok, yeah I haven’t read them yet but what’s going on, why are those briefs related to this?”

Maddie: “Go print the briefs and bring them home with you. You can take the rest of the day off to tend to your concussion (gestures with air quotes) but I can’t cover for you this time. Paul and Camilla are going to be pissed to the nth degree.”

Gabriel: “Why?”

Maddie (starts walking away, fed up & throwing her arms in the air): “Briefs, Gabriel. Read the briefs.” Gabriel (in a low, arrogant, mimicking voice ): “Briefs, Gabriel. Read the briefs. Enough with these fucking briefs already.”

The Darkness: “Is there more to this brief?”

Nevro: “No, Your Darkness.”

The Darkness: “This Gabriel Townsend seems very ordinary, perhaps even teetering of underwhelming. Your surveillance notes shine a light on what appears to be a knack for always being late or just barely on time. And he still eats Lucky Charms for breakfast?

Nevro: Yes, Sir.

The Darkness: “And you’re standing firm that he’s one of the Archos?”

Nevro: “Yes, Sir”

The Darkness: “DAMN IT, Nevro! Could you utter something other than the words yes and no? It’s like I’m speaking to a witness on a stand in a murder trial. HOW do we really know THIS is the descendant?”

Nevro: “He’s one of only four people named Gabriel in the greater Seattle area that plays the trumpet. Two of them are kids and the other is a bum who busks on street corners. He also works in Public Relations, a communications field. He’s the middle child, and son of Liza & Aaron Townsend. Liza is a City Planner, Douglas is an Architect.”

The Darkness: “Thank you for that upper middle class narrative but I still don’t see any signal of surety this guy is one of the Archos.”

Nevro: “Let me assure you Sir, as private as Gabriel tries to make his life, the trail still points to him. “

The Darkness: “Well, let’s hope you’re right because as much as I revel in the pain and suffering of others, the thought of

what I will do to you if you're wrong is too sinister for my own taste. We can not let these wing ding tip the scales from merciless to virtuous. So tell me, what is the plan?

Nevro: "Plan, sir?"

The Darkness (annoyed laughter): "You never cease to make a situation awkward. Let me spell this out for you another way. WE DO NOT HAVE TIME TO PLAY FUCK AROUND, YOU FOOL. Put a plan together to get rid of him OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES. (pauses and smiles) That is all."

“Come on, pick up, pick up,” Gabriel says to himself.

Heather: “ZAP-100 All hits, all Day”

Gabriel: “Heather it’s Gabriel”

Heather: “Gabriel Fucking Townsend. I knew you’d be calling to get your old job back. What are we thinking... afternoon drive, late night, or, ew, overnight?”

Gabriel (laughing): “I do miss the good old days, but I’m not calling for a job. At least not yet...”

Heather: “Uh, oh! Trouble at the fancy firm already?”

Gabriel: “Well, I kind of fucked up a little. I don’t know what’s gotten into me lately.”

Heather: “Talk to me babe, what do you. mean?”

Gabriel: “I don’t know, just life stuff. Like what is my purpose, where is this all going, am I on the right path.”

Heather (laughing): “Honey it’s simple. Hang out with people who are your true friends - hint , hint - or at least a little more often and fuck everyone else.”

Gabriel: “I just saw you in January...aw shit, I guess it has been a little while.”

Heather: “Uh huh”

Gabriel: “Fine, fine — I’m taking you to lunch very soon!”

Heather: “After that last lunch fiasco? Nope.”

Gabriel (laughing): “Who is going to remember that? NO ONE.”



Heather: “Nope. I’m not even taking my chances. This town isn’t that big. Dinner at a nice steakhouse. I know they pay you well at the fancy firm.”

Gabriel (laughing): “Fine. dinner at a steakhouse. And stop calling it the fancy firm. It’s not that upscale.”

Heather: “Great, then we’ll see you back here, let’s say Monday?”

Gabriel; “Fine...”

Heather: “For real, you’ll come back?”

Gabriel: “No, I meant fine...you can continue to call it fancy firm.”

Heather: “I hate you, you’re dead to me. I’m just kidding. Wait, we’re getting ready to hang up the phone and you haven’t even told me why you called in the first place.”

Gabriel: “Yes, yes...so earlier this morning around 9 am or just after, did the station go off -air or did something happen with the signal?”

Heather: “Never on my watch! What do you mean?”

Gabriel: “Well, this is going to sound weird but while driving into work this morning I was listening and all of a sudden the signal started to scramble and I could have sworn I head a voice trying to say something. But this signal...or scramble was downing it out so I couldn’t make out what it was trying to say. It was just weird, hard to explain.”

Heather: “Maybe the voice was trying to spell out C-R-A-Z-Y. Did you hit your head?”

Gabriel: Well, technically yes but that was after this happened and that’s another story. I’m serious. I really heard this.”

Heather: “Well, I guess I COULD pull up the log to see if there were any transmission issues this morning and here we go... OH, this is interesting...”

Gabriel: “What, what does it say?”

Heather: “It says it’s all in your head because there’s no entry in our log indicating an equipment problem or transmission issue.”

Gabriel: “I know I heard this and I’m not going nuts”

Heather: “Well, focus that pretty little head on more productive things...like which steakhouse we’ll be dining at.”

Gabriel: “You’re really set on that...”

Heather: “Oh, babe, sorry to cut you off. I gotta run. Miccolo just arrived. He’s doing a pub tour for his new song and I want to see if he smells as good as I think he does.”

Gabriel (laughing): “Miccolo — good get! I dig his music. Hey, real quick, you guys still record all the broadcasts right?”

Heather: “Yeah, why?” Gabriel: “Could you listen back between 9 and 9:15 am just to make sure I’m not crazy and I’ll buy you dessert too after the steak.”

Heather: “You know your way to a woman’s heart! Fine. Will do. Ciao babe. “

Gabriel. hangs up the phone and picks up the folder of briefs he printed at the PR Firm. As he starts to thumb through them hoping to quickly find the information Maddie was referring to, he starts singing “Vibes on Vibes,” the new song from Miccolo.

He looks up and sees his trumpet on the coffee table. “I’m way too hungover for you today,” he says out loud.

He then sees his bluetooth speaker on the shelf and walks over to turn it on. He grabs his phone and settles for his jazz playlist.

“This should make reading briefs less painful.” He grabs the briefs and sits down on the couch in the living room. Tapping his foot against the coffee table to the music he starts looking through the briefs. “Wait, what,” he says out loud in disbelief.

He learns that the owners of the PR firm want four new high-end clients on the books by June. “Expanding our book of high-end clients will put Fenzi in prime position to sell the firm for top dollar,” he reads.

“Well shit, If I don’t get fired, I’m going to potentially be out of a job anyway,” he thinks to himself. “This really fucking blows.”

Suddenly, the blue-tooth speaker starts to scramble the exact same way the radio did earlier in car. Overcome with a weird and indescribable feeling, Gabriel looks up at the speaker.

“Ok What the fuck is happening?” He hears what sounds like a voice once again trying to convey a message.

“Apron gel aorli imp ur dentt mansion iskom eek euro wuh ave.”

Gabriel slowly walks toward the speaker. Moving his head closer to decipher what the voice is trying to say.

“Apron gel? What the hell is apron gel?,” he says.

He turns off the bluetooth speaker for a few seconds and then switches it back on. It’s silent. As he turns around to walk back to the couch it starts up again but this time the voices is slightly clearer.

Gabriel hears “Acorn gel, avery-port mansion eescombing yurway,”

“Oh, acorn gel, duh, that makes total sense. I wish I could cut through that fucking noise so I could hear this better.”

“Actually, I can! You’re a genius, Gabriel.” He picks up his smart phone and brings up the voice recorder app. He hits record and holds his phone up to the speaker. Once he gets the voice recorded, he pops the file into his laptop and into Logic Pro — a music production program. “There, there, and there!” He applies a low-pass filter to the recording to cut down on the high frequency noise. He hits play.

“Archangel, avery impotent mansion ease skubbing hooray” is what it sounds like.

“Ok, so acorn gel is archangel, but what the hell is the rest of this?” He rewinds and plays the message a few times.

“Archangel, avory, — oh, a very, impotent mansion. Ok important, important mansion? A very important mansion eascoming..ease-coming, — is coming. Archangel, a very important mansion is coming, horray.

“What? This voice is trying to tell me I fucking house is coming my way? Why?”

Frustrated, Gabriel locks his hands together and places them on top of his head. He sighs, and leans back into a more diagonal position on the couch. He’s out like a light.

Gabriel opens his eyes at the sound of knocking at the door. He's squinting as the sun blasts through the large windows in the dining area of his apartment.

"Fuck," he says as he puts his hand out to block the light. The knocking at the door continues. "Coming. I'm coming, hold your horses."

As he heads toward the door he notices a glow coming from his trumpet. He rubs his eyes. "Is the fucking trumpet, glowing," he says out loud.

"You know what — not even dealing with this bullshit today."

He opens the door.

Sage: "Hi handsome," she says with a bright smile. Her long, brown, hair catches some of the sunlight from Gabriel's apartment. She's wearing a white v-neck shirt with a jean jacket, black pants and tennis shoes.

Gabriel: "SAGE!," he says with both excitement and confusion in his voice. She leans in to kiss him..he pushes back...

Gabriel: "Whoa...I haven't brushed my teeth yet...enter at your own risk."

Sage (giggles): “I’m all about the risk-taking,” she says as she lunges forward again but this time grabbing his head with both hands and planting a kissing and holding it for a few moments. The two release their embrace.

Gabriel: “Damn! And breakfast is served.”

Sage: “And if you’re lucky, lunch will be a la carte!”

Gabriel: “Dirty bird! Get in here before we start offending the neighbors.

Sage: “I thought you’d never ask.”

As Gabriel widens the door letting Sage in, he quickly looks over at this trumpet which appears to be normal in color and not glowing.

“I gotta get my head examined,” Gabriel says to himself.

Sage: “We’re you talking to someone?”

Gabriel: “What do you mean?”

Sage: “I thought I heard you talking as you came to the door, I don’t want to intrude.”

Gabriel: “No, never. I was talking out loud. You’re always welcome here. But...why are you here? What brings you the neighborhood?”

Sage (makes a ha ha face): “Funny guy.”

Gabriel looks at her puzzled.

Sage: “Wait, you’re serious? You really don’t know?”

Gabriel remains quiet and looking confused. He then smiles. “Of course I know,” he says as he walks over to his trumpet. He picks it up.

Sage stands there now confused and gestures her hands while mouthing the words “what?”

Gabriel pulls the trumpet up to his mouth and begins playing a beautiful rendition of happy birthday.

While he’s playing Sage begins to smile and tears fill her eyes. When Gabriel finishes he notices her watery eyes.

Gabriel: “Babe, what’s wrong...did I upset you?”

Sage: “Upset me? Noooo. That was so sweet. You’ve never played your trumpet for me before.”

Gabriel: “I haven’t?”

Sage: “No, and how long have we been dating..like three or four months?”

Gabriel: “Great, I pull the trumpet out of my mouth to then insert my foot.”

Sage (giggles): “No, I don’t know how long it’s been either... four months maybe. It’s just I know how much you love playing and It...was just.. “

Gabriel, walking toward her as she’s talking leans in and starts kissing her before she finishes. There’s a knock at the door. Gabriel pulls back from kissing Sage and smiles.

Gabriel: “That must be the mail stripper I ordered.”

Sage: “You only ordered one?”

Gabriel: “Dirty girl!”

Gabriel opens the door

Gabriel: “Oh, Hi Mrs. Barely — everything ok?”

Mrs. B.: “Splendid! I loved that trumpet serenade.”

Gabriel: “Shit..I mean shoot! I’m sorry about the noise.”

Mrs. B. “That wasn’t noise, that was top-notch tantara!”

Gabriel: “Look at you with the lingo! I’m impressed.”

Mrs. B: “Well, my late husband was a trumpet player.”

Gabriel: “Oh no shit— I mean shoot! How did I not know this?”

Mrs. B.: “I was curious about the legitimacy of your playing. I’ve never heard you play. But now that I have, I definitely want you to have these. They were my husband’s”

She opens the box containing three opal trumpet buttons.

Gabriel: “Oh Mrs. Barley I those are beautiful, but I can’t take these.”

Mrs. Barley hands him the box. During the exchange Gabriel drops it but quickly squats down to catch it before it hits the floor.

“Mrs. Barely: “Nice save butterfingers”

Gabriel: “Ok, that was weird. Maybe that was a sign from your husband not to part ways with these.

Mrs. Barely: “Nonsense. He always had a thing for the flare. They belong on a trumpet, not in a wooden box, I’ll be one soon enough and I can’t take them with me. Let them live on.”

Gabriel: “This is so sweet of you. I’m honored. I wish I could’ve met your husband.”

Mrs. B.: “He was always horny”



Sage overhears and giggles

Gabriel: “Ba-dump-bump”

Mrs. B (looking over at Sage): “You must be the birthday girl and here I am giving Gabriel a gift.”

Sage: “I am!”

Mrs. B: “Well, I will leave you lovebirds alone. I didn’t mean to crash the party.”

Sage: “You’ve only made the day brighter and a moment even more magical.”

Gabriel (smiling at Sage, then turns to Mrs. B): “Isn’t she great? Thank you again for these. I’m excited to put them on the trumpet.”

Mrs. B.: “Have a blessed day, you two.”

Gabriel: “Take care and be safe! And thank you again“

Gabriel closes the door, looks at the finger buttons one more time. And puts the box on the table.

Sage: “Alright mister, what are we doing today.”

Gabriel: “Well, we’re splitting up for a little bit.“

Sage (puzzled): “Huh?”

Gabriel: “Well, you’re going over to Peace Spa for a massage and I will meet you there in a bit for the next part of today’s journey.”

Sage: “Oh, and what does that entail.”

Gabriel: “It’s a surprise!”

Sage (being playful) “Fine, but I’m only going to find out anyway. What time is my massage at?” Gabriel looks up at the clock. “In 15 minutes!”

Sage: “Alrighty then, good thing it’s in walking distance.” She walks over to Gabriel, the two kiss and hug.

Gabriel (smiling): “I’ll see you soon, babe.”

Sage leaves.

In a panic, Gabriel pulls out his phone. Pulls up the number to Peace Spa and brings the phone up to his ear. “come on, come on.”

Lou: “Massage in a bottle. Don’t rub us the wrong way.”

Gabriel: “Is that seriously how you answer the phone?”

Lou: “For sure. This week’s theme is how to be more like South Lake Union. (They laugh)

Lou: “Your name came up in the caller id. I knew it was you.”

Gabriel: “I need a huge favor, my girlfriend is on her way over.... ‘

Lou: “Whoa,,whoa,,whoa! Your whaaa?”

Gabriel pauses in a moment, startled by what he said, until a smile widens across his face smiles .

Gabriel: “You heard me fool. My girl! But listen, I forgot about her birthday and I sent her your way for a massage and whatever fucking hot rock, tug my cock bullshit goes on there.”

Lou: “Ay-oh he’s got jokes. I’m not sure which is funnier - THAT or you forgetting your GIRLFRIEND’S birthday. I’ll buy another couch. “

Gabriel: “A couch for what?”

Lou: “For you to sleep on after you two move in together and she kicks you out because you forgot her birthday. “

Gabriel: “I’ve had a lot on my...fuck, I don’t have time for this. Can you please help me out bro. I like this girl...a lot. Like, she could be the one and I don’t want to fuck it up.”

Lou: “Yeah, yeah, yeah, you’re lucky there was a cancellation“

Gabriel: “Lifesaver, bro! I got your drinks at Bar Games next week. As for Sage — please take good care of her!”

Lou: “You have nothing to worry about out. I’ve paired her with the brand new masseuse from South Lake Union.”

Gabriel (bursting out laughing): “Brilliant! Love you bro. Thanks, man.

Lou: Peace! Gabriel pulls off his shift and heads toward the bathroom to start getting ready for the day. As he walks past the stereo speakers in his living room, He stops. “Please just be normal.”

A few minute in, he starts shaving and thinks to himself, “Okay, maybe the coast is clear today.”

He continues on and starts singing along to the song,

Suddenly, the radio scrambles. Gabriel perks his head and freezes.

““No..no..no...come ON!” He turns off the water, steps out of the shower and. puts on his bathrobe. The message appears to be coming through clearer than before.

“Arrghanschul, avory portent minssion is coming. Hurry.”

Gabriel: “Archangel, a very import ion minshun? Oh, mission!”

This time, there’s additional instruction in the message.

“Halo Park, number (inaudible) sewven, hitting entury, comb soon.”

Gabriel: “Wait, what number?”

The radio resumes playing.

Gabriel: “Wait..wait, what’s fucking number?,” he says out loud has he raise his arms up. “Great, so I’m supposed to meet (he motions air quotes with his fingers) some Archangel on Halo Park. Seriously? The fuck is this shit?”

He shakes his head as he walks toward his bedroom. He then looks over at the table noticing the trumpet buttons from Mrs. Barley.

He detours toward the table, picks up the box, opens it and smiles as he looks at the opal finger buttons.

He sets the box down and grabs his trumpet. He unscrews the the brass buttons the trumpet came with and twists the opal buttons into place.

“Wow,” he says to himself. “These are gorgeous.”

He glances up the clock “Shit, I gotta get over to Sage.”

He quickly gets ready, grabs his keys and gets out the door. He’s jogs down the hallway and down two flights of stairs and pushes the front door open. “Shit,” he says looking up at the sky. “It’s sunny for a change, I’ll chance it.” As he starts down the street he decides he wants to get Sage flowers before meeting her at Peace.

He makes a detours down an alley using it as a shortcut to the flower shop. Halfway down, he feels a cold wind and looks up to see the sky turning gray. He senses something isn't right and slows his pace.

Two men appear in front of him out of thin air. "The fuck? Where did you two come from?"

Nevro: "Awfully inquisitive, isn't he Gaamrick?"

Gamrick: "He certainly is. He needs a muzzle."

The two men let out a sinister laugh. Gabriel looks puzzled and starts subtly shaking.

Gabriel: "Hey..come on guys, I don't want no trouble. i'm going to meet my girlfriend, it's her birthday today."

Nevro: "Oh, you and Sage made it official and updated your relationship status. How cute."

Gabriel: "Wait..do you know her? How do you know Sage? Is this a prank?"

Gamrick: "I suppose one could call it that but the joke is solely on you."

Gamrick looks over at a liquor advertisement on an old, worn billboard on one of the buildings in the alley. The bottle in the advertisement glows silver quickly, then disappears from the ad. The bottle comes to life in Gamrick's hand.

Gabriel: "Whoa, what is happening right now? He starts shaking more uncontrollably, further frightened by the. men.

Nevro: "Drinking on the job again, Gaamrick? Tisk, tisk."

Gaamrick: "Hardly," he says as the bottom of the bottle breaks off, spilling the liquor on to the ground. Gaamrick

lunges toward Gabriel and swings his arm to cut him with the jagged bottle.

Gabriel quickly backs up. He's still scared but also angry.

Gabriel: "What the fuck, dude?"

Gamrick takes another swing, Gabriel, quickly swings up leg to kick the bottle out of his hand but misses.

Nevro: "Oh, well look who know karate? Or, was that TaeKwonDo? There are so many they all blend the same to me."

Gabriel: "What do you want?"

Nevro vanishes. He reappears behind Gabriel.

Nevro: "Knock, knock"

Gabriel turns around. Nevro punches him in the face. Gabriel stumbles backward falling to the ground. Gaamrick heads toward Gabriel who, then rolls onto his stomach and gets up.

He's disoriented and posed with his legs spread and arms in front of him, trying to create distance between him and the men. Nevro phases out and reappears behind Gabriel grabbing him in a neck hold. Gaamrick punches Gabriel in the stomach twice, cracks another punch to his face. Gabriel lets out a moan and slumps down to the ground as Nevro lets go of him. Gamrick notices a life-like graffiti drawing of a switchblade on the building. He reaches his hand out. The graffiti switch blade glows, disappears from the building and manifests into his hand.

Gaamrick: "Time to finish what we came here to do."

Suddenly, a lightning strike hits a power line snapping the power cable. The cable swings down, heading toward Nevro.

He quickly phases out and vanishes.

Gaamrick, who is also standing in the cable's path, ducks but it strikes him, severing his arm. Green colored slime spills onto the ground below him. Nevro reappears.

Nevro: "Someone up there must be meddling," he says angrily.

Gaamrick (in agony): "My arm!"

Nevro: "You better scoop up that slime if you want to save it."

Gaamrick looks up at the billboard again. He notices nothing useful. In the distance his eye catches another billboard advertising a cooler. The cooler glows, disappears and reappears next to Gaamrick. As he starts scooping up the slime into the cooler, there's a loud rumble of thunder in the sky.

Nevro: "Your day will come, Gabriel."

Gabriel is out cold, lying on the ground.

Nevro grabs ahold of Gaamrick and the two phase out and vanish.

# Chapter 2

## Face of an Angel

“Sage, open. up, please...I can explain,” howls Gabriel from the hallway of her apartment building. He sighs heavily and is exhausted. His left eye is black and blue and swollen. His lip is busted, and his shirt is torn.

“Please, babe, I need you right now,” he says to himself. He perks his head up and says out loud “Why didn’t think of this sooner?”

He pulls out his smart phone, switches the camera on, snaps a selfie of his face, and adds the message, “Please open the door.” He hits send. A few seconds pass, no response.

As he pulls his phone out again to tell her he’s going home and will try again in the morning, he hears Sage let out scream from her apartment. Gabriel becomes startled and fearful she might be in trouble.

Gabriel: “Sage, are you ok?,” he says as he jiggles the door knob.

Sage: “Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god,” she says with her voice getting louder as she approached door. She fumbles through the lock and frantically opens the door. As she looks at Gabriel, she drops her phone and pulls her hands over her mouth. Thick tears start dripping down her face. She beings



to shake uncontrollably. Gabriel opens his arm, embraces her and pulls her close to his body. Sage pulls her hands away from her mouth and embraces Gabriel — tightly. She starts crying harder.

Gabriel: “Hey, I’m here, I’m here, I’m alive and ok.”

As the two remain embraced for a few more moments, Sage pulls away to look at Gabriel. She’s still shaking and can barely get the words out. She utters... “I’m sorry?” “You’re sorry?” Gabriel says puzzled. “For what?”

Sage: “I should’ve answered the phone. But I was so hurt when you never showed up and I couldn’t reach you.”

Gabriel: “I know but as...” Sage: “No, let me finish. I went back to Peace to find out if maybe you’d called there. And when I explained that I couldn’t find you or reach you, the guy at the counter said you had called this morning too book the appointment. And he said you forgot my birthday and...”

Gabriel: “Wait, why was he telling you all this? Sage: “Do you see me right now. I’m a wreck. He told me because I thought something might’ve happened to you and I made him tell me everything you said to him so I could figure out what was going on. Two hours went by and I still hadn’t heard from you. And, you forgot my birthday and I got upset and...”

Gabriel: “Hey, before I explain what happened, did Lou tell you everything I said?”

Sage: “What do you mean?” Gabriel (in calmer voice): “I mean he must not have told you everything.” He tries to smile, but can’t because of the pain. Sage: “I don’t understand.”

Gabriel: “Yes, I did forget about your birthday momentarily, so I called Lou to see if he would squeeze you

in. I told him how much I like you and that...ugh... Sage:  
“What?”

Gabriel (hesitant): “I’m in love with you, Sage. I would never do anything...”

Sage: “What did you just say?”

Gabriel: “I’m in love with you.” Sage, starts crying and shaking uncontrollably again.

Gabriel; “Hey, babe, what’s wrong?”

Sage: “I have so many emotions right now..angry, scared something happened to you, concerned about your face, confused, all the things,” she says as she starts to calm down a little.

Gabriel: ‘I’m not just saying I love you to say I love you. I actually love you.’”

Sage: “I know.”

Gabriel: “How do you know?”

Sage: “It’s the way you look at me. And, I love you too.”

Gabriel: “I know.”

Sage (cracks a smile): “And how do you know.”

Gabriel: “You just showed me.”

Sage: ‘How?’”

Gabriel: “Those thick tears running down your face when you answer the door and your shaking gave it away. It’s your heart. You’re pure gold.”

Sage smiles.

Gabriel: "How about an ice and aspirin intermission?"

Sage: "Oh my god. I sorry. I'm such a jerk. Yes, yes..yes.."

She starts heading for the kitchen and then quickly turns around. "Wait, wait, wait, " she says as she walks up to Gabriel and gently kisses his lips to avoid hurting his swollen face. "I love you."

Gabriel: 'Ditto.' he replies."

Sage smiled. "Let me get you that ice." She headed toward the kitchen, then quickly turned around. "Wait, you still haven't told me what happened." She placed her hands on her head and said softly, "Today is the craziest day."

"Promise you're not going to think I'm crazy?" Gabriel asked.

Sage pulled her hands off her head. "No, yes, no... I mean... you're scaring me a little. Do you have a debt or something, and some henchmen came looking for you?"

"It's worse," Gabriel replied.

"Oh my god," Sage muttered.

"No, no henchmen. Well, yes, actually henchmen, but no debt. I was headed over to meet you at Peace and cut through the Alley on the way so I could hit the flower first."

"Hit? You mean like rob?" Sage asked, confused.

Gabriel frowned. "Duh, fuck? No. I was stopping there on the way to buy my girlfriend flowers for her birthday."

Sage got choked up and waved her hands as if to say, *Please forgive me for saying that.*

"I know you're scared right now," Gabriel continued. "And I am too, a little. I have no idea who these guys were, but they seemed to know me. And, this is fucked up and weird, but they had like magical powers or something."

Sage, who had been putting ice in a towel, stopped and looked up at him. "Did you just say magical powers?"

"Yeah," Gabriel nodded. "One could disappear and reappear, and the other could somehow make things like pictures on a billboard or graffiti on the wall suddenly just come to life."

Sage looked even more confused. "Gabriel, I think we should go to the hospital."

"For what? They can't really do anything for my face."

"It's not your face I'm worried about. It's your head."

"Sage, I know this sounds ridiculous, but I don't know how else to explain it. This really happened. The one guy—Garmo or Garmick or something—literally made a vodka bottle from a billboard advertisement come to life. Like, it disappeared off the billboard and reappeared in his hand. He tried to hit me with it. I don't know... it all happened so fast. I got punched a few times, and the last one knocked me out cold. Next thing I know, I woke up and it was just starting to get dark outside."

Gabriel paused, staring blankly at the window. "How could I have been out all that time? They hit me that hard?"

"Gabriel, are you serious right now?" Sage asked, her voice trembling with frustration. "I've been worried sick, thinking something terrible happened to you or—or that you were playing some mean trick on my birthday, and then you come in here with this... this... this fucked up story about two magical thugs you met in an alley? Get out."

"What?" Gabriel's voice broke.

"I want you to go."

"Sage, I swear this is what happened. I'm not making it up."

"Okay, I can't listen to this right now. I'll drive you home. Either your head is really damaged, or I... I... I don't even know what the fuck to say right now."

"HEY!" Gabriel yelled, startling her. "I'm not making it up," his voice dropped off as he looked down at the ground and sighed. He looked back up with tears in his eyes. "I'm just gonna go home and get some rest. Maybe my head is messed up. I don't know. That's what I saw."

Gabriel headed for the door while Sage remained still, looking at him as if she was both angry and hurt, trying to figure out what was wrong. He turned the knob and opened the door, then looked back at her before leaving. "I get it. This sounds crazy. I do love you. I hope you believe that part," he said, then walked out and closed the door behind him.

Sage put her hand on her stomach as if feeling queasy. A few seconds later, she pulled out her phone. As she started to dial, she stopped. She wanted to believe Gabriel but was frustrated. She sat down on the couch and spoke out loud. "He forgot my birthday and then gets attacked by fucking... Harry Potter? What is happening?"

"Knock, knock," said Nevros as he approached a doorway of a room filled with darkness, except for the distant glow of a deep purplish-red color.

The Darkness: "I trust you're here, proud to declare, you've cut his wings and left him bare?"

"N-no, my darkness, not exactly," Nevros stammered.

The Darkness hissed, "Explain at once, you useless fool, and make it good or yo—"

## **NEEDS ATTENTION**

"A pack of Marvin Lights, please," Gabriel said to the convenience store clerk.

The clerk looked at him with concern. "Man, are you alright?"

"Never fucking better. I need matches too, please."

"We have ice packs and Ibuprofen in aisle two."

"Thanks, I'm fine."

"You sure you—"

"I SAID I'M FUCKING FINE!" Gabriel slammed his fist on the counter.

"Whoa, bro, bro..." The clerk raised his hands defensively.

Gabriel sighed. "I'm sorry. I know you're trying to help. I'm just not having the best day."

"You hide it well," the clerk joked.

Gabriel laughed, then winced in pain. "Ouch, ouch, ouch, it hurts to laugh."

"Sorry."

"Anyway, thanks for the smokes." Gabriel turned and started to head for the door, but stopped suddenly and turned back toward the

clerk. "Hey, have you heard of Halo Park? Is it like a park or a street?"

"It's about six or seven blocks from here... straight up Slade Road. But it's not the best—"

**Archie:** "Because Angels and windbreakers go together like peanut butter and mayonnaise—just trust me on this one."

**Gabriel:** "Peanut butter and mayo? You've got to be kidding me."

**Archie:** "I'm dead serious. Just take it off."

Gabriel hesitates, then reluctantly removes his windbreaker, tossing it to the side.

**Gabriel:** "Okay, now what? Do I suddenly sprout wings and start flying around?"

**Archie:** "Not quite, but we're about to find out."

Archie stands still, his eyes focused on Gabriel's back. Gabriel feels a strange sensation, almost like a tingling running down his spine. He shudders and looks around nervously.

**Gabriel:** "What the hell are you doing to me?"

**Archie:** "Nothing, it's all you."

Suddenly, Gabriel feels a rush of warmth spreading through his back, followed by a soft glow. He turns his head slightly, catching a glimpse of something white and feathery just out of his peripheral vision.

**Gabriel:** "No...no way..."

Before he can fully process what's happening, a pair of shimmering white wings begin to unfurl from his back. Gabriel

gasps, stepping back in shock as the wings stretch out to their full length. The feathers glimmer with a faint golden hue, each one perfectly aligned and almost impossibly soft-looking.

**Gabriel:** "Holy shit..."

**Archie:** "Now do you believe me?"

Gabriel stares at his wings in disbelief, running his hands over the feathers as if trying to convince himself they're real.

**Gabriel:** "This can't be happening. This is...this is insane."

**Archie:** "Insane, maybe. But it's your reality now. Welcome to your new life, Gabriel Martin—Archo Angel."

Gabriel's mind races as he tries to comprehend the magnitude of what's happening. He opens his mouth to speak, but no words come out. Finally, he manages to choke out a question.

**Gabriel:** "What am I supposed to do with these?"

**Archie:** "You'll figure it out. But for now, you need to focus. There's a reason why all of this is happening, and you're going to need every bit of your strength—and those wings—to see it through."

**Gabriel:** "And what if I don't want to? What if I just want to go back to my normal life?"

**Archie:** "Unfortunately, that's not an option anymore. Once you've been awakened, there's no turning back."

Gabriel lets out a long sigh, his wings drooping slightly as the weight of the situation settles on him.

**Gabriel:** "I don't know if I can do this."



**Archie:** "You can, and you will. But right now, you need to rest and process everything. I'll be around to guide you when you're ready."

Gabriel nods slowly, his mind still reeling. He looks down at the ground, overwhelmed by everything that's happened in such a short time.

**Archie:** "Remember, Gabriel, you're not alone in this. You have allies—more than you realize. And when the time comes, you'll know exactly what to do."

With that, Archie steps back, his wings reappearing in a swirl of golden light. He gives Gabriel a reassuring nod before turning and walking away, disappearing into the shadows.

Gabriel stands there for a moment, staring after Archie, his thoughts a whirlwind of confusion and fear. He glances at his wings again, still struggling to accept their reality. Finally, with a deep breath, he wills them to disappear. The wings retract into his back, leaving no trace of their existence.

**Gabriel:** "What the hell have I gotten myself into?"

He grabs his windbreaker from the ground and slips it back on, his mind still racing. He takes one last look around the dark, empty street before turning and walking back to his car. As he drives away, the reality of his new life begins to sink in. There's no going back now. Whether he's ready or not, Gabriel Martin's life has changed forever.

**Gabriel:** "Fish and bicycles. It doesn't make sense. You need wind; it's your friend."

**Archie:** "Un-fucking real. I'm begging you, dude. You seem like a nice guy...can you just please leave me alone."

**Archie:** "If you take off the windbreaker and nothing happens this time, I will indeed leave you alone."

**Gabriel:** "Fucking fantastic," *he says as he removes his windbreaker.* "Apertis Alis." *Nothing happens.*

**Archie:** "Say it like you mean it."

**Gabriel:** "APERTIS ALIS!" *A bright white swirl of light forms around Gabriel's back and only the left wing appears on his back. Gabriel can feel this and looks in disbelief even though he can't see the wing. He also senses something is wrong and looks over his right shoulder and then the left.* "Duh fuck is this? Why do I only have one wing?"

**Archie:** "I don't know, I've never seen this happen before."

**Gabriel:** "Well, make it go away. I told you I'm the wrong guy."

**Archie:** "How about we focus on getting the other one to come out?"

**Gabriel:** "Apertis Alis...fucker!" *Another swirl of white light forms, and the other wing comes out.*

**Archie:** "Unreal! Maybe it responds to your potty mouth...which, incidentally, you could work on cleaning that up."

**Gabriel:** "Oh...shit." *Gabriel starts hovering as he lightly flaps the wings, but becomes more nervous and flaps harder to overcorrect. This starts kicking up dust and blowing papers and other light objects inside the building. He starts ascending higher.*

**Archie:** "THINK CALM THOUGHTS AND STOP FLAPPING."

**Gabriel:** "I'M TRYING, I CAN'T!" *As he continues to rise, Archie starts talking to him telepathically, urging him to breathe*

*gently and sync the flapping with the breathing. In a few moments, Gabriel starts to descend slowly and gently lands.*

**Archie:** "Let's put them away for now until I can teach you how to connect with the air."

**Gabriel:** "Oh come on, we just got to the good part." *Archie looks at him sternly.*

**Gabriel:** "Alis...uh...go-oh—away-oh."

**Archie (rolls his eyes):** "Really? It's Alis Prope."

**Gabriel:** "Alis Prope." *A quick white swirl of light appears around his wings, and they disappear.*

**Gabriel:** "That was wild."

**Archie:** "Look, I know this is hard to digest and understand. And, admittedly, I wish you could have arrived at all this a little differently — not so abruptly. But you must also know this is very real and with real consequences if evil gets a foothold in this world. You are the messenger angel, not just in what you say, but how your actions align in the fight against evil. You're a message of hope — that good still exists and stopping at nothing to make sure it is the predominant force in the Universe."

**Gabriel:** "But how can I do all that? I mean, I couldn't even make both wings appear. I'm not built for this."

**Archie:** "Quite the opposite. Your heart is uncommon and pleased the heavens. You are one in 2 billion. Do you understand that? One in two billion. ONLY you can do this. ONLY you."

**Gabriel:** "I'm not trying to sound like a jerk, but why not one in 8 billion?"

**Archie:** "Fair question. And that's simply because there are three other Archangels who have descendants: Michael, Raphael, and Uriel."

**Gabriel:** "So do we all have dinner together at Applebees or something?"

**Archie:** "No, in fact, you'll likely never meet them. All four of you are always in play, each with a different mission against evil and different talents to stop it."

**Gabriel:** "So how do I stop evil?"

**Archie:** "A good starting point is doing what you're doing now — asking questions. Keep them coming. As you know, Gabriel had a trumpet. Where is yours?"

**Gabriel:** "At home. I can play a mean C# major."

**Archie:** "Great, but melodies and harmonies are a very small part of what that trumpet can do. Perhaps you can bring it by tomorrow, and I can show you its powers."

**Gabriel:** "Uh, sure. I'm just not 100 percent on board with this yet. It's all still a little crazy to me and it's late. I should probably get home and get some sleep."

**Archie:** "You are probably right. I must warn and ask you not to show your wings. It's not that humans don't know we exist, it's just that we protect them best when they don't know we are around. Your wings are a gift, not a toy, and meant for great purposes. Understood?"

**Gabriel:** "Yeah, I mean I don't know how to use them anyway."

**Archie:** "In time, my friend, in time."

**Gabriel:** "Should I use the door or the wall to leave?"

**Archie:** "Either. Humans can't walk through walls, only angels. And you can't walk through all walls either, only this one. You operate as a human, think like a hero, and fight evil as an angel. We have much to go over. But for now, get some rest, and I hope to see you back here. The radio messages are part of your gift and part of a system to keep what we do on the down low. Too many ears are listening, and The Darkness has too many minions lurking."

**Gabriel:** "The Darkness?"

**Archie:** "Evil's leader."

**Gabriel:** "A descendant of Lucifer?"

**Archie:** "Precisely. But more evolved and with pompous names."

**Gabriel:** "So do I need to go to church and shit now?"

**Archie:** "Only your mouth. It could certainly use some holy water."

**Gabriel:** "Yeah, yeah, I'll work on that."

Gabriel, somewhat hesitant, feels for the wall and walks through it. He looks at his watch.

**Gabriel (thinking):** "3:17 am, I gotta get some sleep."

He gets into his car and heads home. He pulls into the parking garage near his building, parks his car, and gets out. He presses the lock button on his key fob. Upon exiting the garage, he hears commotion in a nearby alley. He quietly walks closer.

**Woman:** "Leave me alone, you jerks! And give me my purse back."

**Man:** "So polite you are, but I think we'll be taking your purse."

**Gabriel (turns the corner):** "I don't think you fucking heard the lady. She asked for her purse back."

**Man 2:** "Aww, a do-gooder. That's cute. Leave now, and you won't get hurt."

**Gabriel:** "Well, at least we're on the same page because I was just going to say the same thing to you two."

The men drop the purse.

**Man 1:** "It's your lucky day, lady."

As the men start to move toward Gabriel, the woman grabs her purse and runs out of the alley.

**Gabriel:** "Well, my work is done here, gentlemen. We can all leave."

**Man 1:** "Oh, you'll be leaving alright—on a stretcher when we're done with you."

The men move closer.

**Gabriel:** "Apertis Alis."

Nothing happens.

**Gabriel:** "What? Fucking windbreaker," he quickly removes his jacket.

**Man 2:** "No need to take your clothes off; we're not getting into bed with you, gay boy."

**Gabriel:** "Gay boy? It's Gabriel. I'm not gay—and not that there's anything wrong with it either."

**Man 2:** "Oh, GAYbriel with a Y."

The men laugh.

**Man 1:** "You better pray to your guardian Gayngel."

They laugh more.

**Gabriel:** "Great idea. APERTIS ALIS."

Gabriel's wings appear. The two men, still laughing, suddenly stop, and their mouths drop open.

**Man 1:** "What the fuck are you?"

**Gabriel:** "Your guardian gayngel. Hope you have some hairspray."

Gabriel stands firmly on the ground and flaps his wings, causing strong winds. The thugs go flying through the air and smack into the side of a building before landing on the ground.

**Gabriel:** "I suggest you leave now because princess is tired and wants to go to bed. And I trust you'll have nothing but nice things to say about gay people from now on."

Man 2 helps up Man 1.

**Man 2:** "Let's get the fuck out of here," he says as they both get up and run off.

Gabriel looks down at his windbreaker.

**Gabriel:** "Well, I guess you don't go with my new wardrobe," he says as he picks up the windbreaker. He closes his wings, puts the windbreaker into a nearby dumpster, and heads to his apartment building.

Gabriel is sound asleep, with sunlight blaring through the windows in his bedroom. Suddenly, the alarm goes off. Gabriel jumps up in bed in a panic.

**Gabriel:** "Who's there?" he says before realizing it's just his alarm. He quickly gets out of bed and heads to the mirror in the bathroom. His face still hurts; he's black and blue. "Ibuprofen pancakes for breakfast," he says.

As he exits the bathroom, he heads over to his trumpet and picks it up.

**Gabriel:** "So, I guess you have some special powers?"

He starts inspecting the trumpet but doesn't find anything out of the ordinary. As he puts the mouthpiece up to his mouth and attempts to blow, it only exacerbates the pain in his face.

**Gabriel:** "Oh, fuck, that hurts," he says as he puts down the trumpet. He heads to the medicine cabinet in the bathroom and pulls out Ibuprofen. He sprinkles out five pills and puts them into his mouth. He grabs a cup near the bathroom sink, fills it with water, and takes a drink to swallow the pills. Next, he quickly gets dressed, throwing on a pair of jeans, a t-shirt, a hat, and some sunglasses. He looks out the window and notices it's now overcast.

**Gabriel:** "Classic Seattle," he says as he heads for the front door, grabbing an umbrella, and then leaves.

Outside, he starts heading toward the alley where he'd taken a shortcut to get flowers for Sage. Once there, he stops, breathes deeply, and continues into the alley. He notices a woman standing farther down the alley with her back to him. He pulls up his sunglasses to get a better look. He walks closer.

**Gabriel:** "Sage?"

Sage, startled, turns around quickly.

**Sage:** "Gabriel, what are you doing here?"

**Gabriel:** "I guess I could ask the same thing."



As he walks closer, holding out his arms to give her a hug, she backs away. Gabriel's demeanor changes, his head drops, and his eyes fill with water.

**Sage:** "Gabriel, don't do that. You're just going to make this harder."

**Gabriel (with tears running down his face):** "Sage, please, let's talk about yesterday."

**Sage:** "I believe you."

**Gabriel:** "What?"

**Sage:** "I believe you—what you told me yesterday."

**Gabriel:** "Ok, but why all of a sudden?"

Sage points to the billboard in the alley where the alcohol bottle is clearly missing from the advertisement. Gabriel looks to where she is pointing and as he turns back to her, she points to the ground and the broken pieces of the alcohol bottle. Gabriel looks down and then looks back up at her.

**Gabriel:** "Ok, I'm glad you see it now, but I don't want us to be over because of this. I...I love you, Sage."

**Sage (tears up):** "And I love you too, Gabriel. But I don't love what I'm seeing. Your face is black and blue. My birthday was a disaster. I know that's not all your fault. But after the dead-end relationships I've been in, I thought I finally found...finally found the one. And now I'm scared with this... well, THIS," she says as she motions to the alley with her arms.

**Gabriel:** "Sage, you're the life I want. I can't explain any of this and...and I...I...I hope it's over and yesterday...these last two days...were some weird fluke. I don't picture a future without you,

Sage. Remember a couple of months ago when we were on top of the Space Needle?"

**Sage:** "Yes, and we raced down to grab corn dogs."

**Gabriel (smiles):** "Yes...I knew then...that...that you were the one. And you still are. You still are, Sage."

**Sage (with an unsure look on her face):** "Why are you here in this alley right now?"

**Gabriel:** "Because I wanted to see if what happened yesterday was really...well...real. And clearly, I'm not bat shit crazy although the jury is still out. And if you'll take a walk with me, I can show you the other reason."

Sage nods. Gabriel extends his hand to hold hers. She grabs his hand, and the two walk through the remainder of the alley. They hang a right onto the main street and walk up just a few feet before Gabriel stops.

**Sage:** "What?"

**Gabriel:** "We're here," he says as he lets go of her hand and opens up the door to the flower shop.

Sage looks at Gabriel, smiles, and walks through the door.

**Gabriel:** "I'm going to get you the flowers I was planning to get yesterday."

**Sage:** "I'll tell you what. Meet me back here in front of the store in 10 minutes...even less, 5 minutes."

**Gabriel:** "What do you mean?"

**Sage:** "I need to run across the street for a minute," she says.

**Gabriel:** "Ok," he says, confused. "Is everything ok? Are we cool?"

**Sage:** "Almost. I'll be right back."

As she walks out the door, Gabriel looks worried but then proceeds to get her a bouquet of sunflowers. He pulls the note

**Sage:** "Sorry babe, I didn't realize I was squeezing."

Sage looks away from Gabriel over toward the alley on the other side of the street.

**Sage:** "Trauma."

**Gabriel:** "Huh?"

**Sage:** "I think you might be experiencing trauma from what happened yesterday."

**Gabriel:** "Well, my face is for sure."

**Sage:** "It looks like it!"

**Gabriel:** "Maybe you're right. I just keep thinking about it."

**Sage:** "Well, don't beat yourself up over it."

Sage cracks a smile and tries to hold back laughter.

**Gabriel:** "Oh, I see what you did there. Now you're a comedian with jokes, huh?"

Gabriel laughs, puts his arm around Sage's shoulders, and pulls her close to him. The two embrace for a moment.

**Sage:** "I'm getting wet."

**Gabriel:** “From a hug?”

**Sage:** “Stupid! No, the rain.”

**Gabriel:** “It’s sprinkling.”

**Sage:** “Fair point. They’re only going to wash my hair anyway today before they cut it.”

Gabriel puts his fingers in his ears and starts walking down the street.

**Gabriel:** “La lalalalalal lalallaa, I’m not hearing this.”

Sage runs up alongside him. The two quickly walk a couple more blocks to Sage’s car. It’s still sprinkling.

**Gabriel:** “Okay, I’ll call you a little later.”

**Sage:** “Do you want a ride home so you don’t get soaked?”

**Gabriel:** “Nah, I haven’t even showered yet today. The water will do some good.”

Gabriel says goodbye. While Sage is in the car, he points to the bag he’s holding and gives her a thumbs up. Sage beeps and pulls away.

## CHAPTER 3

# Birds of a Feather

Lightning flashes, and a crack of thunder follows as rain pounds down on Seattle. Gabriel waits at a red light. His trumpet case is in the passenger seat. Preoccupied by his thoughts, he realizes it's too quiet in the car and turns on the radio. Almost immediately, it scrambles.

**Radio:** “Arshangowww...yow are lade. Plasse come immedioly”

**Gabriel:** “Oh fucking calm down, I’m almost there.” He says out loud, then questions himself. “Why am I talking like he can hear me?”

In a few moments, he approaches the street and turns. The rain stops. Gabriel becomes confused as he looks at the buildings

through the raindrop-beaded car window. He turns off the car, grabs his trumpet case, pops the trunk, and places his trumpet inside. As he crosses the street, he stares at the buildings more intently.

**Gabriel:** “Okay, all these buildings look the same in daylight.”

He approaches one of the buildings, looks around to make sure no one is watching, and walks quickly into the wall, smacking his face into the bricks as he’s stopped in his tracks.

**Gabriel:** “Fuck,” he says out loud. From above him, he hears a voice.

**Woman (from a window):** “You might try the front door. That’s what they’re made for.”

Gabriel looks up.

**Gabriel:** “Yeah, yeah, I’m still getting used to these contact lenses,” he shouts back as he continues down the road. He notices there are no numbers on the buildings. Some are vacant, some are barely still in use. He begins to think there’s a way he could “sense” which building it might be.

As he looks up, the sun is barely poking through the clouds, but a peculiar beam of light is subtly illuminating the front of a building four doors down.

**Gabriel:** “Well, I’ll take that as a sign.”

As he nears the building, he looks around again, checking for anybody watching. He pauses before walking through the wall, poking his finger through the bricks. His hand disappears through the brick, and he continues on through.

**Gabriel:** “What the fuuu..,” he says out loud but catches himself before cussing.

Inside, he notices a much different ambiance and decor from the night before. It's darker, lit by candles, and adorned with what look like white sheets. Seven golden circle outlines appear to glow in the candlelight.

**Gabriel:** "What is all this?" he quietly mutters.

**Archie:** "Welcome."

**Gabriel (startled):** "HOLY shit, where did you come from?"

**Archie:** "Cleaning up that mouth I see."

**Gabriel:** "Given the circumstances, it's fair to be a little on edge."

**Archie:** "Nothing to be nervous about."

**Gabriel:** "Right, right, I'm just at a clan meeting for angels or something...normal day."

**Archie (smiling):** "It'll all start to come together soon enough."

**Gabriel:** "Yeah...so about that, well...this," he motions with his arms indicating the space around him, "I don't know if I want to go through with this whole angel thing."

**Archie:** "Tell me more."

**Gabriel:** "I just don't know if I want to fight evil. I mean, I don't want there to be evil. I'm just saying I don't know if I want to be the one fighting it. I'm honestly just a normal guy, normal life... until now anyway."

**Archie:** "Understandable. Perhaps, you can keep an open mind a little longer? The world is in a very precarious position right now, with a scale that can tip in either direction on the side of good or evil."

**Gabriel:** “Okay, so what happens exactly if the world turns evil?”

**Archie:** “You’ll feel it. The world will feel it. You’ll notice an uptick in crime, people losing their tempers more quickly, more often. Troubled teens become more troubled. Families fall apart more easily. Morals and values crumble. Behind the scenes, demons and dark ones orchestrate this slow world degradation. They intercept any opportunity for good to break through. Life is dismal, unfulfilling. This is a gradual decline, done purposely to acclimate people to this way of life. It drains them of hope, motivation, encouragement. It becomes their mantra of sorts. When it’s fully integrated, the chance of reversing it is...is...well, there isn’t. The economy suffers, quality of life is poor, and once that’s all that exists in every crack and corner of the world, it becomes a planet of doom and gloom.”

**Gabriel:** “Fork! So why can’t good just win out?”

**Archie (laughs):** “Are you familiar with the saying ‘a few bad apples ruin the bunch?’”

**Gabriel:** “Of course.”

**Archie:** “Good people don’t wake up each day and think, ‘How can I be good today?’ They expect others will and that life will be okay. Evil wakes up each day with a burning question. It wants to be in control. And it won’t stop. It will, however, fail and even be tamed if it is met with resistance from good.”

**Gabriel:** “Why?”

**Archie:** “Because good always wins. It may be a bumpy road getting there, but it wins.”

**Gabriel:** “Okay, so then there’s nothing to worry about.”



**Archie:** “In the past, no. No one has ever turned down the Archo call.”

**Gabriel:** “So I’m stuck between a rock and a hard place...damned if I do and damned if I don’t.”

**Archie:** “Only damned if you don’t, but with no guarantee you’ll succeed either.”

**Gabriel:** “I don’t understand.”

**Archie:** “Because you’re not meant to know the how and why behind everything. You’re meant to do great things, and if and when you can’t, another Archo, another Gabriel steps in.”

**Gabriel:** “So why can’t the next Gabriel step in now?”

**Archie:** “Because he’s not ready. Succession planning is a very careful process.”

**Gabriel:** “But you said it yourself, the descendant decisions have all been made.”

**Archie:** “Yes, but going out of order is not part of the plan. The rhyme and reason behind it all are exact.”

**Gabriel:** “So...I just give up my life to make sure the world stays intact?”

**Archie:** “I understand your concern. Don’t think of it so much on a global level. You are ‘part of,’ not the ‘whole.’ Perform from the stage you’re at.”

**Gabriel:** “Well, the stage I like to be on sends music out into the world...so I give all that up to do this? No way, man.”

**Archie:** “You don’t need to give that up. In fact, that’s part of your power and what makes you unique. You’re the messenger. Your trumpet is part of your voice, your message.”

**Archie:** “Well, I don’t know yet. We’re about to find out if you move forward in this process. What do you say?”

**Gabriel:** “But what if I can’t be good all the time...I’m human... or at least half...I don’t know. I’m not saying I’m going to rob banks or kill people or anything like that, but I make mistakes.”

**Archie:** “No one is expecting perfection. And does it really matter what people think? Most aren’t going to know about this ‘other’ life and remember, your journey is your journey. Whatever is in the path is meant to be there.”

**Archie:** “Some, but not all people on this planet aren’t intentionally evil. They’re susceptible to it—like a cold or flu. They become hypnotized without even knowing. And those who do know it struggle. It’s a tightrope walk with no guarantees.”

**Gabriel:** “But what can I do to stop it? I’m not a fighter.”

**Archie:** “You’re the messenger, whose duty it is to relay the divine message to the world.”

**Gabriel:** “But why—why can’t someone else do it?”

**Archie:** “Why is Britney Spears who she is? Why were the Beatles who they were? They just are. Their voices resonated. You have what’s called the uncommon heart—almost impossible to find in this day and age. You must remind people that it’s the heart to emulate, not desecrate.”

**Gabriel:** “So, what—do I just go out there with wings and fight enemies all day? And get my ass kicked like the other day?”

**Archie:** (Looking down at the trumpet case Gabriel brought with him) “Your trumpet has divine power, well, it will anyhow. With that trumpet, you have three powers. Sonic blast—a powerful rush of sound capable at times of moving buildings, and if the resonance is right, to take out the enemies. It has the power of Herald—a cry for help that will send an instant message to available warrior angels to help you stand up against the enemy. And finally, Hark, which is the ability to momentarily go back in time to pivotal moments to help you see what you’ve missed and gain clues to succeed.”

**Gabriel:** “So it sounds like you don’t need me—the trumpet can do it all.”

**Archie:** “The trumpet needs a commander, someone of Archangel status. And when using any of these elements, remember it drains the collective. Going back in time is tricky. A sonic blast with a wrong note could blow everything out of proportion, and when you Herald for angels, they are taken away from their other affairs. It’s not about how to use it so much as when to use it. You will also have divine power. For example, last night when you used your wings after I explicitly said not to.”

**Gabriel:** “Well, what was I supposed to do? A woman was in trouble.”

**Archie:** “But you’re here to tackle the root cause of the problem. You can’t focus attention on carjackings or purse snatchers. You’d be fighting that all day. Your fight is against evil itself. You’ve discovered that your wings send a powerful force of air rushing in any direction. Along the way, you will discover other divine powers, some active, some inactive.”

**Gabriel:** “So is there like a YouTube tutorial to help me figure all this out?”

**Archie:** “You’re funny. Every Archangel before you and any Archangel after you all had or will have different powers and abilities. Think of it like an iOS update. These powers and abilities were created for you and only you. It’s part of the divine strategic plan to continue having a leg up on the enemy. Your powers and what you do are tied to your heart, your gut, and your mind. Those are the three places decisions are made, and the best decisions are made when all three are in unison.”

**Gabriel:** “So what about Sage? I can’t just sneak off and start fighting demons and return like nothing happened. And what about my full-time job? I’ll take a wild guess that evil doesn’t care when it’s menacing.”

**Archie:** “You’re right, evil does not care. And evil’s army plays dirty—laundering money, creating loopholes, avoiding taxes. They don’t all need to work. You will have to do your best to juggle time and responsibilities. The divine is on your side. You won’t be given anything you can’t handle. However, you must not become complacent. Evil’s darkness is a machine in and of itself—sinisterly innovative.”

**Gabriel:** “So, I can’t tell anyone I’m an angel fighting demons and bullshit and trying to save the world, but my ass is always on the line at work or in my personal life when duty calls.”

**Archie:** “I can’t answer that question. Remember, it’s not just about physically fighting evil. It’s about the message you’re trusted with sending to the world. What message would you want to hear? What sort of words resonate with you? What images come to mind when it comes to the kind of world you want to live in? Those are the same things the divine wants too. You’ve been selected to help make sure those thoughts, images, and so forth stick in the hearts of the people of this world.”

**Gabriel:** “So I guess I’m Ravenclaw.”

**Archie:** “A what?”

**Gabriel:** (Laughing slightly) “I was just thinking out loud. It’s from Harry Potter. Ravenclaw was the house of air.”

**Archie:** “Well, then you’re also Gryffindor and Slytherin.”

**Gabriel:** “Oh, so you do know Harry Potter?”

**Archie:** “It took me a second, but yes, I’m aware of Harry Potter.”

**Gabriel:** “So how am I three houses?”

**Archie:** “I’ll let you figure that out. Fighting evil isn’t just throwing punches or sonic blasts. Strategy and intelligence are your allies. Now, if you are ready, we must commence with Ordo Septum Alarum.”

**Gabriel:** “The wha—wha—what?”

**Archie:** “Order of the Seven Wings, a quick gathering of the Seraphim hierarchy of angels to perform Jus Pennarum.”

**Gabriel:** “Oh right, Juice Panera or whatever you just said.”

**Archie:** “Jus Pennarum, which means ‘The Right of Feathers.’ Essentially, the approval process.”

**Gabriel:** “But I thought I was picked centuries ago.”

**Archie:** “Correct. But we like a little pomp and circumstance. This is a big deal. Respect what you’re about to see, feel, and join. Please step onto your circle.”

**Gabriel:** “Which one is mine?”

**Archie:** “I’ll let you discover that answer. You need to start stepping into your power.”

**Gabriel** heads over to the circles, bows his head, and forcefully tries to connect to find the answer.

**Archie:** “What are you doing?”

**Gabriel:** “I don’t know, trying to figure out which circle I’m supposed to stand on.”

**Gabriel** notices inscriptions with each name of the seven angels.

**Gabriel:** “Oh, well forgive me, it’s not like I’ve been decoding scrambled radio messages all weekend or anything.”

**Archie**, unphased by Gabriel’s sense of humor, continues with Ordo Septum Alarum. When the angels appear, it is for induction purposes only. These are the original, not descendants. Why they are able to materialize for this induction, I do not know. I’m just the facilitator. When they appear, you will all, in unison, open your wings...and then wait for it.”

**Gabriel:** “Wait for what?”

**Archie** smiles and starts the calls to the Seven Wings to Order.

**Archie:** “Angels of the Seraphim, please join our circles one by one.”

Bright white light from the base of each circle appears. Around the perimeter of all the circles forms a circular gold swirl. Feathers start falling, floating slowly down into the space in and around the six other circles.

**Archie:** “Jophiel, please take your place, then Raphael, please fill your space. Uriel and Sandalphon, to your circles where you’ll stand upon.”

Angels Jophiel, Raphael, and Sandalphon each appear in a circle, dressed in bright white and each holding a feather.

**Archie:** “Metatron, we summon thee, to the circles and this hierarchy. Michael, Chief, we call you near, for the Right of Feathers, to bless and to guide.”

Metatron and Michael both appear, holding feathers.

**Gabriel**, trembling and in awe of what he’s witnessing, looks over at Archie.

**Archie** nods his head.

**Angels in unison:** “Apertis Alis”

A loud flap sound echoes throughout the room as each of the seven angels’ wings unfold in cadence.

**Archie:** “Angels of the Seraphim, I present to you a next of kin.”

**Michael:** “Mercy”

**Jophiel:** “Wisdom”

**Raphael:** “Revival”

**Sandalphon:** “Empathy”

**Uriel:** “Inspiration”

**Metatron:** “Compassion”

**Michael:** “Those five words are at our core— what we throw and bestow to the world in many forms. Like each of us, you, Gabriel, also have a word that embodies what you represent to the world. But we cannot give it to you. Only the Archangel from whom you’ve descended can share that knowledge. By the order of the seventh wing, we hereby induct you. Do you accept the right of the feather, Gabriel?”

**Gabriel:** “Uh, um...I do.”

The six angels, each holding a feather, place it in front of their mouths.

**Metatron:** “Angels of the Seraphim, extend your feathers unto him.”

The angels blow on their feathers, except Michael.

**Michael** (hands Gabriel the golden feather): “Our blessing granted, we

**Sage:** “The night that he got shot, I would be a mess.”

**Gabriel:** “Oh.”

**Sage:** “Babe, you’re so serious right now,” she says playfully as she pokes him in the side. “Don’t worry, I absolutely love regular guys — especially the one in front of me who’s just a regular Publicist with no special powers.”

**Gabriel:** “No special powers, huh?”

**Sage** (giggles): “Well, you do know how to use your...”

**Gabriel:** “My.....”

**Sage:** “Don’t make me say it.”

**Gabriel** (all playful): “But I don’t know what you mean, my what?”

**Sage:** “Your horniness.”

**Gabriel:** “You are on fire tonight with the comebacks.”

**Sage:** “You’re rubbing off on me.”



Gabriel picks up his phone to look at the time.

**Gabriel:** “Damn, it’s 9:30 already!”

**Sage:** “Ohhhhhh, why do the weekends have to go by so quickly.”

**Gabriel:** “Right!”

**Sage:** “So how are you going to explain what happened to your boss?”

**Gabriel:** “Explain what?”

Sage points to her face.

**Gabriel:** “Oh yeah, I haven’t thought much about that.”

**Sage:** “Well, it looks 10 times better than it did yesterday. In fact, it’s healing pretty damn quickly. What’s your secret?”

**Gabriel:** “It’s that superhero blood in me. I’m healing, man,” he says in a deep voice.

**Sage** (laughs): “Bar fight would’ve been perfect, but that sounds tacky in your 30’s.”

**Gabriel:** “Well, birthday girl, you can’t use that excuse anymore, but I’ve still got another bar fight in me.”

**Sage:** “Touché. You’ll be here soon enough.”

**Gabriel:** “So, you said yesterday morning you believed what I told you happened. Do you still believe me?”

**Sage:** “I just... well... yes, but. Well, look, I just know this. I love you and I don’t want to be without you. So whatever went down, can you just steer clear of back alleys in the future?”

**Gabriel:** “Well, I could, but then you may not get anymore of those,” he says as he points to the sunflowers in a vase near the window.

**Sage:** “No fair. I do love those. Ok, take all the back alleys you want.”

**Gabriel:** “You’re the best,” he says as he pulls her in for a hug. “Ok, I’ve got briefs out the wazoo I’ve gotta read before work tomorrow.”

**Sage:** “Yeah, I’ve got two more files to review myself.”

Gabriel stands up and starts to get dressed.

**Gabriel:** “What are you doing Tuesday?”

**Sage:** “Getting my hair cut.”

Gabriel starts laughing.

**Gabriel:** “I seriously love you.”

Sage smiles, gets up, and puts on a bathrobe. Gabriel hugs her.

**Gabriel:** “In fact, I think you should keep your hair exactly the way it is because I love it.”

**Sage:** “Yet, earlier today you didn’t want me to cut it.”

The two head toward the front door.

**Gabriel:** “Well, I think you’ve proven that you are fully capable of making great decisions about your hair and you’ve earned my trust.”

**Sage:** “I’m so relieved! Now I can go bald.”

**Gabriel:** “Hey, now, I can revoke my trust.”

Sage laughs.

**Sage:** “Be safe, babe. I love you.”

**Gabriel:** “I love you too.”

Gabriel kisses her forehead and leaves the apartment.

## Chapter 4

# Rolling Stoned

Gabriel pulls into a parking space at work. As he turns the car off and grabs his suit jacket, he notices another car pulling into the space next to him.

**Gabriel:** “Shit, so much for flying in under the radar,” he says in a soft voice.

As Maddie pulls in and parks, she looks over at Gabriel and her jaw drops. She mouths the words, “Oh my God.” Gabriel smiles and proceeds to get out of the car. Maddie flings open her car door.

**Maddie:** “What the hell happened to you?”

**Gabriel:** “Turns out it was my turn to get jumped. Two thugs.”

**Maddie:** “What? Where? How? Why?”

**Gabriel:** “Whoa, that’s a lot of questions all at once. I was cutting through the alley near my apartment, and two men, uh, well, came out of nowhere and next thing I knew, I was on the ground.”

**Maddie:** “Are you okay?”

**Gabriel:** “I’m fine. My face has seen better days. But the pain has died a lot compared to Saturday.”

**Maddie:** “Wow, that sucks. Um — on another note, the owners are popping in today.”

**Gabriel:** “You mean like TODAY today?”

**Maddie:** “Yup, found out last night.”

**Gabriel:** “You’re burying the lead. Why are they here today?”

**Maddie:** “They didn’t really say. But you know them...hard to read anyway. I tried to push for more details, but they weren’t getting the hint.”

**Gabriel:** “Awesome, so what time will they be ‘popping in’?”

**Gabriel:** “Awesome, so what time will they be ‘popping in’?”

**Maddie** (shrugs): “Your guess is as good as mine.”

**Gabriel:** “You know, you would make a great news reporter.”

**Maddie:** “Funny guy. They’re like Fort Knox; you can’t get anything out of them. By the way, are you planning to serenade them?”

**Gabriel:** “Huh?”

Maddie points down to his trumpet case.

**Gabriel:** “Oh my God, I grabbed my trumpet instead of my bag out of the car. I have an audition for first chair tonight.”

**Maddie:** “And you’re going to play with a fat lip?”

**Gabriel:** “I’m going to suffer through it. It’s a big opportunity.”

**Maddie:** “And how about those briefs?”

**Gabriel:** “Briefs? What do you mean?”

Maddie gets a look on her face like she’s annoyed and about to yell at him...

**Gabriel:** “Eh, eh, eh... just playing. Yes, I read the briefs.”

**Maddie:** “Always a jokester. Alright, I gotta get in there for a meeting on the Kelvo Games account. I need to meet with you right after lunch for 15 minutes.”

**Gabriel:** “Okay, for sure. About what? Do I need to prep at all?”

**Maddie:** “Nope, just plan on 1:15 to 1:30.”

Maddie turns around and starts walking to the door.

**Gabriel** (quietly): “Um, okay.”

Gabriel heads back to the car and swaps out his trumpet for his messenger bag. He then pulls out his phone and texts Sage.

Loudspeaker: “Order 382, your food is ready, order 382.”

Gabriel makes his way up to the counter.

**Gabriel:** “How long would it take to throw in a Strawberry Sunset Smoothie onto the order?”

**Clerk** (smiles): “About 5 seconds. I literally just made one for another order, but they changed their mind on it.”

**Gabriel:** “That works for me.”

The clerk puts Gabriel’s food in the bag, grabs the smoothie, and returns to the register. Gabriel looks at his phone. It’s 12:26 p.m.

**Clerk:** “Okay, that’s \$17.26 total.”

Gabriel hands the clerk his debit card.

**Gabriel:** “Actually, can I pay for whoever is next?”

**Clerk:** “Huh?”

**Gabriel:** “Random Act of Kindness. I want to pay it forward.”

**Clerk** (looking at the register): “Your new total is \$447.62.”

**Gabriel:** “Of course it is. How about the order after that?”

**Clerk:** “With your bill, that would bring your total to \$42.10.”

**Gabriel:** “Great, do that one.”

Gabriel pays for the food and leaves the restaurant. On his way back to the office, he turns on the radio, reluctantly. Nothing out of the ordinary comes through for the remainder of the drive. As he walks through the door back into the office, all is calm.

**Gabriel** (to himself): “Okay, so today is a normal day... I’ll take it.”

He walks over to Maddie’s office. She’s on the phone.

**Maddie:** “The placement today at 4 p.m. on King5 is still a go. Radio tomorrow and I’m confident we can find some more media support for Wednesday. You’re in great shape.”

Gabriel walks quietly into her office and places the smoothie on her desk.

**Maddie** (covering the phone): “Awesome, thank you. I’ll be off in a few.”

Gabriel returns to his desk, skims over his email, and then starts working on a campaign for a client.

**Gretchen:** “Hey Gabriel.”

**Gabriel** (startled, turns around): “You scared me.”

**Gretchen** (gasps): “What happened to your face?”

**Gabriel:** “Got mugged.”

**Gretchen:** “Damn. That sucks. What should I do about the Kelly Account?”

**Gabriel:** “As in?”

**Gretchen:** “Well, they keep asking for stuff that isn’t in the contract, and we’re always over our hours.”

**Gabriel:** “Have you tried telling them that?”

**Gretchen:** “Well, not in so many words. I just don’t want to make them upset.”

**Gabriel:** “They’re not stupid. They know they’re asking you for things that aren’t in the contract. It happens all the time. Tell them you’re happy to revisit the contract and add in what they want, but



you'll present them with a new invoice to make sure they're in agreement."

**Gretchen:** "Okay, and then?"

**Gabriel:** "Then nothing. They'll know that you know they're asking for extra stuff, and they'll either stop asking or pay the additional cost."

Maddie, who had been standing in the distance listening, walks closer.

**Gretchen:** "Will that work?"

**Maddie:** "Of course it will. It's the same advice I gave him when he was in your position, and it's the same advice I got when I was in your position. Can't let people take advantage of you."

**Gabriel:** "If you have any trouble, let me know and I'll give them a call. They're a good client, but they've had some management changes over there recently and they're all about profit margin."

**Gretchen:** "Got it. Thank you. I'll let you know if I need you."

Gabriel heads over to Maddie's office, walks in, and sits down.

**Maddie:** "Thank you for the smoothie; that was kind of you."

**Gabriel:** "For sure. So what's up?"

**Maddie:** "I'll get right to the point. What happened on Friday was not cool. You seem very scattered lately. It's been going on for a little while. Is there something at work that's caused this?"

**Gabriel:** "No ma'am."

**Maddie:** "How do you think you've been performing the past couple of weeks?"

**Gabriel:** “Well, I suppose the answer to that is very subjective. Have I been at 100% every day? No. Have I been absolutely horrible? Not even close.”

**Maddie:** “I would score you a 75%. Sure, that’s passing, but you’re more capable than that.”

**Gabriel:** “Well, of course. But I would add that when we’re down two coordinators and not hiring right now, that adds extra meat to the plate.”

**Maddie:** “I don’t disagree. And, no, that isn’t always fair. But when I asked you to become a manager, and you agreed, you mentioned you would have no problem jumping in wherever needed.”

**Gabriel:** “I did. And I’m always happy to jump in. But that was before we were down two employees, added 6 new accounts, two of them top-tier, and before Paul and Camilla made us aware they’re planning to sell the firm.”

**Maddie:** “So, you did read the briefs.”

**Gabriel:** “I did. It’s just a lot of work and circumstances we can’t control. And I’m only half-human.”

**Maddie:** “Half-human?”

**Gabriel:** “What?”

**Maddie:** “You said you’re only half-human. I’m not sure what you meant by that.”

**Gabriel:** “I meant human. I’m only half-human.”

Maddie shakes her head, looking confused.

**Maddie:** “Gabriel, I’m lost. What are you getting at?”

**Gabriel:** “That I’m part human and part not human, but mostly human, though I can’t confirm how much on either side. It’s a crapshoot, really.”

Gabriel gets a confused look on his face.

**Gabriel:** “What am I saying right now?”

**Maddie:** “I was hoping you had that answer because I don’t know what’s going on here.”

Maddie crosses her arms, more than hinting she’s not amused.

**Gabriel:** “So I’m sorry. What if I give my answers in the form of a question like they do on Jeopardy?”

**Maddie:** “What? Gabriel, I think this meeting is over.”

**Gabriel:** “Oh come on, I haven’t even gotten a daily double yet.”

**Maddie:** “Gabriel, I’m suspending you until further notice. Before you can come back to work, I will need you to do a drug screen because your behavior today is peculiar and worrisome.”

**Gabriel:** “What am I saying? I would never say that.”

**Maddie:** “Say what? What I just said?”

**Gabriel:** “You have to put it in the form of a question. Uh oh, breaking news.”

Gabriel points to the TV screen. Maddie turns her head.

**Maddie:** “Oh, no no no

**Gabriel:** “Can you turn your radio on?”

**Maddie:** “What? Why?”

**Gabriel:** “I, uh, I just want to see what news radio is saying about this.”

**Mdie:** “Why?”

**Gabriel:** “You know, always good to have a second source.”

**Maddie:** “Did you not see the news chopper above Columbia Center? I think it’s confirmed. Where are you going?”

**Gabriel:** “To my desk for a minute.”

As Gabriel heads toward his desk, he sees a demon he’s never seen before shimmering out of the office.

**Gabriel:** “I fucking knew it.”

He quickly turns on the radio, which immediately starts to scramble.

**Archie:** “Gabriel, get downtown now. Demonic forces at Columbia Center.”

**Maddie:** “What are you doing?”

**Gabriel:** “Checking radio reports.”

Gabriel grabs his jacket and messenger bag.

**Maddie:** “Gabriel, where are you going?” she says, panicked and loudly.

**Gabriel:** “I’ve gotta... I just gotta go. I’ll explain later.”

Gabriel starts to head for the door.

**Maddie:** “So that’s it? You’re just gonna go?”

Gabriel turns around quickly and throws his arms up in the air.

**Gabriel:** “I’m suspended,” he says as he turns around and walks out the door.

Gabriel jogs to his car, pressing his key fob.

**Gabriel:** “Where the hell am I going to park this?” he says to himself. He peels out of the parking lot to make it look like he’s leaving but turns down a road that runs behind the PR firm. He parks, gets out, grabs his trumpet, and looks around quickly.

**Gabriel:** “Apertis Alis,” Gabriel says sternly. A white and gold

swirl of light engulfs him then dissipates to reveal his wings.

Gabriel immediately flies straight up into the sky before leveling out and flying at a speed of about 120 mph.

**Gabriel:** “This is crazy,” he says out loud as he focuses on getting downtown.

Below him, he’s scanning, looking for any signs of trouble.

Suddenly something bumps into him, sending him into a spin and knocking his trumpet out of his hand.

**Gabriel:** “Da fuck?” he says as he stabilizes and swoops downward quickly to grab his trumpet. He looks up and notices two winged demons flying toward him. He pulls his trumpet up to his lips and sends a quick blast between the two demons. They split up to avoid getting hit.

As one of the demons loops around, it spews a reddish-green liquid toward Gabriel. He flies backward and dips under as the liquid passes over him. The two demons fly toward Gabriel.

**Gabriel:** “Shit,” he says as he quickly points his finger at them. “Behind you.”

The two demons both turn around to look in mid-air. Gabriel plays a D# and blasts the demon with a sonic boom. The demon explodes.

**Gabriel:** “Well, that was too easy. Idiot.”

The other demon becomes livid and starts shooting the toxic liquid in a machine gun fashion at Gabriel.

**Gabriel:** “Oh, hell no,” says Gabriel as he starts spinning, quickly into warp speed creating a tornado effect. As the toxic liquid comes closer to him, the tornado-like wind sends it flying back at the demon. As the demon tries to repel its own toxic, Gabriel comes to a stop and blows an F note. This time the sonic boom has red swirls in it. It cuts through the demon, slicing him vertically into dozens of equally sized pieces before he explodes.

**Gabriel:** “So the F note stands for fuck you. Noted,” he says as he turns back around and starts speeding toward downtown.

In the distance, he can see emergency vehicle lights around Columbia Center Building. As Gabriel nears the building, he pulls his trumpet up to his mouth and starts playing “Reveille,” as is done in the morning in the military to muster the troops out of bed. The first responders look up at the sky. As they make eye contact with him, Gabriel motions for them to back away from the building. The first responders quickly get into their vehicles and back away from the building.

**Gabriel:** “Let’s hope this works.”

He pulls the trumpet to his mouth, playing a G. He plays the note for 10 seconds as he watches the sonic blast form in front of his trumpet. Shifting his fingers, he takes the G to the next octave. When he gets enough blast power, he raises the G octave, sending the blast at the Columbia Center Building. As the blast hits the Columbia Center building, it slowly slides back into place. In the final inches of the slide, Gabriel notices a person stumbling on a balcony as the building slides. The movement causes the person to go over the side of the balcony.

**Gabriel:** “Oh fuck, man, I’m so sorry.”

The man is hanging onto the metal balcony railing with just one hand. Gabriel points his arm toward the building and in a fast streak of moving light, Gabriel is at the building. He grabs the man, lifting him back over the railing and safely onto the balcony.

**Gabriel:** “You okay, man?”

**Man:** “My heart is racing, but I think so. Who are you?” the man says as he looks Gabriel in the eyes, semi-frightened.

**Gabriel:** “Your guardian angel... I think?” Gabriel winks at the guy and says, “Be safe,” as he flies from the balcony into the air and identifies a safe spot to land. He speeds toward the ground, landing in an alleyway.

As soon as he lands, six plumes of black smoke shoot up from the ground with a demon in each and now surrounding Gabriel.

**Nevro:** “Outnumbered again. You’re not very big on learning from past mistakes, are you?”

The other demons start to laugh. Gabriel, worried, lifts his trumpet. Gamrick's arms start glowing.

**Gamrick:** "Eh, eh, I'm afraid not."

Gabriel lowers the trumpet.

**Gamrick:** "You ready, demons?"

The demons, still circled around Gabriel, begin to attack him.

Gabriel screams. It's hollow but muffled.

**Gabriel:** "Da fuck? What's happening?" he says as he can feel the demons hitting him but feels no pain.

**Demon:** "I can't break through this stone."

**Gamrick:** "Keep hitting him, he'll crack eventually."

**Gabriel:** "Crack? What?"

He then realizes he's turned to stone, like a statue.

**Gabriel:** "Well this is new."

Not knowing how long it will last, he forms a plan. As the demons continue hitting him with their weapons, he starts glowing purple.

**Nevro:** "Back up!"

As the demons back up, the stone around Gabriel vanishes and he shoots straight up into the air, escaping.

**Demon:** "Follow him."

**Nevro:** "Don't bother. It's a marathon, not a race. Let's keep him on his toes a little while longer and get him when he least expects it."

Lightning flashes, followed by a crack of thunder, as the rain comes down in Seattle. Gabriel is stopped at a red light. His trumpet case is in the passenger seat. Preoccupied by thoughts, he realizes it's quiet in the car and switches on the radio. Almost immediately, it scrambles.

**Radio:** "Arshangowww...yow are lade. Plasse come immedioly."

**Gabriel:** "Oh fucking calm down, I'm almost there," he says out loud. "Why am I talking like he can hear me?"

In a few moments, he approaches the street and turns. The rain stops. Gabriel looks confused as he looks at the buildings. He turns off the car, grabs his trumpet case, and crosses the street.

**Gabriel:** “Okay, all these buildings look the same in daylight,” he says to himself.

He approaches the building, looks around, and walks quickly into the wall. His face hits the bricks as he’s stopped in his tracks.

**Gabriel:** “Dah fuck,” he says out loud.

From above him, he hears a voice.

**Woman:** “You might also try the front door. That’s what they were made for,” says a woman staring out her window.

Gabriel looks up.

**Gabriel:** “Yeah, yeah, I’m still getting used to these contact lenses,” he says.

He continues down the street noticing there are no numbers on the buildings. Some are vacant, some are still in use. He thinks to himself, “There must be a way I can sense the building or something.” As he looks up, the sun is barely poking through the clouds but a peculiar beam of light is subtly illuminating the front of a building four doors down.

**Gabriel:** “Well, I’ll take that as a sign,” he says as he heads down to the building and looks around trying not to get noticed.

As he heads for the wall, he pauses just before stepping through. He holds out his arm to discover it penetrates the brick. He walks the full way through. Inside, he notices a much different ambiance and decor from the night before. It’s darker, candles are lit, and the room



## Chapter 5

### Shake

The tires squeal as Gabriel pulls into a space in the parking garage. He quickly puts the car in park while scrambling to unbuckle his seatbelt. He gets out of the car in a rush and heads to the trunk. “Shit,” he says as he runs back to the driver’s side door. He opens it, and grabs the keys from the console. He pops the trunk, grabs his trumpet case, and works his way quickly to the stairwell.

He paces down three flights, exits, and crosses the street. He pulls open the large entry door to the concert hall. Inside, it’s

quiet. Every step he takes echos loudly as his loafers meet the marble floor on each step.

He approaches a door and stops. “Ok, take a deep breath,” he says to himself. “You got this, you know how to do this, just relax.” He turns the handle and slowly opens the door, giving the impression that he’s calm.

Inside he looks around, but no one is in the room. Gabriel looks down at his watch. “5:15 and right on time.”

Oliver: “Mr. Townsend,”

Gabriel is startled as he looks up.

Gabriel: “Oh, hi Oliver. I didn’t see you.”

Oliver: “If you’re not early, you’re late.”

Gabriel: “Sorry, sir. I hit some traffic.”

Oliver: “Head out to the stage, get set up. I’ll be right there.”

Gabriel: “Thank you, sir”

Gabriel walks through another door out onto a stage filled with 86 empty chairs. He walks to the last row of chairs, taking the seat two chairs into the row. He removes his trumpet from his case, and attaches the mouthpiece.

The door creaks open. Oliver enters and walks out onto the stage. He passes by Gabriel’s row and continues to the front of the stage. He walks in very precise almost even footsteps. He’s got a mechanical aura and manner. Everything is timed out and in sync. It’s weird and noticeable presence, but it works on him. He turns around facing Gabriel.

Oliver: “Mr. Townsend, as you are aware, the position of first chair of the trumpet section, like any first chair, is coveted. It comes with responsibility. Whoever sits in that chair must be an example and leader to the trumpet section. He or she must be respected by the orchestra as a whole. If selected, do you agree to exemplify all that comes with this position?”

Gabriel: “Yes, sir, of course.”

Oliver: “Very well then.”

Oliver lifts his baton, and begins waving his hands. Gabriel begins counting beats in his head, making short blasts of sound periodically where the trumpet section would come in. As he continues to play, the score intensifies. He begins to mentally prepare for the high notes.

“Don’t fuck this up, you got this,” he says to himself. He takes a deep breath, forcing more air through the mouth piece, perfectly hitting all the notes. He’s well aware of Oliver’s strict adherence to precision and the flawless performance needed to win his favor.

As he works his fingers on the trumpet buttons, he suddenly notices what appear to be orbs of light slowly entering the back of the theater, behind Oliver. Gabriel’s eyes widen as he continues to play.

“Oh no, no, no, this can’t be happening. What now?,” he says to himself. He keeps playing trying to not startle Oliver or alert him to what’s happening behind him in the theater.

Suddenly, each orb of light starts to take the shape of an angel until seven angels, with wings open, are all hovering in the theater behind Oliver. Gabriel stops playing, and pulls

the trumpet away from his mouth with his mouth wide open and eyes in disbelief.

The angels look at each other, confused, as if they wondering why they're there. Gabriel waves his hand motioning to them to go away.

Oliver: "Mr. Townsend, is there a problem?"

Gabriel: "Uh, no sir. Well, yes, sir, th..there's a bug...a wasp or bee I think flying around here. I'm allergic." He waves his hand again, motioning for the angels to go away but also mimicking swatting the "bee" away. The angels point to themselves as if to say "us?" Gabriel motions of the angels to go away while also disguising it swatting the bee away. Then, Gabriel lifts his leg and stomps his foot on the stage floor.

Oliver: "Is everything ok, Mr. Townsend."

Gabriel: "Yes, sir, I got it. My apologies."

Oliver gives an awkward pause. "Great, I just blew it," Gabriel mumbles.

Oliver: "Top of page," he says as he lifts his baton. Gabriel quickly pulls his trumpet up to his mouth. Gabriel starts in on command, working through the notes of the score in front of him for another two minutes. Oliver motions with his baton and Gabriel blasts the final note holding it for a few moments. He stops precisely on Oliver's wave of the baton.

Gabriel pulls his trumpet away from his mouth. His lips are wet, and sweat is rolling down his face.

Oliver: “Mr. Townsend, please look over page 28 briefly.”  
Gabriel scrambles through the music sheets and looks at page 28.

“What the hell,” he says to himself. He’s not familiar with the music and doesn’t recall seeing it previously.

Oliver: “Are you prepared to play.”

Gabriel: “Yes, sir, of course,” he says half-convincingly.

Oliver stares at Gabriel for a moment. He lifts his baton. Gabriel looks at the music, scanning it quickly and pulls his trumpet up. As Oliver precisely waves his wand, Gabriel runs through the notes impressively, in-time, and with confidence.

This goes on for several minutes with the score becoming increasingly more challenging and intricate. Olive signals the baton for Gabriel to stop. However, Gabriel doesn’t pull his trumpet away from his mouth.

Oliver holds his position while Gabriel feels sweat over his eyelids and white his eyes fixed on Oliver’s baton. Suddenly Oliver moves the baton in three distinct motions. Gabriel hits two of the three notes with precision. He jumps the gun on the third.

Oliver pulls his wand down, indicating the song is over. Gabriel pulls the trumpet away from his mouth. He’s winded, sweating, and worried he’s just blown his audition for first chair.

Oliver: “Mr. Townsend, I’ve heard all I need. The audition has now concluded.”

Gabriel: “Um, ok, sir...thank you for the audition..do I...how did...um”

Oliver: “I believe you’re trying to inquire how your performance went, correct.”

Gabriel: Yes, sir.”

Oliver: “You know the process Mr. Townsend. The person selected will be notified once I’ve reviewed all candidates. You were the final audition and I can now begin work on the scoring.”

Oliver puts his baton on the case and starts walking toward the back of the stage. Gabriel sits trying to catch his breath and wipes sweat off his forehead. As Oliver passes by Gabriel, Gabriel acknowledges him and says thank you. Oliver nods and continues on by. Oliver stops, turns around at a perfect 90 degree and walks back to Gabriel’s row. Gabriel looks up.

Oliver: “That was remarkable — the most impressive I’ve ever hear someone play that last piece, especially with it being thrown in as a surprise. I shouldn’t tell you this, and forgo the rule, but fuck it. Congratulations.”

Gabriel sits speechless as Oliver makes himself proper, walks toward the door and exits the stage.

“FUCK YEAH!,” Gabriel shouts. This was a goal and milestone he’s been eager to achieve for years. He pulls out his cell phone and starts to text Sage the good news. “What the hell am I doing?,” he says as he deletes what he’s typed. He waits a few moments, then gets up and walks to the front of the stage. He opens the voice recording app, presses record and places the phone on the Maestro stand. He returns to his seat and picks up his trumpet. He’s been eager

to experiment and with sound now that he's come into his angelic power.

He pulls out pulls the trumpet to his mouth, presses it tight and lets out a steady but powerful stream of sound. The sound is gradually getting louder. Suddenly he notices a faint red glow around the sound coming from the horn. He's startled by it but remains calm and eager to see where it goes. He's in his element when he's playing the trumpet. He's confident and grateful for his gift.

The red glow strengthens, the sound intensifies. Gabriels feels locked onto the trumpet and he can feel his body tense. He can't pull the trumpet away. The sounds starts to "shake," when the sound creates a shaking pattern. As the red glowing sound reaches the front of the stage, Gabriel starts shaking, as does the theater. It's like a tremor or aftershock from an earthquake.. Two music stands knock over. The chancellor in the theater starts swaying and chairs in some of the rows start move due to the vibration.

Gabriel, wrestles the trumpet away from his mouth. "Whoa," he says as the sound retreats and the shaking stops.

The rear door of the theater swings open an the nighttime janitor runs to mid stage and puts his hands on his head. He's panicked. He turns around notices Gabriel.

Janitor: "Dude, did you feel that?"

Gabriel: "Yeah man, what was that?"

Janitor: "I think ti was earthquake. I was dusting out in the lobby and suddenly I felt this..this...vibration. Then a few things fell off my cleaning cart. Are you ok?"

Gabriel: “Yeah, I was just as startled as you were.”

Janitor: “LOOK,” he says as he points to the chandelier still swaying back and forth slightly.”

Gabriel: “Oh wow.”

Janitor: “I better go check around the building to make sure there’s no damage.”

Gabriel: “I was just on my way out.”

The janitor starts straightening out some of the chairs displaced by the tremor. Gabriel walks to the front of the stage, grabs his phone and stops recording. “Next time i”m video recording,” he thinks to himself.

He walks back to his seat and starts gathering his belongings.

Gabriel: “Ok, man, k’m outta here. Are you going to be ok?”

The janitor is picking up the miscue stands and looks over at Gabriel.

Janitor: “Yes, If you’re leaving, please be careful outside the building in case anything has come loose or fallen.”

Gabriel: “For sure. You too.”

The janitor waives and starts quickly moving about the theater to investigate further.

Gabriel walks toward the back door and leaves the theater. As he passes by the janitor’s cart he picks up two bottles that had fallen off and places them back in the mix of the others.



He makes his way tot the front door. He looks around outside as he leaves to survey the area for any damage. Nothing seems out of place.

He crosses the street and walks into the parking garage. He climbs up the three flights of stairs and pushes open the door. As. he starts to walk a demon shimmers in.

Demon: “Going somewhere?”

Frightened and without thinking, Gabriel swings trumpet case at the demon’s head, knocking him to the ground.

Gabriel runs taking cover behind a nearby car. He opens the case, pulls out the trumpet. As he reaches for the mouthpiece to attach it, he drops it. It rolls underneath the car.

“Fuck..fuck..fuck,” he says. He peeks out from behind the car.

Demon: “You can, but you can’t hide, angel. Best come out, meet your fate and get it over with.”

Gabriel’s trying to quickly form a plan in his head. He lays low and quick moves behind another car, but still out of the demon’s sight.

Gabriel: “Looking for me,” he says as he stands up and looks at the demon.”

The demon smiles and starts to walk over toward the car Gabriel was previously hiding. behind. Gabriel, puzzled for a second of the demon’s move, realizes he’s headed for the trumpet. The demon bends down in front of the trumpet case.

Gabriel: "I wouldn't do that if I were you."  
The demon looks up and laughs.

Demon: "Or what?"

Before Gabriel could speak, tires from a car a couple floors up start squaring. As the demon looks at where the sound is coming from, Gabriel pulls out his phone and launches the voice recording app and presses play.

The demon looks over at Gabriel and starts laughing again.

Demon: "What, are you gonna have Siri take me out?"

Gabriel points the phone toward the demons while pressing the volume button to turn it up.

The car's tires squeal again. As the demon quickly looks to see any sign of the car, the sound starts getting louder. The demon has smug look on his face, but then starts to become paralyzed by the sound. Moments later he starts shaking. His convulsing intensifies before he's blow up and vanquished. His remains vanish as the car rounds the corner in the parking garage and continues to drive down levels toward the exist.

Gabriel runs over to his trumpet case, reaches under the car and grabs his mouthpiece. "I don't know how that worked," he thinks to himself.

As he pulls out of the parking garage, he's on edge - worried about another demon attack. He looks at the clock. "6:36 is still early," he says to himself as he makes a quick left to head toward Archie's place.

His mind is racing with thoughts and he's second-guessing his decision to take on this angelic duty.

“This can't be how the rest of my life is going to unfold — demon attacks after work, or during rehearsal or wherever else they decide to show up. How is this living?”

He turns on the radio, just listening to the music as he tries to drown out some of the noise in his head.

Gabriel pushes his arm through the brick wall and then walks completely through until he's standing inside Archie's place.

Gabriel: "Yo, Archie, my man...where you at?"

Archie: "Up here!"

Archie is floating in a meditative position directly above Gabriel, about 20 feet off the floor.

Gabriel (a bit startled): "What the...what are you doing up there?"

Archie: "Meditating."

Gabriel: "Is it better up there, than down here...you know, on the couch?"

Archie floats back down to the floor.

Archie: "I did start down here. I float up there as I get more deep into the meditation."

Gabriel: "Weird, but cool."

Archie: "You have your trumpet, are you planning to serenade me?"

Gabriel: "No, but the weirdest thing just happened. I was at my audition and.."

Archie: "How did it go?"

Gabriel: "Great. So I was experiment with sou..."

Archie: “Well, did you get it?”

Gabriel: “YES, but that’s not important. I was experiment with sou...”

Archie: “Congratulations.”

Gabriel (sighs): “I’ll wait.”

Archie: “Carry on, I’m just teasing”

Gabriel waits another few seconds and then continues to tell Archie about the sound and shaking from from the trumpet at the concert hall.

Archie: “So you’re telling me it produced a powerful vibration to take out a demon?”

Gabriel: “I mean, I guess. It was wild.”

Archie: “Be proud of that. That means you’re growing ability and discovering new capabilities with your trumpet. It really is a powerful instrument.”

Gabriel: “Ok good, then you don’t need to look at it to make sure it’s working ok?”

Archie: “Did it feel awkward?”

Gabriel; “No just unexpected. And just before that, while I was in my audition, like seven angels appeared out of nowhere. And they all looked confused about why there were in the theater.”

Archies starts to laugh.

Archie: “You’re on fire. It appears you’ve also learned how to “Herald” with your trumpet as well.

Gabriel: “Oh so that’s what that was. Well, that explains their confusion about why they were summoned there. The herald was purely by accident, I don’t know how I did it. “

Archie: “You’re new at this. These kinds of things are bound to happen. The takeaway is that you used it and figured out how to use it.”

Gabriel: “But I don’t.”

Archie: “You do. Think about the emotion or state of mind at the time it happened. What you were preoccupied with or feeling.”

Gabriel: “Deep down I was worried I wasn’t going to succeed at my audition and needed a miracle or something.”

Archie: “And the angels came to aid — a little out of context, but they came to your aid. It must’ve been a powerful thought or emotion.”

Gabriel: “Well, there’s a whole thing about getting to this point but that’s for another day. So, these demon attacks don’t seem normal either. It’s like they know exactly where I’m going to be. I’ve gotten lucky so far, but if this keeps up they’re going to get me. And I don’t want to walk around on edge all the time.”

Archie: “Well, do you think part of it is they want you out quickly so they can turn the world evil?”

Gabriel: “I thought about that, but even when I divert from my plans or not let anyone know where I’m going, they still seem to know.”

Archie: “Well, you’re two for two with your trumpet tonight. Why not see if you can hit the trifecta.”

Gabriel: “What do you mean?”

Archie: “Well, I want you to start getting to the point where you can think through the problems and issues and figure out a way to get what you need.”

Gabriel: “I mean, I thought blasting a demon with the trumpet sound I recorded on my phone was kind of a moment of brilliance.”

Archie: “Indeed. So keep that mindset moving.”

Gabriel flips open the latches on his trumpet case, opens it and pulls out his trumpet. He then attaches the mouthpiece.

Gabriel: “Hark”

Archie: “Well, done.”

Gabriel: “Should I try now?”

Archie: “No, I’d wait until a few more attacks from demons.’

Gabriel; “Hilarious. So any pearls of wisdom?”

Archie: “Hark works two ways. It’s either going to kick in when it wants and when you need to know something when you’re not even looking for it. Or, you can engage Hark yourself and force it, so to speak. There’s no guarantee the forced hark will work. And remember, there’s not a lot of time to waste when you’re traveling back in time. You risk

messing something up in the future so get in, get out. That simple.”

Gabriel: “Got it. Understood.”

He pulls the trumpet up to his mouth and closes his eye standing quietly for a moment. In his his mind he’s focuses on what Archie told him. He begins to play the trumpet, hoping to figure to the magical code that will connect him with the information he needs to know from time past. He keeps playing but nothing is happening.”

Archie: “Think about what you could do with that information. How will you feel once you have it. It’s all about how this will move you forward in the journey. Maybe it’s a feeling of fairness, or justice that will come with the knowing. Maybe it’s to even the playing field.”

Gabriel continues to play softly as Archie guides him through. Suddenly, Gabriel can’t hear Archie anymore. He opens his eyes and realizes he’s standing in the hallway of the floor he lives on in his apartment building.

“Um, ok,” he says out loud. He looks around trying to make sense of why he’s in his hallway. He pulls out his phone and look at the date on the calendar. It says Saturday.

As Gabriel contemplates what to do next, he hears the song “Happy Birthday” being played on what sounds like a trumpet from his apartment. A demon shimmers into the hallway in front of Gabriel’s door. He looks around to see if anyone else is in the hallway and makes eye contact with Gabriel It’s Nevro.

Gabriel is about to make a move but then realizes he’s invisible, or, at least can’t be seen.



“Ok, maybe I’m invisible in the past?”

Nevro then shape shifts, taking on the appearance of Mrs. Barley and knocks on the door.

Gabriel’s eyes widen in a look of disbelief. “You dirty rat,” he says out loud. He listens in as his past self starts talking to Nevro disguised as Mrs. Barely. He then walks slowly toward the door. Although he’s invisible, he’s still guarded. While he’s watching he decides to walk through the door to make sure Sage is ok, despite that past already being the past. He quickly walks through Mrs. Barley and himself.

*Gabriel: “Ok, that was weird. Maybe that was a sign from your husband not to part ways with theses.*

*Mrs. Barely: “Nonsense. He always had a thing for the flare. They belong on a trumpet, not in a wooden box — like I’ll be soon and I can’t take them with me when I go.”  
Let them live on .”*

Gabriel: “The trumpet buttons! That’s Sneaky,” he says to himself.”

As he looks over at Sage listening to the his past self and Mrs. Barley speak, he smiles. It was her birthday. As he looks at her he reminded even more that he needs to tell her he’s an angel. Especially, now that he further knows the capability of these demons.

“Oh, shit,” he says to himself. “I gotta get out of here.” Not really knowing how to get back from the past, he pulls his trumpet up to his mouth, closes his eyes, concentrates and starts playing. ‘

He opens his eyes and realizes he's back at Archie's place. He looks around — eager to tell Archie what he discovered.

Gabriel: “Archie!”

Gabriel looks up to see if he's floating. Archie starts lowering himself back to the floor.

Gabriel: “How many times a day are you meditating?”

Archie: “Well, there is a reason I meditate so much, but that's another story.”

Gabriel puts his trumpet case on the table, opens it and begins taking off the opal finger buttons.

Gabriel: “Get this dude, these finger buttons are tracking me — that's how they know where I am.”

Gabriel makes face as he struggles to remove one of the buttons.

“Damn, this is on tight! Do you have a flathead screwdriver”

Archie walks over to the closet near entry, opens the door and grabs a screwdriver out of his tool belt.

Archie: “But how did they get them on there and how did you not notice?”

He hands the screwdriver to Gabriel.

Gabriel: “Because it turns out, Nevro — who is one of the two demons who jumped me in the alley, can shape shift. He took on the appearance of one of my neighbors who then fed

me a story about how her late husband used to play trumpet. She wanted me to have his buttons.”

Archie: “So they can shape shift now. Remarkable how far they’ve advanced. This is why its so important to grow your angelic skills and ability. Speaking of which, have you considered giving yourself training days?”

Gabriel: “You mean like gym days but for angel stuff?” he says as he continues to pry the last button off.

Archie: “Yes.”

Gabriel (intensely working the button): “I mean, who’s got time for that with all the on the job training I’m getting? DAMN IT this thing is on tight.”

Archie: “Let me take a look.

Gabriel attempts to hand him the screwdriver but Archie denies it and laughs.

Gabriel: “What?”

Archie: “Watch”

Archie puts his hand over the trumpet button, his hand glows in gold briefly before he turns it over revealing the trumpet button in his palm.

Gabriel: “What the heck, how did you do that?”

Archie: “Don’t know. I realized I could do it one day after meditation. I was trying to get the cap off of a soda bottle.”

Gabriel: “I’m gonna have to look it’s this Harry Potter yoga you’re doing.”

Archie: “Well, you’ll need a lot of patience. I’ve been meditating for 20 years and just start floating three years ago. That cap trick just came about two years ago.”

Gabriel: “Maybe you’ve reached guru status?”

Archie: “Perhaps”

Gabriel put his trumpet in the case and closes it. He lift it off the table. He scoops up the buttons in his other hand. He starts to head for the door.

Gabriel: “Ok, I gotta run. Still have one more stop to make before heading him.”

Archie: “Well, it was nice to see you.”

Gabriel stops, turns around and smiles. He then opens his arms and walks toward Archie, embracing him in half hug so he doesn’t hit him with the trumpet case.

Gabriel: “I really appreciate you Archie. I don’t know what I’d do without you and you’re guidance. I promise I’ll get better.”

Archie: ‘You’re right where you’re supposed to be and doing a splendid job.”

Gabriel’s phone starts ringing.

Gabriel: “Ok, that’s Sage, I gotta run.”

He walks through the wall out onto the sidewalk. He puts the trumpet buttons into his front pants pocket and grabs his phone from his rear pocket.

Gabriel: “Hey babe.”

Sage: “Hi. How are you?”

Gabriel: “Just getting out of rehearsal.”

Sage: “On a Tuesday?”

Gabriel: “Yeah, Oliver had some thing he had to do this week on Thursday so it got moved. Hey, listen, can I come over and give you a kiss?”

Sage: “You’re going to come all the way here just to give me a kiss?”

Gabriel: “Well, there’s something else too I want to talk to you about.”

Sage: ‘Ok..should I be worried, or...’

Gabriel: “Not at all. We’re good. There’s just something I need to tell you.”

Sage: “Hmmm...well now I’m curious. So, yes, please come over.”

Gabriel (laughs): “I promise, there’s nothing to worry about. I’ll see you in about 20 minutes or so.”

Sage: “Ok, drive safely.”



## Chapter 6

# One in a Million

As Gabriel remains stopped at a red light, he can see Sage's apartment building off in the distance. And the closer he gets, the bigger the knot in his stomach grows.

By the time he pulls into the parking lot at her apartment building, he's running warm and feels beads of sweat start to accumulate on his forehead.

It's not often he gets this worked up with anxiety, but when he does, it's hard to hide. He's still on high from making first chair, but worried how Sage will accept the news of his new identity.

He grabs onto the rearview and adjusts it so he can get a look at himself before he goes inside. As he moves the mirror into place, his eyes catch his trumpet case. He mind takes him back to his 10 year old self.

*"Can't I just take a peek at it," Gabriel says from the back seat of his parents' car.*

*Abby: "We're almost home, you can take it out of the case when we get there. Trumpets aren't made for playing in cars."*

*Gabriel: "Says who?"*

*Abby Townsend: "Well, how many trumpet players have you seen playing from the backseat of the car?"*

*Aaron Townsend: "Plus, you don't even know how to play it yet," said Gabriels father.*

*Gabriel: "Not true, I played one before.*

*Abby: "Where?"*

*Gabriel: "Summer camp."*

*Aaron (laughing); "You were there for two weeks, I'd hardly call that playing. You have to study the music and practice daily if you want to get good."*

*Gabriel: "I know. But I'm just saying I know how to play the trumpet a little already. Even the camp counselor said I'm gonna be the next Dizzy Gillespie"*

*Abby: "Dizzy what?"*

*Gabriel: "Dizzy Gillespie the trumpet player."*

*Abby: "I'm sure he was just being nice honey. But if you practice hard, you certainly can be like this Dizzy guy."*

*Gabriel gets annoyed and crosses his arms. He heard me playing" said Gabriel. Aat summer camp two years ago.*



in the back seat. His mind immediately flashes back to his first and only year at York Music School — a tough school to get into and one with that taught him about tough luck

Gabriel wipes the beads of sweat from his forehead and puts the mirror back into place. He unbuckles his seatbelt, pulls the door handle and gets out of the car. The knot now feels like the size of bowling ball in his stomach. He's scared to reveal his newfound identity to Sage. It's not a normal circumstance. He has no idea how he's going to tell her. "Guess I'm going to have to wing it." he says smiling at his pun.

He texts Sage letting her know he's there and on his way up to her apartment. Just three floors now sit between him and the hardest conversation of his life,

Inside the lobby, Gabriel makes a bee line for the bathroom. At the sink, he turns on the water, lettering is run a for few moments. Looking in the mirror at himself, he silently reminds himself to speak from the heart and hopes the honesty and transparency work as pocket aces among the cards he's been dealt.

He splashes water up onto his face a few times, then rips the paper town form the dispense or and holds it on his face to suck up the sweat and water.

In an effort to buy a little more time, he takes the stairs instead of the elevator. When he reaches Sage's floor, he passes by a table filled with books and. a sign from one of the tenants reading "Free To Take."

Gabriel shuffles through the stack of books — half curious about what he'll find and half intentionally to delay his arrival to Sage's apartment. He pulls out a book titled "Connecting With Your Angels," and starts thumbing through it. He lands on a page where he reads "...Angels don't have demons and demons don't have Angels." He laughs and puts the book back and continues down the hall to Sage's apartment.

"Come in," Sage says after the knock on her door.

Gabriel: "Hi babe."

Sage is sitting at the breakfast bar doing some work.

Sage: "Hey you."

Gabriel (making small talk); 'What'cha doin'?"

Sage: "Catching up on some work— so many cases lately"

Gabriel walks over to her and leans in to give her a kiss.

Gabriel: "Did our generation ever know a time where taking work home with us at night isn't normal?"

Sage: "No, but let's be the generation that changes that too!"

Sage closes her lap top, turns herself towards Gabriel and looks up at him.

"You've got my undivided attention, what's up?"

Gabriel: "Well, so...ok, remember the other day when I told you how I got jumped in the alley by those two men?"

Sage: "Yeah."

Gabriel: “Well, they’re actually demons....I found out.”

Sage has a puzzled look on her face.

Sage: “I..I..demons? What do you mean?”

Gabriel: “Like actual demons with magical powers who are trying to make Earth this awful place to live. And, they’re...”

Sage: “Wait..are you sure you’re ok? You never went to the hospital to get looked at. I’m starting get concerned, Gabriel.”

Gabriel: “I know this sounds crazy Sage, but you have to believe me.”

Sage: “I want to believe you, but do you hear yourself?”

Gabriel: “Ok, well, there’s more. So before I got attacked, I’d hear the radio start to scramble while listening — like someone was trying to get a message to me. But I couldn’t make out exactly what was being said. The voice was actually this guy...well, angel. His name is Archie. And he when I finally met up with him, he told me that..that..I..I’m an angel too.”

Sage listens stone faced and then bursts out laughing.

Sage: “Ok, how are you even doing this without laughing. Can you stop trying to pull my leg, I’m onto your joke.”

Gabriel: “Sage, tt’s not.a joke. Believe me, that would great.”

Sage: “Ok, ok, I’ll be serious again. So, you’re an angel, huh? Prove it.”

Gabriel sighs

Gabriel: “Ok, but brace yourself.”

Sage: “Oh, I’m braced — go for it.”

Gabriel: “Apertis Alis.” he says as a swirl of white and gold surround him before reveal his wings.”

Sage’s face turns from amused to terrified as her jaw drops. She stands up from the stool, knocking it over. She’s shaking.

Gabriel: “No..no..babe don’t be scared. I’m a good angel. I would never hurt you.”

Sage: “Don’t come near me. I don’t know who..or..or..or... what you are..’

Gabriel: “Sage, it’s still me, just in angel form. Please don’t be scared. I did not mean to scare you.”

Sage (starts fanning herself): “Oh my God, what is happening right now?”

Gabriel: “Are you warm,” he says as he starts flapping his wings to try and cool her off. But he sends a stronger gust of wind than intended and the breeze starts blowing papers off the breakfast bar and knocks over the sunflowers in vase on the table. The vase falls to the floor, breaking and spilling water.

“Oh shit, I didn’t mean to do that I was just trying to cool you off.”

Gabriel starts to head over near the sink to grab some paper towel.

Sage: “Stop, don’t come any closer,” she says as she’s still trembling. She walks over to the sink, grabs some paper towel, heads over to broken glass and water and starts cleaning up the mess.

Gabriel: “Can I help you, please — this was not supposed to happen like this?”

Sage: “Oh really, Gabriel? Exactly how was this..this... whatever you are supposed to happen? Was I supposed to be chill about it and not affected?”

Gabriel: “Ok, that’s fair. I just mean the way this played out in my head doesn’t match. But I wasn’t going to keep this from you or lie about — that’s not what we do in this relationship. It’s all still new to me, there’s so much I don’t know.”

Sage: “That’s even more unsettling, Gabriel. So you rushed into whatever it is you’re doing without having all the facts?”

Gabriel: “No, no, it’s not like that. I’m one of the archangel descendants...we’re called Archos. We protect the world from evil. “

Sage: “And how do you do that exactly?”

Gabriel: “Well, lately through trial and error. I got lucky fighting off the last demon. My trumpet..”

Sage: “Back up — fighting off a demon. So there have been others attacks since the one in the alley?”

Gabriel: “Well, yeah. Ever since they found out who I am, I’ve been a sitting duck. That whole breaking news the other days with the building that shifted downtown — that was them. I had to fix it. And then tonight after my audition, I fought a demon in the parking garage.”

Sage: “Your audition for what?”

Gabriel realizes he just put his foot in his mouth.

Gabriel (Sighs): “My audition for first chair.

Sage (throws her arms up): “30 seconds ago you told me you don’t lie because that’s not what we do in this relationship.”

Gabriel: “I know, I know — but come on, I mean I don’t lie about anything. This is a bit of a different situation I think. I couldn’t tell you I was the “angel swearing” ceremony. I didn’t even know it was going to happen.

Sage: “Ouch, damn it,” she says as she cuts her finger on a tiny shard of glass. “So, that’s it, your new life now is what? Demon fighter?”

Gabriel: “Well, no, I still do my PR job. I fight demons whenever. I don’t really know if there’s a schedule. I’d imagine they hold down jobs too?”

Sage: “Incredible. I finally meet the man who was a true one in a million...you’re kind, compassionate, loving, attractive and...and then..I find out you’re really one in a million... an..an..angel.”

Gabriel: “Sage, I couldn’t turn this down. The stakes were too high. I was chosen ages ago.”

Sage: “So you *had a choice* but still went through with it?”

Gabriel: “Well, yeah, but it was to save the world, to save people, to save us.”

Sage: “Gabriel, did you stop during any moment of this and think about me or us?”

Gabriel: “Sage, I think about you all the time. I love you. I’m madly in love with you. You know that.”

Sage: “On paper.”

Gabriel; “Huh?”

Sage: “On paper you love me. But once in action, you didn’t think about me or this relationship at all.”

Gabriel: “That’s not true.”

Sage: “It is true Gabriel, because you didn’t ask me how I would feel before going through with this. You just went through with this hoping i’d agree and go along for the ride. But you didn’t. Even if you had, how could you expect me to wake up and go about my day wondering if you’re actually going to be alive at the end of the day? I dreamed of us getting married, having a family, not demon hunting. This is your life, Gabriel. Not mine.”

Gabriel’s eyes well up with tears and getting more full and wet as Sage goes on.

Gabriel: “So what are you saying?”

Sage (starts crying): “That there is no more us if this is your life Gabriel.”

Gabriel: “Come on Sage, we can figure this out..you’re..you’re a mediator...you know how to do this.”

Sage: “You can only mediate and negotiate when two people want the same thing Gabriel. We don’t want the same thing.”

Gabriel: “We do want the same thing..it’s just the roadmap there is complicated.”

Sage: “There is no roadmap. It doesn’t exist. At least in our world. I don’t know how to date an angel. “

Gabriel: “I’m half human”

Sage: “But I signed up the whole package, not half. I want the human Gabriel.”

Gabriel: “But we’re in love Sage. That has to count for something.”

Sage starts crying a little harder.

Sage: “And that’s what makes this hurt the most. If you had just cheated on had been a dick and abusive..I think it would be a lot easier. But you’re a great guy and..and..and literally an angel. So don’t make this any harder than it is.”

Gabriel: “Alis Clausis,” he says as his swirls of light close his wings. “It’s still me, Sage. I don’t want to be without you.”

Sage: “This isn’t how I wanted things to end either, Gabriel. I didn’t want things to end. But things happen I suppose. Look, I’m I’m...I don’t know what I am right now. But I’m gonna go to bed.”



Sage walks up to Gabriel and gives. him a hug.

Sage: “Stay well, ok/“

Gabriel starts crying more as he watches Sage walk into her bedroom and close the door. Gabriel remains standing there for a few moments. As he starts to walk. toward the front door, he hears Sage start sob loudly. This breaks his heart. He let’s himself out of the apartment angrily walking down the hallway. As he passes by the table of books he holds his arms out, swiping all the books onto the floor.

He continues walking but turns around an scans the floor quickly. He picks up the book titled “Connecting with Angels.”

# Chapter 7

## Flyin' Solo

Lou: "Glasses up, bitches. let's cheers."

Gabriel and Hector reach for their glasses.

Hector: "Did you want to tell us why we are doing this, or should we figure it out on our own?"

Lou: "We're celebrating Gabriels two weeks of freedom."

The three lift their drinks and do the cheers.

Lou: "It's a cheers, let's act like it."

Gabriel: "I know, I know. But I still want to be with her. I miss her so much."

Hector: "You could always join my team. We have room for one more."

Lou: "Just one, Hector. I thought you liked it three or four at a time?"

Hector; "It's Thursday, I pace myself to Saturday."

Gabriel: "It's amazing how to turn every conversation sexual."

Hector: “He’s just jealous I didn’t ask him to join the gay team.”

Lou: “Yes, I’m heartbroken. over it, really.”

Hector: “So how do we get you feeling good again, Gabriel?”

Gabriel: “You guys are awesome. You always put me in a good mood. I’m just...I don’t know man, this hurt.”

Lou: “It still doesn’t make sense to me. Everything was going great.”

Hector: “That’s how you straight people operate. Just when we think you’re going to zig, you zag.”

Lou: “Oh please”

Hector: “What? We don’t do that.”

Lou: No, just when we think you’re going to zig, you fag.”

The three of them burst into laughter. Lou puts his arm around Hector.

Lou. “This is exactly why i love you Hector, please don’t change.”

Hector: “Never, he says as he raises his arm. “Bartender, three shots, he shouts.”

Gabriel: “Oh no no...I can’t overdo it tonight. I slept in until almost noon yesterday I was so hungover.”

Lou: “Noon? Your boss must have been pissed.”

Gabriel: “Nope. I have a month off...well, three weeks now.”

Hector: “Ugh, you’re so lucky. I need a month off.”

Gabriel and Lou look at each and start laughing.

Hector: “What?”

Lou: “You work almost none days a week.”

Hector: “Not true. I work two days a week. Thank you very much.”

Gabriel: “You also work for yourself. I didn’t realize how stressful it could get fighting with imaginary co-workers all day.”

Lou laughs. Hector crosses his arms knowing the guys are just teasing, but a little annoyed they think there’s no stress when self-employed.

Hector: “You know what, you’re right. Stress or no stress, I think I’m gonna go to Maui tomorrow for a little self-care — no — preventative care.”

Lou (looks at Gabriel): “The best part is, he’s not kidding.”

Hector: “You work for yourself, Lou. How much stress could their be in a massage parlor.”

Lou: “Bro, you can’t call it a massage parlor. It gives off the impression we offer happy ending.” like we offer happy endings.”

Hector: “You do. You just don’t know about it.”

Gabriel; “Don’t we all just want a happy ending?”

Hector and Lou look at Gabriel funny.

Gabriel: “Well, not that kind of happy ending. But a regular happy ending.”

Lou (stands up): “Uh-oh, here comes Aristotle. Hold your philosophical thoughts. I need a bio break.”

Hector’s phone rings. He looks at it.

Hector: “I gotta take this, I’ll be right back.”

Gabriel looks to his left and two his right in gesture to make fun of the situation.

“I guess it’s just you and me Aristotle,” he says quietly.  
“Cheers to a happy ending...one day.”

Gabriel pulls out his phone to check his messages. Though his ideal side is still holds onto hope that Sage will reach out, his cynical side does not.

Ruth: “Why don’t you just call this Geronimo guy?”

Sage: “Really, mom? It’s Gabriel and we’re broken up. Why would I text him?”

Ruth: “Are you just going to sit there and play with your food with your fork like a 5 year old or eat it? We’re at a country club for heaven’s sake? Act like a 31 year old.”

Sage:(rolls her eyes): “I’m 30 mother, and does the country club have rules on how one has to eat food?”

Ruth: (swirls her wine glass): “No, it’s just expected that a woman conduct herself as such at a country club. You’ve been sulking for the past two weeks. How great could this Geronimo guy have been anyway? There’s other men in the ocean or river...or however you say it “

Sage (even more aggravated): “His name is Gabriel. Do you ever listen to me when I talk?”

Ruth: “Honestly, Sage. If you like this Gabriel fella, why don’t you just get back together with him and be. happy. Clearly you’re miserable without him. Problem solved.”  
Oh..oh.”

Sage: “What?”

Ruth: “Just my back,” she says as wiggles around to get it back in place. “There we go, My masseuse moved to Brazil. The rat bastard.”

Sage opens up her purse and pulls out a business card.

Sage: “Here, he’s really good. “

Ruth takes the card and looks at it.

Sage: “It’s Gabriel’s friend. He owns a spa. And obviously I’m not going back there.”

Ruth: “Here we go again.”

Sage: “Here we go again,” she says condescendingly. “Not every relationship problem is that easily solvable. It’s complicated. He’s just the person I thought he was.”

Ruth: “Then stop trying to make him ideal in your head and let him be who he is. You’re never going to love the person you want to fall in love with because he doesn’t exist.”

Sage: “It’s just...I don’t know it’s complicated. But there is something I wanted to talk to you...”

Ruth: “AHHHHHHHHHHH.”

Sage (jumps): “MOTHER why are you screaming”

Ruth: SALLY DALTON

Sally, near the entrance of the restaurant looks over at Ruth.

Sally: “EHHHHHHHHHHH Ruthie McCoy.”

Sage: “No fucking way I’m dealing with all this right now,  
“ she mumbles under her breath.

Sally: “You must be Sage. You were just a kid the last time I saw you.”

Sage: “Well, I was 15 and already three years into my period”

Ruth: “Honestly, Sage! Sally - don’t mind her. She’s going through a.a...a...thing right now.”

Sally: “Oh, all is good.”

Sage, stands up and grabs her purse.

Sage: “I’m going to excuse myself and let you two catch up. Mom, it’s been a pleasure. Sally, nice to see you again.”

Ruth and Sally, wave her off and Sage exits the restaurant. As she makes her way outside, she gets an eerie feeling. She continues walking to her car but grabs her keys and mace. A demon appears and hides nearby watching as Sage makes her way to her car. Before she gets inside she scans the lot one more time. But this time she makes eye contact with the demon.

“Shit..shit..she,” she says quickly gets into her car to get into her car. gets into her car. She quickly starts the car, turns the lights on and backs up without looking. She slams on the brakes at the sound honning blaring. She looks out the driver’s side window and is blinded by the lights of the SUV that almost hit her.

“Sorry...fuck,” she says as she continues backing up. She scrambles to maneuver around the SUV and leaves the parking lot so quickly that her tires squeal on the pavement. A few moments later she bursts into tears. She’s angry at life. She’s angry at Gabriel. She’s angry at herself. And she’s angry at her mother. She puts her hand on her stomach and starts crying harder.

Lou and Hector arrive back to the table as Gabriel looks up from his watch. It’s 8:30 pm



Gabriel: “All that talk of happy endings get your two worked up? Who’s hand hurts.”

Lou (mockingly): ”Funny guy”

Hector: “Alright, who’s got next round?”

Gabriel: “Sorry fellas, I gotta bow out and call it night.”

Lou: “Why? You’ve got absolutely nothing to do.”

Hector: “And it’s the last time you’ll see me for two weeks. I’m really going to Maui.”

Gabriel: “I want to stay out but I gotta get my life in order and figure stuff out. Besides, my living room looks like a fucking hotel room party right now.”

Gabriel stands up and gives Lou and Hector a hug.

Gabriel: “Give us a call when you get back from Maui.”

Hector: “Who says I’m coming back?”

Lou: “Gabriel, you’re staying, we’re doing his farewell party right now.”

Hector mockingly laughs at Lou.

Gabriel: “You guys are too much. Be safe!”

Gabriel turns the key in the lock and cracks the door to his apartment open.

“WOW that’s gnarly,” he says as he’s blasted with a foul smell. His living is decorated with clothes everywhere, half eaten bowls of food. The dishes in the sink are piled up. In fact there isn’t a room in the apartment that doesn’t look like the aftermath of party scene or break-up.

He sets his keys down and grabs a laundry basket from the closet. Grabbing clothes from all over the living room, he puts them in the basket until it’s full. Making his way over to the laundry area, he opens the washer lid and starts putting clothes from the basket inside. He pulls out a pair of jeans checking the pockets. He pulls out \$10 bill from a front pocket.

“Let’s hope this slot machine stays hot,” he says to himself. He dips his hand into the other front pocket and feels two small, round objects. As pulls his hand out of the pocket, he finds two of the trumpet buttons. He sets them down and puts his hand back into the pocket. It’s empty. He starts rummaging through the laundry basket. He races back out into the living room to see if the other button had fallen out. He starts pulling out the couch cushions - finding nothing. “Oh no, oh no, “ he says out loud as he runs to grab his keys. He leaves his apartment, quickly locking the door behind him. He races down the hallways to the stairwell and starts to run upstairs. As he gets to the top floor he heads over to a door. He fidgets through the keys and unlocks the door. Out on the rooftop of his building he checks to see if anyone is around. With coast clear he runs toward the edge of the building.

Not stopping, he jumps off the building yelling: “Apertis Alis.” As he drops down his wings come out and he starts

flying. He flaps them rigorously as he reaches high speed. He's once again getting a knot in his stomach. He hasn't heard from Archie in almost two weeks.

He whizzes between two buildings and starts to slow down. It's harder to see at night. He quickly scans the street below, not seeing much activity. he lowers himself down onto the pavement and closes his wings.

He runs up to Archie's building and vanishes through the brick wall. Once inside, he looks around quickly.. "Archie, ARCHIE, he yells. No answer. He looks around again. This time he notices the third trumpet button lying on the carpet. He also sees Archie's body lying on the ground. "NOOOO," he tells as he runs over to Archie. He begins shaking him. "Archie, Archie, please" Gabriel begins to cry. "RAPHAEL, I NEED YOU, RAPHAEL, RAPHAEL...HURRY."

A golden feather appears in the middle of the room floating for a few seconds before its starts swirling lights. Raphael appears.

Gabriel: "QUICKLY — HEAL HIM, HEAL HIM."

Raphael starts to head toward Archie but stops.

Gabriel: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING? HEAL HIM, PLEASE"

Raphael (shaking his head no): "I'm sorry GaGbriel, I can't heal the dead. We're too late."

Gabriel: "NO NO NO. PLEASE THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING WE CAN DO."

Raphael: "I'm sorry Gabriel. I wish there was something we could do. I can't be in here. It isn't safe. I have to go."

Lights start to swirl around Raphael as he disappears.

Gabriel: “NO DON’T Go..Don’t go, Archie, I’m so sorry. Please, don’t die, he says as he weeps overlooking Archies bruised and beaten body.

Gabriel stands up, clench his fists. He shaking, quickly turning from heartbroken to heated and angry. His mind starts racing, flashing back to to all the times he’s been angry or hurt. He revisits the second grade when he had to go to the bathroom badly and his teacher, Mrs. Fortman wouldn’t let him go.

*Gabriel: “Please, I really have to go.”*

*Mrs. Furman: “Fine, baby, go to the bathroom,” she said condescendingly.*

Gabriel raced down the hall, he tried his best to hold it in but started wetting himself as he ran, He finished up in the bathroom, but his pants were soaking wet. Embarrassed and angry he returned to the classroom trying to hide the wet spots down the front of each leg of his pants.

His mind skips ahead to the 6th grade when he and his friend Ian were walking back home from the corner store on winter night. They were neighbors. Ian had moved to Seattle two years prior. He and Gabriel immediately became friends. Ian was closest the road, and Gabriel was next to him. As the cars passed back and forth, one of them hit Ian, killing him instantly. The driver never stopped. Gabriel had long bout of anger and still has guilt from the indecent. The driver was never caught. HIS mind jumps again, this time to his Freshman year at York Music School. He was there to master the trumpet. He instead got a lesson in tough luck.

*You could hear a pin drop in Rehearsal Hall. For a music school, it was awfully quiet sometimes. This building housed all the main administrative offices in addition to the orchestra pit, choir risers, and theater.*

*Gabriel had just finished putting in a hour of practice. If there were a time he needed to stay sharp, it was then. He was about to become the youngest student to ever hold a first chair position. They're generally reserved for Juniors or Seniors. But Gabriel's hard work paid off. He was waiting for the Dean to make the official announcement and he would serve as first chair at the start of his Sophomore year. Gabriel packed up his trumpet, exited the rehearsal space and started down the long hallway to the stairwell and exit.*

*He was tired, and walking slowly. Though Rehearsal Hall was a ghost town at this hour, he noticed the faint voice of someone talking. It was coming from the admin offices a little farther down the hall.*

*Dean Romero: "Carson, again, we are so excited you'll be joining us in the fall. We'll have the announcement within the next day or so and from there we'll schedule a call with the trumpet section so so they can meet you and you can give them a glimpse of what your leadership as first chair will be like, Dean Romero says, then pause. "Ok great, we'll be in touch soon. Take care." Dean Romero hangs up and immediately picks up his phone and starts dialing.*

*Dean Romero: "Alex, — it's s done deal. Carson will be coming to York in the fall.*

*Alex: "Ca-ching...that's big boost to our savings accounts."*

*Dean Romero: “Fuck saving, I’m spending. There’s a boat with my name on it. I’m spending the summer literally on the Finger Lakes.”*

*Alex: “Well, speaking of fingers have you figured out how you’re going to give the middle one to Gabriel? He’s really counting on that first chair..”*

*Gabriel gets closer to the door and realizes it’s Dean Romero’s voice. He was going to pop in, wave and say a quick hello. But when he heard his name, he remained hidden by the wall to listen in.*

*Dean Romero: “Gabriel can get as pissed as he wants. I’m not turning down a \$500,000 kickback — split two ways of course,”*

*Dean Romero paused for a moment while Alex responded. Out the hallway, Gabriel could feel himself starting to run warm. He was crushed and what he learned.*

*Dean Romero: “No, no, let’s just stick to the script here. The bylaws clearly state we can exceed enrollment capacity if a first chair is vacant and we can’t find a qualified replacement within our student body. We’re covered. Ok, I gotta get running. My wife has a thing tonight and I gotta watch the kids. We’ll chat more tomorrow. “*

*Dean Romero hung up the phone, took a deep breath as he tilted his back while sitting in the chair. When he moved his head back into normal position, Gabriel was standing in the doorway. Dean Romero stood up right away approaching him and extending him a handshake.*

*Dean Romero: “Gabriel, what a nice surprise. What brings you here at this hour?”*

*Gabriel: “I was practicing for a little while and just finished.”*

*Dean Romero: “Always working hard, that’s why you earned a spot at York.”*

*Gabriel: “Well, if only I d known the other ways to get into this school. I could’ve given more fucks.”*

*Dean Romero (still playing it cool) “I don’t follow, what do you mean?”*

*Gabriel: “Oh, don’t act like I don’t know what’s going on here. Your voice carries down the hallway. Also, who is stupid enough to talk about accepting kickbacks so freely at work. You’ve never to heard not to shit where you eat?”*

*Dean Romero: “Mr. Townsend, I don’t appreciate your tone and I don’t know what you think you heard from my phone call but...”*

*Gabriel’s blood was beyond the boiling point. He turned around, took a few steps then turned around again facing the Dean.*

*Gabriel: “You’ve got a lot of never, you know that. And you’re lucky I don’t punch you in the fucking face right now. It’s just so easy for you to give away that first chair position — like it means nothing that I busted MY ASS so a slimy prick like you could give it to the highest bidder?”*

*Dean Romero: “Gabriel, you’re making way bigger of a deal than it needs to be. It just came down to experience. You are so close and by your Junior or Senior year, you are going to shine in that first chair.”*

*Gabriel: “And you’ll still be despicable in the captain’s seat of that precious bounding baby boat you bought with the dirty money from the Silver Spoon family. No thanks. I’m not sticking around this place.*

*Dean Romero: “Gabriel, I’m sorry you feel this way. Maybe just sleep on it and clean your head a bit.”*

*Gabriel stood there for a moment just staring at Dean Romero in disgust. What he did next, he’s never been proud of. He cocked his head back slightly, collecting saliva in his mouth and spit directly in Dean Romero’s face.*

*Gabriel: “There, now you know how that feels. I’m sure you’ll have no trouble sleeping tonight despite ruining someone’s dreams. Fuck off.”*

*Gabriel turned around and left the Dean’s office. After Heartbroken and with his eyes heavy and filled with tears, he pack up his clothes and other belongs from his dorm and left York Music School for good.*

Breathing heavily and still crying, Gabriel looks over at Archie.

“I will get those motherfuckers and get you justice Archie, I promise,” he says

Suddenly, Archie’s body starts glowing and swirling in light. His body vanishes but a golden feather emerges. It floats in place for a moment before moving closer to Gabriel.

Reaching out his hand, Gabriel grabs hold of the feather between his index finger and his thumb. The feather starts to glow producing and glow around Gabriel’s body. It disappears as if absorbing into his body.



“Whoa, what just happened,” Gabriel asks himself. He looks over to see the trumpet button lying on the floor. He picks it up to inspect realizing it’s the button that had the tracking device in it. Gabriel realizes he must have dropped it when he hugged Archie goodbye.

## **Chapter 8**

# **Tooting His Own Horn**

“That’s it motherfucker, a little more to the right...a little more...a little more...., says Gabriel as he lets out a short but piercing blast of sound. It’s travels quickly, clippings the demon in the head, killing him.”

“Another poor bastard takes the bait and bites the dust,” Gabriel says as he smiles. He’s fastened a scope, much like you’d find on a rifle, on the top of his trumpet. He uses the trumpet button with the tracker to lure in the demons but trips the up by placing a feather from his wing on nearby. When they shimmer in, they gravitate toward the feather but get confused when Gabriel is nowhere in sight. Perched a top of a building like sniper, that’s when Gabriel makes his move. He’s now hunted nine demons this week.

The toxic smell of vanquishing also forced him to buy a gas mask from the Army surplus store.

He packs up his small bag on the rooftop of a building and stretches. “Ok where to next?” He turns and looks and in all four directions. “Hmmm...nothing is ringing my bell,” he says. “Wait, Bellevue. I’ll go to Bellevue. Get it? Bellevue?” he says as he laughs at his own joke.

He’s yet to cope with the trauma of the break-up with Sage and the shock and guilt by the death of the Archie. He’s on a killing spree, eliminating demons one by one. In the back of his mind, he knows the underworld must be gearing up to wage a retaliatory war. But he’s numb from the pain and almost welcomes the attack to some degree.

“Apertis Alis,” he says as he lunges off the building and glides through the air. He notices the sparkle of the sunlight on the water.

He rolls over onto his back and places his hands on the back of his head as if he’s lounging into chair, all while flying. “Let’s sunbathe, shall we?” He closes his eyes and glides through air with a smile on his face.

A few moments later he opens his eyes. “Oh shit, we’ve got some company. Let’s look alive, he says as he rolls from his back onto his stomach. Looking behind him, he notices the five demons tailing him are catching up quickly. He unhooks his trumpet from from his vest, brings himself into a prone position and hovers while staring the demons down.

He pulls the trumpet up to his mouth and yells, “rapid fire” before sending out short blasts of sound like daggers at the demons. But as the blasts hit the demons, they’re either absorbed or deflected of of what appear to be rubber suits the demons the demons are wearing.”

“Well, that’s new, Gabriel says. The demons are now right in front of him as they stare him down and he does the same.”

Demon: “Oops, bet you didn’t *hear* that coming, now did you?”

Gabriel: “No, no I didn’t. The only thing I heard was your terrible attempt at humor. “

Demon 2: “Well, let’s find out what the sound of your death sounds like, instead.”

Gabriel: “I wouldn’t go there if I were you,” Gabriel says as he points, insinuating someone or something is behind the demons.

The all turn around to look.”

Gabriel; “Idiots — every time,” he says as he blows into his trumpet. The blast hits one of the demons in the head, vanquishing him instantly. Annoyed, the demons dart toward Gabriel who immediately flies straight up into the air. As the demons follow him, Gabriel reverses direction and nosedives into a fast spin creating a cyclone effect. As he crashes through the demons, hoping the wind and speed

would knock them away, two demons instead swing their knives at him. One cuts him the shoulder, the other cuts his right wing.

“Fuck,” Gabriel says as he continues to nosedive. The demons follow him downward. As gets closer to Lake Washington, he expands his wings outward, he curves them up slightly, continuing to spin rapidly. This creates a vacuum effect pull the the water up. The millions of drops of water pelt the demons. The weight of the water on the rubber suit pulls one of the demon’s down and he drops into the lake.

Gabriel needs to think quickly. He’s certain water can’t be favorable to his feathered wings.

“Hell fire rise, protect our tribe,” the demons yell in unison. Suddenly, flames form just over the top of the lake burning the water Gabriel was trying to use to use for defense.

Gabriel: “And all this time, I thought you ass hamsters were just one trick ponies. Still, you shouldn’t play with fire.”

He curves his wings again and starts spinning. “Frigus ut glaciem,” Gabriel says as he creates cold air, turning the fire to ice. While the air is cold around him, he uses it to his advantage create powerful wind gusts with his wings to keep the demons at bay.

As they are thrown by the wind, he quickly raises his trumpet to get a group shot. He takes a deep breath and blows an F#. But he makes the sound wide to hit all three demons. As he gets them where he wants them he starts to shake the sound. Seconds later, two of the demons who had no rubber protecting their head, explode in a vanquish. The final demon breaks free from the trance-like sound and starts to

retreat. As Gabriel raises his trumpet to blast him, he catches a long, thin shadow moving over the top of the lake. “Ewwfff,” Gabriel grunts as he whizzes through through the air — even somersaulting. Just before he’s about to crash into the water, he’s able to gain control and hover.

“What the fuck was that?,” he says as he scans the outer bank of the Lake. He moves higher into the air to get a better look. On the shore he spots Gaamerick. He notices a weird glow around his arm. Suddenly, Gaamerick’s arm is growing and stretching and coming toward Gabriel again.

Just as Gaamerick’s arm is about to swat Gabriel, he quickly soars higher into the sky. Gaamerick swings his arm back toward Gabriel, who answers back with short staccato blasts of sound. The sound is illuminated and takes the shape of half a dozen daggers flying toward Gaamerick’s humongous and powerful arm.

Gaamerick manages to deflect most of the sound daggers but one hits his arm. But it does little damage, due the size of his arm in comparison to the sound.

“Game on, fucker,” says Gabriel as he points his trumpet toward Gaamerick and blasts the ground in front of him. He creates a tremor, throwing Gaamerick off balance. Gaamerick has no choice but to retract his arm back because he can’t balance well with the arm disproportionate to the rest of this body.

Gabriel flies full speed ahead toward Gaamerick, and with his trumpet to his mouth - ready to blow, but Gaamerick is able to regain his balance and quickly elongates his arm. Gaamerick swats at Gabriel, knocking the trumpet out of his hands. As if he falls, Gaamerick tries to grab it.

Gabriel however starts himself into a cyclone spin creating a vacuum. The trumpet is sucked is pulled back up by the wind and Gabriel grabs onto it. He takes a second to scan for Gaamerick.

He doesn't spot him. He thinks to himself "Ok, this could be a trap. He wants me to think he's gone. And he's waiting to get me around a corner. Either way I've to get out from over this Lake before. I'm not about to find out what happens if they get wet."

Using caution he flies over to the shore of the Lake. He touches down looking around him in every direction. Still no sign of Gaamerick. Gabriel walks in between two buildings cutting through to the other side.

Gaamerick reveals himself. "Fancy wing work up there, you've improved."

Gabriel: "Not bad yourself either with that fucking go-go Gadget arm."

Gaamerick: "Thanks. Well, I hate to do this to you but...."

Suddenly, 7 or 8 other demons emerge, once again outnumbering Gabriel.

Gabriel: "Well, that's rude!"

Gaamerick: "That you didn't get the invitation to this get together."

Gabriel: "No not quite. I meant that's rude of me to just invite my friends without asking first. Gabriel pulls the trumpet up to his mouth and plays a "wa, wa, waaaa"

Gaamerick: “Well, it doesn’t appear you have very many friends.”

Gabriel: “That’s only because you’re too stupid to hang with me and my friends. And if you don’t believe me, just ask them.”

Gaamerick looks around to his left and right.

Gaamerick: “Well, as sad as your life is all by your lonesome, we’ve got strict orders to finish you off. You ready boys? “

Gabriel;: “Whoa,, whoa, fellas.

The demons pause wondering what Gabriel is doing.

Gabriel; “You haven’t even said. hello to my friends. They’re behind you.”

Demon: “As if we’re going to fall for that again.”

Gabriel; “No I’m serious. Look, I’ll even set my trumpet down so I can’t sneak attack you..” Gabriel places the trumpet own the ground a couple feet in front of him.

Gabriel: “You should really say hello to my friends”

Demon: “Ready boys:”

Gabriel: “You ready, angels?

Suddenly arrows strike the ground next to some of the demons.

They turn around, and notice seven angels hovering in the sky behind them.



Gabriel: “Wa, wa, wahhhh, says Gabriel.

As the angels begin fighting with the demons, Gaamerick becomes infuriated. Gabriel grabs his trumpet and lifts himself into the sky. Gaamerick throws a punch into the air and elongates his arm at the same time. Gabriel plays a quick B flat note, turning the sound into a small wall of sorts to block the push. Gaamerick punches again, Gabriel blocks. Gabriel flies higher up into the sky.

Gaamerick spots a billboard with a water conservation message on it and three six giants water drop images on it. He reaches his arms toward the billboard. As the water drops phase out of the picture, Gaamerick mimics throwing them at Gabriel.

Suddenly, Gabriels is blasted with humongous drops of water, leaving his soaking wet. He flaps his wings rigorously hoping he can get them dry enough to maintain his flight. It's almost as if he's in slow motion trying to move his wings. The feathers are too wet and the weight of the water starts bring him down.

As he starts to fall to the ground, an extremely powerful and steady force of wind prevents Gabriel from falling. He's held steady in the air as the wind blows past him.

The angels he heralded just moments before were now inaugurated in formation allowing them to combine their forces for the giants blast of air.

Gaamerick uses his super demon arm to disrupt the angels' formation. Just as he knocks them out of rhythm, Gabriel's wings become dry enough for him to resume flying.

The seven angels each take the form of a flash of light as they disappear one by one back to their normal realm.

Gabriel looks over at Gaamerick, who is visibly annoyed. He notices Gaamerick's arms is glowing, almost as if it needs recharging from too much use.

As Gaamerick takes a swat at Gabriel, his arms only extends a quarter of what it normally would.

Gabriel (laughing): "Play stupid games, win stupid prizes. And since I flew here, I don't have jumper cables to help you out."

Suddenly, Nevro phases in, the two of them look up at Gabriel as if to send him s stern signal or warning. Nevro paces his hand on Gaamerick's shoulder and the two phase out."

"So much for ARMageddon," Gabriel says as he flies off toward home.

Gaamerick: “AAAHHHHHHHH, I want to twist that smug head off of his shoulders.”

Nevro: “Every encounter with him is progress.”

Gaamerick: “Progress toward what — getting our asses handed to us?”

Nevro: “Patience. He’s teaching us how to take him down — remember that! He’s tough but he can’t last forever. But speaking of having our asses handed to us, The Darkness called an emergency meeting. I think he’s about to come unhinged.”

Gaamerick: “Perfect, I’ll see you in demon purgatory.”

Nevro: “You gotta stand up to The Darkness sometimes. Even he knows things can and do go wrong. We’re doing our best.”

Gaamerick: “When is this meeting?/“

Nevro: “Right now, come on.”

The two demons turn the corner of start down the hallway leading to the Chamber of Darkness. They open the door and take their seats at the large conference table. As they sit down, The Darkness enters the room.

“Could this sun be any fucking brighter right now? i can’t see shit, Gabriel mumbles as flies home. The pain from the stabs he suffered during the attack is also throbbing in his shoulder and wing.

He gets an idea to stop by a drug store to find something to take for the pain. “Take what?, he thinks to. himself.  
“ Preparangel H? Halocortisone? An anti-christamines?

His mouth continues to widen — even though he’s fully aware that he’s tooting his own horn by laughing at his own jokes. “Well, at least I’m smiling,” he thinks to himself.

Suddenly he notices his trumpet start glowing. In flash, he finds himself back at the scene of the fight.

*“What the hell is happening he says, as he looks around to see himself in the air just before Gaamerick doused him with the water drops.*

*“Oh so now my trumpet just harks on its own?” He looks around, scanning for the clue. He looks up to noticing only billboard. Suddenly, the winds picked up, when the angels were in formation drying him off. The rush of wind - kicking up dirt — forces him to look away. He notices a record store off the distance.”*

*Before he could think, he’s suddenly whisked away., flashing back to the spot where he was flying home.*

Puzzled by experience, he spots a Walgreen's and looks for a safe spot to land.

The Darkness: “Am I invisible? When I enter a FUCKING ROOM, YOU RISE.

The demons scramble and quickly stand up from the seats. The Darkness looks over at Nevro.

The Darkness: “Do I need to give you a crash course in HOW TO BE A FUCKING LEADER. I’m starting to regret promoting you.”

Nevro: “My apologies your Darkness.”

The Darkness: “I’m warning you imbeciles right now. My patience is the thinnest it’s been in 2000 years. Think before you speak. Am I clear.”

The demons sit frightened in silence. The Darkness laughs, as he turns to Nevro again.

The Darkness: “Although hardly the time for one, I can only hope that was a joke. Let’s try this again. DO I MAKE MYSELF FUCKING CLEAR.”

Demons (in unison): “Yes, your Darkness”

The Darkness: “Is there anyone who doesn’t know why were at an emergency meeting at 3:30 in the afternoon on a Sunday?”

Demon: “Fantasy football draft,” he says as he laughs and looks around.

The Darkness: “Un-fucking-believable/. What is your name?”

Demon: “Arren, your Darkness.”

The Darkness: “Well, Mr. comedian, you “Arren” gonna like what happens next.”

Arren begins to glow bright red from the inside of his body out, as the Darkness inflicts and burns him with hell flame. He screams from the pain as he turns a deeper shade of red and becomes vanquished.”

The darkness looks over at Nevro again.

The Darkness: “Of all the candidates who applied for this mission on Indemon, that was one of the best you came across?,” he says sarcastically.

The Darkness looks back to the small group of demons.

“How is it that a 29.-year-old man, who knew nothing of his legacy a month ago has figured out how to fight and kill more than a dozen demons? How could a human, who doesn’t know

ANYTHING ABOUT GOOD AND EVIL seem to leverage every tool he can find to FUCK UP OUR MISSION?” When it couldn’t get more embarrassing for us, he drops the trumpet button with the tracker in the very location that has remained a secret and hidden from us he still manages to counter our every move when we kill the angel responsible for his training and learning. ARE NONE OF YOU FUCKING THE LEAST BIT EMBARRASSED?

The Darkness turns his head toward Gaamerick.

The Darkness: “I’m one to give praise when due, so thank you Gaamerick for your shameless strategic thinking and killing Archie. Wrong angel, but a significant kill.

Gaamerick: “All for you, your Darkness.”

The Darkness: “Now that we know what DOESN'T WORK. Does anyone have a solution to our problem at hand?”

The Darkness pauses and a few seconds pass...

Demon: “The mass loaded vinyl suits worked but could use some tweaks.

The Darkness: “They worked great for defense. We need an OFFENSIVE MOVE if we are going significantly perpetuate an evil overtone in the world. Let's try this. I'm going to leave the chamber for two minutes. When I return, I either get a solution that works or I'll do some housecleaning.

The Darkness looks at Nevro as he utters the word “housekeeping.” Nevro, though stone faced, is fuming underneath.

As soon as the Darkness leaves the room, the demons start clamoring, throwing out ideas, but speaking over one another.

Nevro: “Guys,..guys...GUYS,” Shouts Nevro. “You're all ripe with ideas when he leaves the room but say nothing when he's sitting in front of you? What gives?”

Demon: “We don't want to say the wrong thing.”

Nevro: “Top-notch thinking and teamwork right there. Thanks.”

Gaaamerick: “We have 30 seconds to come up with an idea.”



“Apertis Clausis,” says Gabriel as he touches down in between two buildings. “Wow, I need a shower,” he adds as he smells his body odor.

He steps out of the alley and onto the sidewalk. As he walk up to the corner, he starts to slow down. “Is that Sage, he says to himself. “That is Sage! But who is she with?” he says under his breath.

She’s with a guy he’s never seen before. They’re carrying two large pizzas and what appear to be a stack of magazines on top. Gabriel can’t hear what they’re saying but Sages starts laughing uncontrollably. The man with her does the same and places his hand on her shoulder as he laughs. Gabriel is in a mix of emotions as he watches on. Without thinking he positions his lips in an o like shape and blow air out. It becomes an extreme gust of wind rushing toward the guy. He’s thrown back a few steps as the magazines are blown off the top of the pizza boxes.

Sage rushes to hold her hand over the magazines to keep the rest from blowing. “What the hell was that, she says as she looks around. As she starts to look over in Gabriel’s direction, he ducks into a doorway hiding himself. He watches as the two get into her car and drive off.

The Darkness takes a seat back at the conference table in the chamber. Nevro, with no idea, takes a deep breath preparing for his impending doom. His throat closes up.

The Darkness: “Nevro — the plan, please.”

Nevro: “Uh, well. I think..we should, um..”

The Darkness: “STOP STALLING AND FUCKING GIVE ME A PLAN.”

Nevro (closes his eyes): “What if we use Sage to get to him... lure him somehow,” he says trembling and holding his breath.”

The Darkness: “Not genius, but not bad. I’m listening.”

Nevro opens his eyes, relieved.

Demon: “Wait, aren’t there rules against using humans in our wages for control of the world?”

Nevro shoots a furious look at the demon.

The Darkness: “I’m sorry, what’s your name?”

Demon: “Baldimel, your Darkness.”

The Darkness: “And just so I understand correctly, you are a FUCKING DEMON, RIGHT?”

Baldimel (trembling): “Yes, your Darkness”

The Darkness: “Then locate a handbooks and READ IT. We’re demons. We break rules or find LOOPHOLES YOU FOOL. Nevro, carry on.”

Nevro: “Well, Gaamerick and I attacked Gabriel in that alley weeks ago before he knew he was an Angel. He was only human at that point and we received got any backlash from Universal Functional Council .”

The Darkness; “Technically he was legacy latent.”

Nevro: “ Your Darkness?”

The Darkness: “Legacy latent meaning though he didn’t know of his status, it didn’t negate his status.”

Nevro: “I see. So who’s got an idea of how we use Sage to get to Gabriel?”

Baldimel: “Well, his Darkness just said we’re demons and we break rules. So let’s be Demons and break the rules.”

The Darkness: ‘Finally getting through to you. Bel-Brh-im — whatever your name is.’

Nevro: “We need to know and understand this plan does come with serious consequences. Using a human directly versus indirectly will come with a sanction, that could include a stripping of powers, disbandment of our enterprise, even death.”

The Darkness: “We’ll act first, fight for a loophole or ask for forgiveness later.. Very well, now that you’re getting a great advantage, i trust you won’t FUCK IT UP again. UNDERSTOOD?”

Demons (in unison): “Yes, your Darkness”

The Darkness; “Dismissed”

# Chapter 9

## Wingwoman

Clerk: “\$17. 32 is your total, sir”

Gabriel reaches for his wallet in his back pocket, but it’s not there. He nervously feels around for it n his other pockets. “Shit, I don’t have my wallet. It’s in my car.”

Clerk: “Well, I can hold your items here while you run out to the parking lot.”

Gabriel: “My car is at home, I flew everywhere today.”

Clerk: “Huh?”

Gabriel (backpedal) : “Uh, I mean, uh, I was flying all over... the point is my wallet is at home.” |

Addy: “I can spot you if you like.”

Gabriel turns around.

Gabriel: “Thank you ma’am. That’s sweet of you but I can’t let you do that.”

Addy: “It’s no problem.”

Gabriel: “Well, that is kind of you. I can give you my number or take yours and Venmo you as soon as I get home. I live just a couple blocks away.”

Addy hands her debit card to the clerk.

Gabriel: “Thank you again...uh..”

Addy: “Addy,” she says. “Well, Adriel, but people call me Addy for short.”

Clerk: “Alright, card for you and a bag of healing for you.”

Gabriel: “Thank you.”

Addy: “Do you always carry a trumpet with you.”

Gabriel: “No. but it would take to long to explain why I have it today. Ready for my number?”

Addy: “Uh, sure.”

Gabriel: “ 206-865-1917,” says Gabriel as Addy stands there listening and smiling. “Uh, did you want to write it down or put it in your phone?”

Addy: “No, I got it. 206-865-1917”

Gabriel: “You’re good.”

Addy: “Photographic memory,” she says as she lets out an awkward laugh.”

Gabriel: “I bet that comes in handy quite a bit. That’s a great gift.”

Addy: “Indeed, it does prove to be useful in many instances”

Clerk: “I can ring you up.”

Addy: “Uhh..oh...just this,” she says as reaches for a pack of gummy Lifesavers hanging on the display at the checkout.

Gabriel: “You came in here for Lifesavers?”

Addy: “I know. But they’re so addicting.”

Gabriel stands there for a second waiting.

Gabriel: “So...did you want to text me your number so I can pay you? “

Addy: “Oh, yes, that’s right.” She pulls out her phone and types in Gabriel’s number and sends him a text.. His phone phone dings.

Gabriel: “Great, I’ll pay you as soon as I get home. Thanks again and

Gabriel leaves the store and starts walking home. He puts the key into the lock, turns and opens his apartment. He walks in, closing the door behind him. He sets his trumpet down and empties the bag from the Walgreen store. Just as he unscrews the cap from the Hydrogen Peroxide bottle, he hears a knock a the door.

He sets down the bottle and walks over to the door opening it.

Addy: “Hi.”

Gabriel: “Hi, I literally just got home and was about to pay you. He pulls out his phone and spends the next few

moments entering the information. “Ok, you should. have it now.”

Addy: “Oh yes, thank you.”

Gabriel: “Well, have a good night and thanks again.”

Gabriel closes the door and heads back over to the table. “How the hell did she know where I lived?, he asks himself but shrugs it off and continues to open the bottle. He grabs a wash cloth from the closet. He makes his way over to the sink and pours some hydrogen peroxide onto wash cloth.

“Apertis Alis, “ he says as his wings reveal. “I hope this doesn’t hurt like hell,’ he adds as he applies the Hydrogen Peroxide.”

As. he cleans the wound, he notices it’s not as awful looking as the anticipated and doesn’t hurt as much as it did initially. “I guess that magic tea Archie gave me really does work, he thinks to himself as he wonders who he’s going to get more of it when he runs out.”

Flashes of swirling light suddenly appear in the middle of his living room. It’s Adriel.

Gabriel: “What the fuck?” He flaps his wings send a rush of wind over to knock her off of balance. She’s unphased by it.”

He starts to head for his trumpet. “I’m warning you lady fucking demon, I’m in no mood.” He picks up the trumpet.

Addy: “Gabriel, wait” She pauses, as a circle of golden light appears over her head and quickly disappears. She starts smiling.

Gabriel looks behind him and then back at Adriel.

“What the fuck are you smiling at,’ he says confusedly and pulls the trumpet up to his mouth.

Addy: “Hello? I’m one of you. I’m an angel. Did you not see the halo?”

Gabriel cautiously lowers his trumpet. “Yeah, but I’ve never seen that before and I’m still not convinced you’re not a demon. “

Addy: “For crying out loud. Apertis Alis, she says as a swirl of white and gold light appear around her revealing her wings. “Now do believe me?”

Gabriel: “May be a little more. Why are you here and why are you following me.”

Addy: “Well, this is awkward. I thought you knew I was coming. I’ve been following you your entire life.”

Gabriel: “Why?”

Addy: “I’m your guardian angel.”

Gabriel stands there speechless and somewhat confused by her presence. He looks at the scar on his hand and back up at her.

“Ok, well prove it.”

Addy: “Even you — someone who always has an overabundance of hope didn’t thought for sure doctors would have to amputate your arm after that car accident shortly after your 16th birthday. I couldn’t let that happen. You were



too good with that trumpet. The world deserved to hear you play.”

Gabriel: “So..so you saved my arm.”

Addy nods.

Gabriel walks over to her and gives her a hug.

“I knew something or someone was looking over me when I woke up from surgery and my arm was still there. I’ve never had any complications or issues with it since. I was terrified.

Addy: “Yeah, you even had a dream during surgery that you somehow rigged up a way to play the trumpet without both arm,”she says as she smiles.

Gabriel: “I’ve never told anyone about that dream. How did you know?”

Addy tilts her head to the side and gets a serious look on her face.

Gabriel: “Ok, you’re my guardian angel.”

Addy: “Well, I was your guardian angel. Once you became an Archo — officially anyway — my assignment with you ended. What’s happening right now —us meeting like this — doesn’t ever happen. Guardians never meet their strikes.

Gabriel: “Strikes?”

Addy: The people they’re assigned to protect. Of course, guardians know a lot about their strikes, there’s just no interaction except when there’s an interception. A strike may feel our presence or know we’re around but we. never interact.

Gabriel: “So why are we meeting — is something wrong?”

Addy: “Well, we need to have a conversation in a moment here. As your Guardian, I didn’t know you were an Archo. That’s not information for us to know. We get assigned and reassigned all the time without know the reason. But in this instance I’m here because of Archie’s death. I was promoted to replace him.

Gabriel drops his head.

Addy reaches out and grabs Gabriels hand.

Addy: “Forgive me, replace wasn’t the best choice of words. I realize no one will replace him. I was promoted to guide you. You’ve been through a lot this past month. The powers that be figured since I knew you best, and this situation had no precedent, it made sense and provided the best course of action to keep the mission going.

Gabriel: “Yeah, but now that’s one less guardian angel out there because of me dropping that stupid trumpet button.”

Addy: “Not quite. I still keep my other strikes. I just pull double duty of sorts.”

Gabriel: “Another ripple effect from my carelessness.”

Addy: “What was the last interaction you had with Archie.”

Gabriel tears up and pauses momentarily to contain himself. “I gave him a hug to thank him for his help.”

Addy: “Then let that be the ripple you remember. It was heartfelt, authentic and speaks volumes to why you’re an

Archo. You didn't mean to drop that button and, look, even angels don't know the reason behind everything. We're not perfect and that's not our design, anyway. When you called Raphael in to heal him — that was...that was love. That was LOVE. No Archo has ever summoned Raphael to ask for healing. You instinctively did that because you love and care. That was your core in action. It was a ripple and it was impressive. A real, bonafide ripple. You understand me? Don't forget that beautiful moment in your timeline or discount it because the end result wasn't what you'd hoped for. You gave an outstanding performance that day because your heart was involved, not just your head and your gut.

For the first time since Archie's death, Gabriel could begin to process pain and work toward closure.

Gabriel: "Can you talk to me like that every day because it's tough."

Addy: "I know and we have to have a tough conversation. You've gone a little rogue and though you have learned to power of that trumpet and how to control it, you must be careful with it and not abuse it. Using that hark earlier today could've gotten those angels killed.

Gabriel (defensive): "Isn't that exactly why the hark power is there to begin with — to help me when I'm outnumbered?"

Addy: "Yes, when it's necessary."

Gabriel: "It was necessary. I would've been toast without them."

Addy: "But had you not been baiting demons and killing them and asking for trouble from the underworld, you wouldn't have needed them in the first place."

Gabriel: “Addy, come on. A..a..a month ago, I-I-I was this fun-loving guy, who had the..the best girlfriend a guy could ever hope for. I had friends, a job and career that I love and an audition I’d been waiting for my entire life. And now, I’m face to face with my former guardian angel, I have friends I can hardly see and even when I do I’m so preoccupied by all of this that I’m never really present, I’m on hiatus from the job, I lose the best thing that has ever come my way — even better than...than..that trumpet. And I’m left with a first chair position that I’m never going to succeed in because instead, I’m chasing down demons to keep good alive. That’s just evil, honestly.

I lose everything because of this stupid heart of mine that was too big to not have in the world but too small to have what I wanted in this world. It’s not fair. It’s not fair,’ he says as tears of sadness and anger drip down his face. His wings close.

Addy: “Oh boy.”

Gabriel: “Oh boy— wh—what’s oh boy supposed to mean”

Addy: “Your wings closed”

Gabriel: “So?”

Addy: “Try to open them”

Gabriel: “I don’t understand why you’re asking me that.”

Addy: “Try to open them”

Gabriel: “Apertis Alis,” he says as nothing happens. “Apertis Alis,’ he says once again with a no show of wings. “What happened, why are my wings not working?”

Addy: “I think they’ve been clipped.”

Gabriel: “Why?”

Addy; “I don’t know exactly but they don’t just close automatically. You have to speak them closed.”

Gabriel: “Apertis Alis. Apertis Alis. “APERTIS FUCKING ALIS,” Gabriel shouts.

Addy: “Alright, here’s what we’re gonna do. You go shower, because you stink of demon vanquish and body odor. I’m going to see if I can ’t find out what’s going on with your wings. After your shower, please go to sleep and get some rest. I’m putting protection on this apartment. Do not leave, understood. A demon won’t get in here but out there — you’re target. Understood?

Gabriel; “Yes.’

Addy: “Praesidium,” she says as she swirls in light and phases out of the apartment. Immediately upon her exit, a golden red glow engulfs all four walls and dissipates.

Gabriel takes a long, hot shower and lies down in bed. Though concerned by the disappearance of his wings, he’s finally processing the emotions he’d been avoiding. He closes his eyes and is out like a light.

# Chapter 10

## Brainchild

“Oh no more, no more, no....,” says Sage as she continues vomiting in the bathroom, curled up next to the toilet. Her eyes water as she breathes heavy. “This is torture,” she thinks to herself. There’s a knock at the door. “Of course someone would be at the door at this very moment,” she says exhaustedly.

She quickly gets up, wiping her eyes. She opens the door.

Sage: “Mom? What are you doing here it’s 730 in the morning.”

Ruth (Throwing up her arms): “I hope you’re joking,” She pulls hers sunglasses down away from her eyes. “And I guess you’re not joking. You look a mess. Why aren't you ready?”

Sage: “What are you talking about? Ready for what?”

Ruth: “Wheelcharity. Sage, we talked about this a million times. Why aren’t you ready?”

Sage: “Uh, because it’s not until tomorrow, mother!”

Ruth: “What?”

Sage: “Today is Friday,” she says half annoyed but also somewhat amused.”

Ruth: “No, that can’t be right,” she utters as she opens her purse and pulls out her phone. “Son of a bitch, it is Friday. WOOPS,” she says as she laughs at her mistake.

Sage: “And you say I’m the. one who’s off in La La land half the time.”

Ruth: “Honestly Sage. It’s a silly, fleeting little flub. I’ve been so busy planning, time slipped by me. Well, since I”m here, why don’t have.a girl’s shopping morning “

Sage: “I have to work.”

Ruth pulls down her glasses again.

Ruth: “Really? And am I allowed in your apartment only in the doorway?”

Sage opens the door wide and backs up. Ruth enters.

Sage: “What do you mean by “Really?”

Ruth: “I mean, it’s okay to play hooky every now and again.

Ruth walks over to the couch to sit down as she continues talking. “You’re not in elementary school anymore. What was was it — three , four years of perfect attendance?”

Sage: “No,” she says in a snotty voice.

Ruth & Sage together; “five,” they both say at the same time and burst out laughing.

Ruth: “Settled then. You hookey bank needs withdrawal.”

Sage: “I don’t know...I mean, I don’t. have any mediations today. It’s just a planning day anyway.”

Ruth: “What is that?,” she says as she points behind Sage.

Sage: “What?, she says as she turns around. “Shit,,she says under her breath.

She turns back to her mother. “It’s a baby crib.”

Ruth: “OHHHHHHH”

Sage: “MOTHER, get a grip. It’s a baby shower gift for my friend.’

Ruth: “Which friend?”

Sage happens to glance at her mother’s hand as she tries to think up a name.

Sage: “Ruby”

Ruth: “Oh, well at least Ruby’s parents will get to be grandparents in this lifetime.,” She says as she looks away purposely to make herself look upset.

Sage: “Well look at you beating a record. I don’t think I’ve ever heard that this early in the morning. And it’s not a holiday, either.’

Ruth: “I’m just saying...I’d love to have some grand kids to spoil.”

Sage: “Alright, well, then I’ll just start sleeping around. Maybe the kids can all have different father’s too!”



Ruth: “Honestly, Sage”

Sage: “The clicker is on the table. I’m going to shower. And after shopping I’ll let you buy me lunch.”

Gabriel rolls over and opens his eyes. He stares at the wall for a moment in a slight daze then jumps out of bed quickly. “Wait, what am I doing. I still have one more week off of work,” he thinks to himself.

He turns back around to head back to the bed then turns around again and walks out to the middle of the living room.

“Apertis Alis,” he says. Nothing happens. “Apertis Alis,” he says again with a swirl of glowing lights around him that disappear and reveal his wings.”

“Interesting,” he says out loud. “Maybe it was just a glitch,” he says with a shoulder shrug.

Another quick swirl of light enters the living room as Addy phases in

Addy: “Actually it wasn’t a malfunction.”

Gabriel: “Well good morning and what do you mean.”

Addy: “The powers that be nixed your wings purposely yesterday afternoon.”

Gabriel: “ What? Why? “

Addy: “In short, out of concern for your mental health. You haven’t been yourself lately and they felt it was the best move should you uh, should you..”

Gabriel: “Come unhinged? Go bat shit?”

Addy: “Not in those exact words, but yes”

Gabriel: “Incredible,” he says as he throws his arms up. It’s not like life hasn’t been a roller coaster on ..on ...on crack for me lately. This is an adjustment and i’ve only been at it for a little more than a month.”

Addy: “I know it’s not easy and I can’t imagine the transition is anything less than challenging and frustrating. But, let’s look at it this way - I made a pitch that you have shown tremendous ability and skill.

Gabriel: “Right, and then they realized they don’t have another Gabriel to do their dirty work and ‘poof,’ suddenly my wings are restored. “

Addy: “I understand your frustration and point of view. I’m here now to make sure you have guidance and support. That’s a good thing and a foundation from which we can proceed and move forward.”

Gabriel: “I guess you’re right.”

Addy: “Rather than attacking the demons as your first course of action, reflect on your past interactions with them. How did they move? How strong are their powers? What are strengths and limitations of their powers? What other tools or strategies are they using. Having answers to those questions become part of your offense Studying up will make an even more powerful force— and an intuitive one as that.”

Gabriel: “I feel like I’m always outnumbered and a constant target.”

Addy: “All the more reason to lay low. If you’re always showing your hand, they’re always going to gamble. They’re demons. But there are many of them, and one of you.”

Gabriel: “So is there like some sort of angelic internet to research and study...like...wing instead of Bing.”

Addy (smiles): “You’re funny. That would come in handy, now wouldn’t it.” Addy pauses and closes her eyes. “I’ll be back in just a bit, one of my strikes needs me. Journal a bit and see if that can connect some dots.”

Addy phases out. “Well, ain’t no time like the present I guess.” He grabs his laptop, brings up a blank notebook page and begins recalling his interactions to see where it leads.

Sage and her mother pull into the shopping center. They're going to look at furniture as her mother has plans to do some remodeling.

Sage: "So what's this room you're doing — a think space? What is that?"

Ruth: "A think space — you know, where you listen to ambient music and clear your head and...and...meditate."

Sage (laughs): "You've got it backwards, mother. You don't want to think when you meditate. You want to clear your head of thoughts to remain present."

Ruth: "Oh present, thank you for reminding me. Your brother's birthday is in two weeks. I need to get him something."

Sage: "Unbelievable," she mutters.

Ruth: "What?"

Sage: "Nothing."

Ruth: "WHAT?"

Sage: "It's just, I feel like it's always this tug-of-war with you. You're so critical of the way I think or act. or have any interest in what I'm doing. Yet Parker can't do anything wrong. He's always getting attention. He's 27. he'll. be fine.

Ruth: "Honestly, Sage. So I shouldn't be getting him a birthday gift? And he's 26, not 27 just yet.

Sage: "Unbelievable."

Ruth: “What now?’

Sage: “You thought I was 31 when we were having dinner at the country club and you’re going to correct me on — you know what, that’s case and point.

Ruth: “Sage, I’m not listening to this rubbish. I love you and Parker equally. Why are you laughing?”

Sage: “Because. Who says rubbish?”

Ruth ignores her and pulls the car into space in the parking garage.

Nevro: “Huddle up,” he says as he tries to get the demons’ attention. “Chimon, Zaygor, Ollis, he sternly says. It’s go time.”

The demons gather around focusing their attention on Nevro.

Nevro: “The plan and goal are simple. Frontline, you take out Gabriel. Sage is just the bait. We’re already taking a big risk by using her. Understood? “

Demons: “Yes, your Shadow,” they say in unison.

Demon: “Where is Gaamerick? “

Nevro: “Gaamerick is charging his arm. He should only use it when necessary to preserve anergy. Get his trumpet and we severely weaken him and his ability. He’s one against the 12 of us. We got this,” he says as the demons remain silent. “I said WE GOT THIS,” He shouts as the demons cheer and carry on in excitement. “THE WORLD IS OURS.”

Ruth: “What in the world is that?”

Sage: “It’s a statue of Kwan Yin.”

Ruth: “Why does she have her own statue?”

Sage: “She’s a figure in the Buddhist religion. She hears the cries of the world.”

Ruth: “Oh, I like that, how much is she?”

Sage looks at the price tag and starts laughing.

Sage: “\$1700 dollars. I think she just heard us crying over the price.”

The clerk notices the ladies and walks over.

Clerk: “What a fine piece in our collection. Kwan Yin is all her glory. Would you like me to ring you up.”

Sage: ‘No thank you. ‘

Ruth: “Yes.”

Sage: “What?”

Ruth: “What? It’s a nice statue.”

Sage: “It’s gorgeous, but it’s expensive.”

Ruth looks at the clerk.

Ruth: “We’ll take it. It’s for my daughter.”

Sage: “What?”



Ruth: “And don’t tell your brother,” she says as she winks at Sage.

Sage: “Mom, I don’t know what to say.”

Ruth: “You just said all I needed to hear.”

Sage: “What did I say? “

Ruth: “You called me mom instead of mother.”

Sage: “Well, thank you for the statue. It’s beautiful. That was sweet of you.”

Ruth looks at the clerk.

Ruth: “My daughter will coordinate the delivery to her place with you. I need to use the restroom before I float away. I’ll be back in a few,” she says as she hands her credit card to Sage and leaves to use the bathroom.

Addy: “Hard at work, I see,” says Addy as she phases into Gabriel’s apartment.

Gabriel: “Yes, and I’ve found something out.”

Addy: “What’s that?”

Gabriel: “During the last battle with the demons, some of them were wearing these rubber suits and my sound blasts got repelled or absorbed.”

Addy: “Ok, I’m listening.”

Gabriel: “Mass Loaded Vinyl.”

Addy: “Come again?”

Gabriel: “They were wearing mass loaded vinyl. It’s used for sound proofing.”

Abby: “Interesting. Good find. How do you combat that?”

Gabriel: “No idea. My sound only affected the parts of their body that weren’t covered.”

Addy: “Hmm. Ok, well, at least have part of the equation. Any other insights?”

Gabriel: “Yes. Sound travels farther and faster when it’s raining and humid outside versus a sunny day. “

Addy: “Good thing you live in Seattle.”

Gabriel: “Good for sound, not for feathers. Harder, if not impossible to fly.”

Addy: “Excellent research, though. Maybe there’s workaround?”

Gabriel: “Maybe,” he says as he stops to think. “Yesterday my trumpet harked me back to the scene of the fight while I was flying home.”

Addy: “What was the clue?”

Gabriel: “I have no idea. It was when the angel were drying my wings. Gaamerick made these giant wanter drops come to life and soaked me. During the hark, I had to look away when it was happening because of the wind the angels created kicked up dust. I saw a record store off in the distance.”

Abby: “Odd, she says as she presents a look of thinking on her face. “What did you say those demons were wearing.”

Gabriel: “Mass Loaded Vinyl — oh, Vinyl, like Vinyl record. But what’s the connection? “

Addy: “It has to be with sound. That’s where your gift is. And you recall the wind from the angels, so that was shown to you for a reason.”

Gabriel: “Wind, Vinyl, Sound. Wind, Vinyl Sound.”

Addy: “How fast can you fly?”

Gabriel (smiling): “well, not to toot my own horn but I’ve gotten pretty good and pretty fast at flying.”

Addy: ‘Could you fly even faster than the fastest you’ve flown yet?’”

Gabriel: “It would be an energy drain but I could do it for a few moments. Why?”

Addy: “I don’t know, I was just thinking there’s something with the wind, it was drying you off so it had to have some heat behind it.”

Gabriel: “Wait a minute,” he says as he starts pressing the key on his laptop. A few moments pass.

Gabriel: “Ok, maybe you’re on to something. Extreme heat will break down Mass Loaded Vinyl, deform it, and make it lose it’s structural integrity.”

Addy: “So flying extremely fast around them could produce heat. But would that be enough?”

Gabriel: “Good question, he says as he looks over at his trumpet. “Wait, sound waves also produce heat. What if I could create enough heat while flying. Blast sound at the same time creating a catalyst of sorts to penetrate the Mass Loaded Vinyl as its being broken down?”

Addy:”Impressive. You are brilliant.”

Gabriel: “No, we’re brilliant. This was teamwork. You connected the heat.”

Addy: “Well, let’s hope it works the next time you’re in battle.”

Sage heads out of the store to wait for her mother, as soon as she steps outside, her mother comes walking up.

Sage: “That was quick.”

Ruth (shrugs her shoulders): “Alright, there’s a store down here I want to check out quickly.”

Sage: “Alright. Any thoughts on what you want for lunch? I’ll buy since you got me that statue. It’s the least I can do.”

Ruth: “The pleasure was all mine.”

The two start heading down the corridor,. Ruth turns down a hallway and Sage follows.

Sage: “Where we going — what store is down here.”

Nevro shape shifts from Ruth back to his normal identity.

Sage’s jaw drops, before she can scream, Nevro grabs her arm and the two phase out of the corridor.

A couple hours pass. Gabriel steps out of the shower and begins to dry off, when the phone rings.

Gabriel: “Lou, my man, how are you?”

Lou: “I’m good, hey is Sage with you?”

Gabriel: “No, why would you think that?”

Lou: “A woman named Ruth just called here saying she’s Sage’s mother. She can’t find her and called me to see if you knew anything.”

Gabriel: “Wait — I don’t get it. Why would she call you?”

Lou: “Something about she gave Sage my business card the other night while they were at dinner. She must have kept it from when she was in here on her birthday.”

Gabriel: “Ok, but she’s missing? Where was she last?”

Lou: “Ruth said she and Sage were out shopping. Ruth went to use the restroom and when she returned, Sage was gone. She can’t get a hold of her on her phone.

Gabriel: “Fucking Nevro.”

Lou: “What?”

Gabriel: “Uh, nothing, I..I ‘m dog sitting for a neighbor and he was getting to the trash. Did Ruth leave a number?”

Lou: “Yeah, let me know when you’re ready.”

Gabriel; scrambles to find some paper and a pen.

Gabriel: "Go," he says as he starts to write down the number.  
"Ok, thanks dude. Let me call and find out what's going on."  
Lou: "Let me know, dude. I hope everything is ok."

Gabriel: "Me too."

Gabriel hangs up the phone and quickly starts to get dressed.

A few moments later, Addy phases in.

Addy: "Forgive me for not using the door."

Gabriel: "All good, we've got a problem."

Addy: "That we do. Sage's guardian angel just alerted us that a demon has her."

Gabriel: "Yeah, it's Nevro and when I see that Motherfucker, he's done for."

Addy: "Gabriel, demons interfere with humans at least physically. They are breaking all sorts of Universal rules by doing this. "

Gabriel: "And they're going to pay for it dearly."

Addy: "Slow down and listen to me for a moment. They're using her to get to you. And for them to do such a think knowing all the repercussions of that suggests the levels to which they'll stoop for evil. "

Gabriel: "So what are you saying? "

Addy: "I'm saying I don't have a good feeling about this. If they're using Sage banking on the fact that you'd find out and go after them, they're going to be prepared for you."

Gabriel: “They should be. If they fucking hurt her, they won’t get a moment’s peace from me until they’re all dead.”

Addy: “All I’m saying is maybe we should draft some sort of strategy or plan. The powers that be were talking about clipping your wings until we figure out a safe strategy.”

Gabriel: “Damn it, NO.

Addy: “Gabriel”

Gabriel: “Addy, NO. You need to go back to them and tell them if they clip my wings, then don’t even think about giving them back to me because i will never use them again. I mean ever. I don’t care if come back here in a million pieces or dead. I”m not going to let the woman I”m madly in love with die. This isn’t fair to her. She is everything to me, everything.”

Addy: “Gabriel, just slow down.”

Gabriel walks over to a drawer in his kitchen and pulls out a small box. He lifts open the top, and angrily walks back toward Addy.

Gabriel: “You see this? I bought this for a reason. I was going to ask her to marry me because I love her.

Addy: “It’s a beautiful ring”

Gabriel: “And i didn’t stop loving her just because we aren’t together.” Gabriel raises his arms up. “You tell whoever they are to fuck off. I’m going to get Sage from those demons. And if they don’t like it, they can find someone else to save



their world. Right now, I'm going to save Sage because she's my world. "

Addy has a tear in her eye and a look as if she's torn on what to do.

Addy: "Do you still have some of that tea that Archie gave to you?"

Gabriel: "Yes, why? "

Addy: "Make yourself a cup. No, make yourself two cups just to be safe and give those demons hell. I'll make sure you're wings remain in tact."

Gabriel: "Thank you. If anything happens..."

Addy: "No, no. Don't even say it. Because if anything happens, I'll be the one killing you. Do not come back without Sage. But just keep this in mind, Gabriel. They wouldn't dare kill her. They just want you. So you need to be extremely careful out there."

Gabriel; "i've got the wisdom of AA on my side."

Addy: "Alcoholic's Anonymous."

Gabriel: "No, silly. Archie and Addy."

Addy (smiles): "Be safe. Good luck."

Addy phases out. Gabriel turns on the stove to start the tea kettle. A few moments later he pours himself a cup and calls Sage's mother while he waits for it to cool down.

Gabriel: ‘Mrs. McCoy.’

Ruth: “Yes, who’s this?”

Gabriel: “It’s Gabriel.”

Ruth: “Oh thank goodness, I was just about to call the police. Is she with you, I’m worried.”

Gabriel: “No, I haven’t spoken to her since she broke up with me.

Ruth: “I just don’t understand where she could’ve gone and why she isn’t answering. We were having a delightful time shopping. It was one of the more pleasant days with — she’s been miserable for weeks over the breakup.”

Gabriel: “You have no idea how much I love her. I’m sure she’s fine. Let me check around with some friends and I’ll call you back. You last saw her while you were shopping?”

Ruth: “Yes, we were at Lincoln 5 - that new furniture store at Motley Square. I went to use the restroom and when I came back she was gone. The clerk says he thought he saw her leave with me.”

Gabriel: “Hmm. I’m sure everything is going to be fine. Let me check around. ok?”

Ruth: “Yes, thank you honey. And listen — I’m not trying to stick my nose in where it doesn’t belong, but whatever came between you two — consider fixing it. I’ve never seen her this unhappy.”

Gabriel: “Well, it’s complicated but I appreciate you saying that. I will reach back out shortly.”

Gabriel hangs up the phone, pours himself a cup of tea. He drinks it in two gulps, then pours another cup. As he sips he grabs his phone again and starts swiping through screens.

“The Columbia Center Building! Those dickhead demons are about to be sorry,” he says as he grabs his trumpet and keys.

He locks his apartment door behind him and runs down the hall and up the stairs to the top floor. He unlocks the rooftop terrace door. With coast clear, he runs over to the edge of the building. “Apertis Alis,” he says as he jumps off. His wings come out and he starts flying downtown.

Sage is shaking and scared. She and Nevro are at the top of the Columbia Center Building.

Sage: “What do you want from me?”

Nevro: “It’s not you we want. It’s Gabriel.”

Sage: “I haven’t spoken to Gabriel in weeks. We’re not together anymore.”

Nevro: “That’s doesn’t mean you still don’t love each other.”

Sage: “I don’t understand what that has to do with why I’m here.”

Nevro: “You’re the bait. We get Gabriel, you walk away unharmed.”

Sage: “Why do you want Gabriel? Why can’t you just leave him alone.”

Nevro: “Come on, Sage. We know you know why. We’re not stupid.”

Sage: “Look, if this is about money, my parents are loaded. What is your price to leave me and him alone. \$500,000 — a million? Name it.”

Nevro laughs.

“You humans always think it’s about money.”

Sage: “Well, isn’t the love of money the root of all evil.”

Nevro: “No, evil is the root of all evil. And I’m here to protect it so it prevails.”

As Gabriel flies, he's scanning around him. He's expecting an attack. Off in the distance he sees two demons flying toward him. "And so it begins," he says. As the demons come closer into range, Gabriel prepares his trumpet.

"What the fuck. That can't be."

As they get even closer he notices he's familiar with these two demons.

Gabriel: "The Wonder Bread twins? Wow. Well, I guess in some ways I'm not surprised, he says to himself.. "And apparently we're not getting the Arlington account."

Gabriel slows down to hover.

Gabriel: "Look boys, I don't want to have to hurt you. Can't you just run along and play.

One of the twins has a sling shot. He pulls the band back and releases a small rock. It's an evil crystal designed to bring negative energy toward him instead of warding it off.

It hits Gabriel in the shoulder.

Gabriel: "Ouch, you little — mmmm," he says. He pulls his trumpet up to his mouth and blasts one of the twins, throw him back in the air several feet.

Both boys become enraged and start flying toward Gabriel.

"Hardly the time for a game of tag, but since you insist,' he says. Gabriel starts whizzing through the air, zig-zagging to

avoid the twins and to hopefully tire them out. Moments later Gabriel comes to a shop in a hover. One of the twins is off in the distance on one side of him and the other is off in the distance on the other side.

Gabriel looks at one, makes a funny face at him and says “Na na, na, na na, you can’t catch me.” He does the same to the other one. Both start flying directly toward him.

“Wait for it, Gabriel says to himself. Just as both demon boys are about to crash into, Gabriel shoots straight up into the air. The two demon boys collide into each other and fall from the sky. “Next time pick on someone your own size,” he says.

Just as the words come out of his mouth, six demons start flying toward him — from every direction.

“ First tag, a now ring around the roses? What’s next, Candyland?,” he says.

From the center of the circle, Gabriel plummets down underneath them. As they look down puzzled, Gabriel shoots back up into the air. While coming back up through the center of the circle he shifts into a rapid 360 spin. The rush of air scatters the demons tossing them around the through the sky.

While trying to regain composure, Gabriel lets out two blasts — and vanquishes two demons.

One of the demons flies directly toward Gabriel. Gabriel does a backward flip, kicking the demon in the face. Another demon flies in from the side. Gabriel folds his wings

over to one side and swings at the demon like a bat would hit a baseball and sends the demon flying.

He shoots a blast, vanquishing another demon coming at him. The remaining three demons all start flying toward him. “Oh now it’s Red Rover, Red Rove, send the demons over?” Gabriel blasts a steady, low tone from his trumpet which puts the demons in slow motion as they approaching . He changes the tone and starts shaking the sound. One by one the demons explode and vanquish.

As he continues on to the Columbia Center Building, six other demons , all in black rubber suits appear. “They’re everywhere, he says to. himself.

Gabriel starts flapping his wings in very slowly start but then increases more rapidly. As a demon approaches him, he whizzes past him in a flash of speed. The next demon tries to attach him and he does the same thing. Annoyed, the demons form a circle around him. As they start closing on him, Gabriel does a 360 spin in the prone position let out blasts of air in a machine gun fashion as he spins.

The blasts of sound hit the demons, but instead of being absorbed, the, sound is repelled and starts coming back toward Gabriel. Gabriel does another 360 spin in the prone position sends blasts back at the demons who again. The sound once again repels. Gabriel flies up and outside the circle and starts quickly flying in a circle around the demons. As he’s circling, he kicks in to hyper speed creating intense heat. The force of the air push the demons toward the center where the other sound is sitting. The heat combine with that sound starts wearing down the Mass Load Vinyl. From his circular pattern, Gabriel shift and flies above the circle. From above he sends a sonic blasts in a stream toward the

center of the center where the demons are gathered and watches a giant of explosion as they're all instantly vanquished. "That was for Archie, motherfuckers," he says.

Grey clouds quickly fill the sky. It begins to drizzles.



From a magical screen, inside the Chamber of Darkness, Gaamerick, a few other demons and The Darkness look on.

Gaazmerick: “Your Darkness, shall I join the fight.

The Darkness: “No use getting yourself killed and neither rain nor potential lightning are good for the that arm.”

Gaamerick: “Then what will we do, your Darkness?”

The Darkness: “What we should have done all along. It’s either Sage or that FUCKING ANGEL,’ he says as he pounds his fist onto the table. “I don’t care about repercussions. I want him annihilated.

Gaamerick: “But, sir, are you sure. We can still get him another day.”

The Darkness: “I am the COMMANDER IN CHIEF and we will get rid of the angel today. DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR? “

Gaamerick: “Excellent. Now please call Nevro and give him my order. The world has waited long enough.”

Gabriel lands on top of the Columbia Center building. Nevro turns around still grabbing ahold of Sage.

Sage: “GABRIEL,” she yells out of joy to see him.”

Gabriel (smiles): “Hi gorgeous.”

Nevro: “I hate to break up a happy couple but I have strict orders,” he says as he pushes Sage toward the edge of the building.

Gabriel: “Or what? “

Nevro: “She goes over.”

Sage squirms as he says this.

Nevro: “Give me the trumpet.”

Gabriel: “Not on your life.”

Nevro: “Give me the trumpet or she goes over. Don’t make this any harder on yourself, Gabriel.”

Sage: “Gabriel, just give him the trumpet.’

As Gabriel ponders his next move, he suddenly closes his eyes, as if he’s focusing on something. A few seconds later, he opens his eyes.

Nevro: “The trumpet.”

Gabriel: “Not a chance.”

Nevro: “Last time I’m going to ask or she goes over.”

Gabriel: “Then push her over, you’re not getting the trumpet.”

Sage: “GABRIEL!”

Nevro: “I warned you,” he says as she shoves Sage over the building.”

Gabriel pulls his trumpet up to his mouth and gets a stream of sound going toward Nevro. The light raindrops help it travel more quickly locking onto Nevro. As he tries to move and phase out, he’s stuck. Gabriel plays another note that starts crushing him. He plays another, then another — each intensifying until finally, Nevro implodes and vanquishes.

“No, I warned you, motherfucker.”

Gabriel dives off the building making a nosedive toward the ground. He touches down, next to Sage.

Sage: “What just happened,? I-I-I was falling and..and...and then this swirl of light came around me and the next thing I new i was on the ground.”

Gabriel: “Were you going to tell me you were pregnant?”

Sage: “Gabriel, of course I was going to tell you. I just didn’t know how after I last saw you and I was so scared and angry...and.and”

Gabriel closes his wings.

Gabriel: “Hey, hey, come here, he says as he embraces her in a hug. “Everything is going to be fine. We’re in this together.”

Sage: “Wait, how did you know I was pregnant?”

In that moment Gabriel realizes it was Archie’s final feather that gave him the psychic power.

Gabriel: “Because our little boy is angel. He was talking to me just before Nevro threw you over the side. He told me he’d protect you.”

Sage looks frightened,, places her hand on her stomach and starts crying.

Sage: “Oh no,” she says hysterically.

Gabriel: “Sage, come on, that little guy just saved your life.”

Sage: “It s not that — what about the other one?”

Gabriel; “The other one what? “

Sage: “We”re having twins Gabriel, what about the other baby?”

Gabriel becomes surprised and worried at the same time.

Gabriel: “I only heard one voice,” he says . Sage starts crying. Gabriel quickly takes out and starts dialing.

Operator: “9-1-1 what’s your emergency.“

Gabriel (panicky voice): “I need an ambulance right away.”

# About the Author



M. Joseph Doria considers himself a hostile author. Despite always being a writer in some form or another, authoring books was not exciting. In 2013 and 2014, he wrote and published his first two books. “It’s a Sign, Stupid!” and “The Light Year” Both were collections of real life situations in which he extracted the meaning as he maneuvered through his spiritual journey. Though he agreed to write them, they were born out of people pleasing, not personal interest.

Several years later, he considered writing “Happy Go F\*ck Me,” a self-deprecatory satire cautioning the need to aim high in life, and “If x, then wh(y)?, a philosophical and research-driven look at the deeper meanings of the x y variables as they relate to genes, generations, science, the arts and humanities and life in general. He was more enamored with the titles he’d chosen rather than the content itself. He’d also had an idea for a children’s book series titled “Marco the Magician” This thematic and highly engaging

series centers around Marco, a boy fascinated with magic, who receives a magic set as a birthday gift. But in a twist, the magic wand, called the “Wander Wand” really worked allowing Marco to cast himself into fantasy worlds to learn valuable life lesson the read could understand and apply to life.

However, the real magic began to form when ideating the concept for The Archos book series. The foray into fiction and fantasy writing, coupled with the genuine concern of whether he was creative and smart enough to pull it off, was the motivation and resonance needed to produce the manuscript for the first book. Clearly, he could.

“Full-disclosure, I had a loose plot and other nuances for Trumpet vs. Horns, but had no idea how the book would evolve chapter to to chapter. It was series of surprises and serendipitous moments that made the writing process engaging and interesting,” said Doria.

But, out of respect for the process and to make his life a little easier, he is hybrid of the planner and the plotter. As for the writing mindset behind this book, Doria did so with no expectations or preconceived notions. “The only thing I knew is that I had what I thought was a cool idea for a book. While the concept of angels has been explored in depth, that didn’t mean I could put my imprint on it. I mean, there are a ton of rom com movies with similar plots. It’s the that the writer got there that’s important. It’s how they got there and the choices in the script that make each movie a little different and memorable in their own right. That’s all I was aiming for.” Doria, big into spirituality and concepts such as numerology, decided to find the date meaning for August 11, 2024 — the day he finished the book.

## Date Meaning

Below is an interpretation of the energy represented by the date:

### **August 11, 2024**

August 11, 2024 calculates as a number **9** date.

The energy represented by a number 9 date resonates with compassion.

It is a humanitarian energy. Actions are directed to the benefit of others — the larger the group to be benefitted, the more the energy resonates with the action.

There is no dissonance with the energy represented by virtually all personal numerology charts, whether **core numbers** or others. Tolerance and compassion have no resistance within other chart energy.

Additional aspects that may surface are idealism and an inclination to support philanthropic organizations.

Provided courtesy of **Affinity Numerology**