From Darkness to Promote Me

by MaCall (misterpointy)

Summary

“The path to paradise begins in Hell.”
—Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy

Michael is healed by Vee, the daughter of a witch and an archdemon, after Mallory runs him down. Since they’re the only two of their kind, Michael thinks they’re made for each other. Vee isn’t comfortable with the idea of dating someone who’s technically a three-year-old and looks barely legal, so the Antichrist begins his quest to grow the hell up.

Notes

(1) I’m mad at Ryan Murphy for making me want to bang the Antichrist, but here we are. This fic is also me geeking out about demonology, something I haven’t gotten much of a
chance to do in a story. UNTIL NOW.

(2) Story and chapter titles are quotes from *Paradise Lost* (1674) by John Milton.

(3) If you’re using Chrome or Firefox, you should be able to read the annotations by hovering over the bracketed numbers. Otherwise, endnotes are at the bottom of each chapter.


(5) We’re all going to hell. YEET.

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**Primary Biblical Sources:**


*The Book of Watchers* (1 Enoch 1-36), first of three apocryphal texts attributed to Enoch.

*The Zohar* (זוהר), Kabbalistic foundational text.

*The Book of Formation* (ספר יצירה), Kabbalistic primary text.

*The Book of Secrets* (ספר התרנגולים), Kabbalistic grimoire from Late Antiquity.

*The Book of Raziel* (רזיאל חכם), Kabbalistic grimoire from the Middle Ages.

*The Tree of Life* (עץ חיים), Kabbalistic primary text written in 1573.
TO
The Occult Science
And
To all its Disciples.

OUR MAGIC
The Art in Magic
The Theory of Magic
The Practice of Magic

IT'S NO BIG DEAL.
JUST THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY
What Chance, What Change

Chapter Summary

Vee Roscoe saves Michael Langdon from being roadkill and takes him out for lunch.

Tell yourself pain is normal.
A cliché. The sky
at your feet. You feel pity
for the way it lies there. It has
no mother, no father. Yet.
You have the urge to stomp on it,
to beat it to death.

Chelsea Dingman, “How to Survive [a Stillbirth]”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 1
What Chance, What Change

1991
New Orleans, LA

Marie Laveau narrows her eyes at the corpse of nineteen-year-old Gwendolyn Hoozuki—a half-Japanese, half-white witch excommunicated from the coven of Salem descendants for getting herself knocked up by a demon—and shakes her head at the sight of blood trickling down the drain.[1]

Lyn showed up on her doorstep seven months ago, pregnant and terrified. Marie would’ve turned her away, if she wasn’t sick and tired of stealing innocent children from the maternity wards at every hospital within a hundred miles of the French Quarter. It’s witchspawn and demonspawn—nothing innocent about that.

So, the Voodoo Queen let poor unfortunate Lyn into her home. Marie has been immortal long enough to learn how to avoid getting too attached. It still hurt, watching Lyn hemorrhage and bleed out in her bathtub while her newborn daughter was screaming like a banshee.

Marie had almost died the same way, before she sold her soul and her own daughter was taken from her.

When she offered the infant to Papa Legba, he laughed in her face. “Can’t touch this little one,” he told her, “her father would destroy me.” There was a strange emphasis on the word destroy as he slid his tongue over the back of his teeth, stretched into two distinct syllables. “I wouldn’t take her if you offered me a hundred of the purest souls.”

Dr. and Mr. Roscoe, a pair of psychologists, adopted her three months later. Marie didn’t know it
yet, but she was going to die before she ever saw that little girl again.

2014
Seattle, WA

According to the apocryphal Books of Enoch,[2] two hundred fallen angels called the Grigori or the Watchers fell to earth and had children with humans.[3] These humans were taught forbidden knowledge: writing, astrology, sorcery, technology, weaponry, cosmetology, the bitter and the sweet. Those angels were gendered as male in the bible and called the Benei Elohim, the Sons of God. Their hybrid children were called the Nephilim. All witches are descended from angels, from the ones who fell because of the beautiful—sinful—women they loved.

Veronica Roscoe is one of the Nephilim. Quite possibly the only Nephil in the world, since archdemons don’t get out much. Vee is the daughter of Penemuel, one of the five angels who led the Watchers astray.[4] After he fell, he became the prince of Hell who epitomizes the deadly sin of sloth: Abaddon, the destroyer, the angel of the abyss.[5]

According to Dante, sloth is characterized by the absence or insufficiency of love. Unlike the other deadly sins, which are excessive or disordered expressions of love.[6] Maybe that’s why Vee has been terminally single for almost six years. There’s no dating site for autistic hellspawn seeking their soulmates. Vee is one of a kind—literally. So even if she wasn’t too awkward to meet someone organically or online, that person wouldn’t be able to understand her. “I’m the daughter of a witch and a prince of Hell but I was adopted by a tenured professor and a school psychologist, how do you feel about that?” isn’t a good first date icebreaker.

When she looks up from her mac and cheese at the flatscreen hanging on the wall of the bistro, she chokes on a mouthful of penne and melted Beecher’s. It’s too loud to hear the reporter talking over the blare of pop music, but she can read the captions.

Since your extraordinary public statement last month, the reporter says, there has been quite a bit of fanfare. This frank revelation about your cult has sparked quite a brouhaha in the media, and—

Cordelia Foxx smiles affably, her brown eyes shining with something otherworldly that can’t quite be captured on camera. Let me clarify that, Bill: we are not a cult. We don’t proselytize, we have no agenda. We’re not recruiting. Women who identify as witches are born as such and their abilities, which we call powers, are part of who they are—part of their DNA, if you will.

Oh, Bill the reporter says, I see. So, in fact, you’re saying that it’s not a choice. Being a witch.

Cordelia nods. Yes, that’s exactly what I’m saying. There are so many young witches who have resisted their calling, because they’re afraid of how they may be perceived or what’s expected of them.

But there are still hate crimes, Bill points out.

When a group of religious extremists from a church in backwoods Louisiana burned Misty Day at the stake, her story went viral and made the national news. Cordelia broadcast the existence of witches to the world six months later, and that story went superviral.

Yes, Cordelia says, that is true. But, you know, when you hide in the shadows you are less visible, you have less protection. We’ll always be targets for the ignorant—it is what it is. But we are strong
women, Bill.

So, Bill the reporter says, what would you like to say to all those young girls watching and wondering if they might be witches?

Call us, Cordelia implores the eye of the camera, email us, or just come to New Orleans. There is a home and a family waiting for you.

Vee sucks on the plastic tip of her straw obnoxiously and drinks the last dregs of her soda as the screen cuts to commercial. Pretty lies, she thinks, but I know the ugly truth. There’s no home waiting for a witch like me.

2015
Los Angeles, CA

Constance Langdon is no saint, but everyone she ever harmed was someone who harmed her first. Moira, who stole her husband. Hugo, who cheated on her with the help. Larry, who moved his family into her house. Ben, Vivien and Violet were invading her territory and they had the gall to attempt to take custody of her grandson from her. So, any unkind thing she did to any of them was their own damn fault.

Michael, on the other hand, kills any creature that crosses his path. There is no method to his madness beyond carnage for the sake of carnage. Michael says he does the things he does out of love for her, but Constance doesn’t want that kind of love. It’s ugly, and violent, and she has gotten sick and tired of being the object of his hellish affections.

When she opens his door and sees the ghastly corpse of the priest with his throat slit, Constance is horrified. Michael smiles at the sight of her and his face is so angelic that it makes her heart clench terribly in the confines of her ribcage. This boy is supposed to be the light of her life, but he has too much darkness in him and she can’t take it anymore.

So her love turns ugly, and violent. Constance shatters his fragile heart with her words and throws him out of the house with nothing but the clothes on his back, dots of arterial blood staining his shirt and tears staining his cheeks. Michael is too overwhelmed to put on a pair of shoes and he walks into the street barefoot, the asphalt hot beneath his heels.

When the car that careens around the corner and crashes into him and she makes eye contact with the driver, Constance feels a shock of relief that reverberates through her like a bolt of electricity and brings a biblical deluge of tears to her eyes as she holds her grandson and strokes his angelic blond hair and waits for all the life to bleed out of him.

Michael begs her to drag his body to the house, his voice trembling with how much he needs her to love him. Constance tells him to go to hell and she’s about to walk away when a girl steps off the sidewalk and hobbles over to them, her cane making hollow sounds against the pavement before she crouches next to the spawn of Satan and squints at him from behind the lenses of her glasses.

“Why aren’t you helping him?” the girl wants to know.

Constance glares down her nose at this interloper: she’s a chubby thing dressed in a black sundress festooned with blood red polka dots and shiny red buttons from her neckline to the corset belt around her waist, black glasses with retro plastic frames perched on her tiny button nose, sharp gray eyes with a ferocious intelligence behind them, and tendrils of thick ash brown hair slithering over her
pale freckled shoulders like snakes. “I don’t know who the hell you think you are,” she snaps, “but this is none of your goddamn business.”

“I’m Vee,” the girl murmurs and splays the fingers of the hand she isn’t using to grip the handle of her cane in the humid air above Michael’s chest so her palm is parallel to his fluttering heart, “and if you’re not going to help him, I will.”

Michael stares at her with hot tears darkening his pale eyelashes and swallows the blood in his mouth. “Please,” he says. “I don’t want to die.”

Constance grabs her wrist and squeezes hard enough to make her flinch. “Oh, no you don’t,” she snarls.

Vee sees everything in the bite of her fingernails, the pressure of her palm: the Langdons, the hellmouth gnawing on the souls trapped in the murder house, the Harmons, the rubber suit, the Infantata, the afterbirth, the rosebushes. Psychometry always gives her the kind of headache she can feel in her teeth—some of the memories are so vibrant that it hurts to look at them even with her eyes closed. Vee clenches her jaw and forces Constance to let go, using telekinesis to unfurl her grip one finger at a time.

Constance recoils and stumbles as the magic prickles under her skin, like the spindles of thorns. Emilia DeLongpre, her grandmother on her mother’s side, was a witch—the witch[7] Constance hasn’t spoken to anyone from her mother’s side of the family in years because she never wanted to get involved with anything of that ilk. Oh, the irony. “If you do this,” she hisses, “he’s your problem. I’m done with that monster.”

Vee unclenches her jaw and sighs. “Fine,” she deadpan before she hunches over Michael and breathes life back into him.

Michael chokes on his own air when he feels his broken rib unpuncture his lung and unbreak, along with every fissure and fracture in his body. When he looks up, the girl hunched over him is out of focus because her face is hovering an inch above his. Michael shudders and breathes in through his nose and mouth, inhaling the intoxicating smell of apples from her shampoo and gorging on her life force like a glutton at a buffet. This is what he’s been craving every time he killed something or hurt someone: the vital energy flowing into every cell in his body and illuminating every dark corner of his mind. Michael squeezes his eyelids shut against the hysterical light and opens them again slowly, his heart thrumming under the palm of her small hand.

Vee abruptly uses her cane to get back on her feet and he blinks at her, his mouth ajar. When his eyes meet hers, it knocks all of the air out of her lungs. Vee stops breathing at the sensation of some cosmic force cracking her chest open and clawing at her fluttering heart.

Michael looks at her and she feels the earth spinning under her feet, the firmament above her shifting as gravity moves through her like an unstoppable force pulling her to him.

“Who are you?” he asks, his voice soft and wondering.

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers and sighs. “Let’s go,” she says instead of answering his question and hobbles up onto the sidewalk.

Michael scrambles to his feet and follows her, his whole body vibrating with nervous energy while his Adam’s apple anxiously bobs in his throat. Vee opens the doors of a glossy red MINI Cooper with a blurt of telekinesis and folds herself into the front seat. Michael gets in the car and looks at her
over his shoulder before he opens his mouth, but he doesn’t get a chance to say anything because the girl in question holds up her hand to stop him.

Vee shuts the doors with another blare of magic and hunches over in her seat until her forehead is nestled in the protective circle of the steering wheel. “I need a minute,” she mumbles. “Casting Vitalum Vitalis is exhausting.”

“Vitalum Vitalis?” Michael forms the words slowly because he’s worried they might burn his tongue like the exorcism incantations burned his ears. Vital…um Vital…is.

Vee hums, the soft uh-huh coalescing in her clenched jaw. “It means ‘life for life,’” she informs him, “or ‘the life within the living’ if you want to get pretentious about the Latin. Basically, I used my life force to bring you back from the brink of death and heal your extensive injuries. Which is why I need a minute—” she slumps back in her seat and rubs her temples with her fingertips in a futile attempt to dispel the oncoming tension headache before she bites her lip and winces at the pain in her brain, “—actually. No,” she mumbles as she conjures her keys out of her purse and into her hand. “I need some food. We both do,” she pauses to put the key in the ignition and he startles at the sound of the engine starting up, “since your cells had to regenerate at a hyperaccelerated rate. It’s a good thing our telomeres don’t shorten,” she looks at him over her shoulder and checks her blind spot before she drives away from everything he’s ever known and loved, “or you’d be totally fucked.”

Michael forces himself to look at her instead of looking back. “What are telomeres?” he asks.

Vee muffles a yawn in the hollow of her palm and keeps her eyes focused on the road. It’s partly because she’s too autistic to make eye contact, but mostly because traffic in L. A. is a fucking nightmare even for neurotypical people. “Otherwise known as the repetitive nucleotide sequences at the ends of chromosomes,” she clarifies. “When cells divide, telomeres get shorter. Until people get old and senescence occurs. Then organ failure, and eventually death. We don’t have that problem because our cells contain telomerase—an enzyme specific to cancer cells that replenishes depleted telomeres—so Nephilim have no Hayflick limit. We can make new cells for eternity. We can also be killed,” she says and glances sidelong at him over the nervous gnarl of her shoulder as she stops at red light, “but if you were eating properly you would’ve survived being hit by that car without my help.”

“I am eating properly,” Michael tells her with a pinch of petulance in his voice, “my grandma feeds me three meals every day, and snacks at teatime.”

Vee forces herself not to shy away from the unadulterated fascination lurking in his devastatingly blue eyes. This boy didn’t have a life outside of his grandmother and their little house of horrors until five minutes ago, so odds are he’s not looking at her because he finds her fascinating. It’s just because she’s new. “I’m not talking about human meals,” she says, “I’m talking about demonic consumption.”

Michael stops pouting and frowns, his forehead crumpling in confusion. “What?”

Vee flinches at the sound of a car horn blaring a few blocks away before she answers that question with another question. “Why do you think demons make diabolic pacts?” she asks. “Hell is temporary for most souls. It’s their punishment for sinning on earth, but eventually they do their penance and they ascend to Heaven or they’re reincarnated into a new life on earth. Which is why demons tempt humans into diabolic pacts: because their immortal souls become an eternal food source for demons who feed on pain and suffering. I bet that’s why you’ve been killing small animals: you consume their energy and feed on your grandmother’s emotional response to your offerings,” she says and crooks her fingers like quotation marks around the word offerings without
unclenching her vicelike grip on the steering wheel and turns onto Sunset Boulevard, “in the aftermath. It’s obvious that you’re not consciously aware of how to feed on human emotions, though. Otherwise her resentment wouldn’t’ve built up until she broke down and disowned you. If you knew how to eat like a demon, things never would’ve escalated that far.”

“So,” Michael says in a trembling voice caught halfway between hope and agony, “does that mean I can make her take me back?”

Vee shakes her head slowly to avoid exacerbating her headache. “No,” she tells him as she pulls into the parking lot at Wendy’s and unbuckles her seatbelt before she pops the glove compartment open and hangs a violent red handicapped placard from the rearview mirror, “you can’t retroactively feed on her resentment and erase her feelings. We consume the excess psychic energy generated by human emotions. Or their Vitalis, their life force. Which doesn’t make the feelings themselves go away. Now,” she says as she bends over the gearshift to snatch up her purse from where it was sitting on the floor by his feet. “Let’s go.”

“Um…” Michael grabs her shoulder and looks at her with a wide-eyed stricken expression on his face, “…my clothes—”

Vee casts a spell nonverbally to clean the blood out of his clothes and hair. “It’s okay,” she whispers conspiratorially and shrugs his hand off before she gets out of the car and conjures shoes onto his bare feet. “I’m magic.”

Michael blinks down at the shoes and gapes at them. These aren’t just any shoes: they’re his boots, the special ones his grandmother bought him after he went through his preternatural growth spurt. Michael smiles at the sight of the scuff on the left toe and the double knot in the laces that he tied himself before he scrambles to open the door of the restaurant for Vee and winces as the intrusive thoughts start clawing at his mind, the dissonant voices of everyone on Sunset Boulevard screaming at him on a frequency only he can hear.\[9\]

Vee doesn’t seem to have the same problem when she approaches the counter and gives the menu a cursory glance. “I’ll have two large orders of fries,” she informs the teenager behind the counter, “a small chocolate Frosty, and a large Dr. Pepper with no ice—”

Michael flits his gaze downward when she looks at him expectantly and stares at his shoes as the flush of embarrassment creeps up the back of his neck. “I’ve never eaten fast food before,” he admits.

Vee shrugs. It doesn’t surprise her that Constance Langdon never took her grandson to a Wendy’s, or McDonald’s, or any other restaurant with a drive-thru. “Okay,” she says, “he’ll have the Double Stack meal deal. It’s the most bang for my buck.”

“What would you like to drink?” the teenager behind the counter wants to know.

Michael turns and looks down at Vee. “Can I have chocolate milk?” he asks.

Vee nods. “Sure,” she says.

Michael beams at her and she smiles back shyly before she pays for their food. After she puts her tray on top of a corner table, she folds herself into her seat and puts her hair up so it won’t get in her Frosty. Michael watches her hold the hair tie in her mouth and spin the slithering tendrils of her hair around into a messy bun, focusing on her to quiet the cacophony of invasive thoughts creeping into his mind.
Vee dips two of her fries in her Frosty and narrows her eyes at him behind her glasses. “What?” she asks.

Michael takes a bite of his double cheeseburger before he answers her question. “You said ‘we,’” he murmurs curiously. “What are we? Who are you?”

Vee eats her fries and tries not to moan at how good the combination of salt and sweetness is. “I’m like you,” she says, “but not. I’m the daughter of Abaddon, the third prince of Hell. You’re the prodigal son of Satan, king of Hell, so we’re not exactly the same.”

Michael looks around nervously to see if anyone is eavesdropping on their conversation.

“It’s okay,” Vee says, “anyone who overhears us won’t believe we’re actually hellspawn. I could get on top of this table and yell ‘the Antichrist is risen! Ave Satanas!’ and everyone here would just assume I was drunk or high.”

Michael bites his lip when the mark behind his ear itches and scrunches up his shoulders at the sensation. Constance named him after the archangel, the one who defeated Lucifer and cast him the hell out of Heaven, in the hopes that he would grow up to be like his namesake instead of his unholy father. “So you’re a demon,” he says.

Vee shakes her head slowly. “I’m one of the Nephilim,” she informs him, “half-angel and half-human. Specifically the daughter of a fallen angel and a witch. Your mother isn’t a witch, is she?”

Michael chews on his bottom lip and swallows thickly. “No,” he says, “my mother is dead.”

“So’s mine,” Vee says, “my biological mother died because I was born. I don’t think humans—even witches—can survive giving birth to giants.”

Michael frowns at her in confusion. “You aren’t a giant,” he says. “You’re shorter than I am.”

Vee chortles and Michael has the urge to snatch the sound of her sublime laughter out of the air, to keep it for himself. “I’m shorter than pretty much everyone,” she retorts, “but I was being hyperbolic. Nephilim is translated as ‘giants’ or ‘fallen ones’ in most English versions of the bible, but I call us ‘the violent ones’ instead. Symmachus, who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek during the late second century, translated it that way.”

Michael thrills at the word us. All his life, he’s been alone. Only now he’s with this girl—this woman—and just being near her fills his chest with a pure warmth that he never knew existed. It feels better than anything he’s felt before, like every jagged and broken piece of him is fitting together finally. “Were you here for me?” he asks.

“No.” Vee shakes her head. “I wanted to see if that house was actually a hellmouth. There’s another one at the Hotel Cortez, five miles east of where you were. I came for a family reunion and stayed for all the demonic activity. Which is kind of ironic, since Los Angeles means ‘city of angels.’”

Michael, whose family consists of monsters in one form or another, wonders if hers is the same. It’s odd, but he can’t seem to hear her thoughts or see into the darkest parts of her soul. Although he can sense that she hasn’t lied to him or tried to trick him. Vee is honest; a virtue he’s surprised by, given her lineage. “Your family isn’t like us,” he deduces, “are they?”

“No.” Vee shakes her head again. “I thought I was the only Nephil on the planet until I saw you.”

Michael is overcome by a desire he doesn’t understand. It takes him a moment to realize he wants to
kiss her, since he’s never wanted to kiss a girl before. Maybe because he’s never met another Nephilim until this afternoon. Or because he’s still a child, even though he looks older. “What’s your name?” he asks.

“I’m Veronica Roscoe,” she answers, “but people call me Vee.”

Michael can feel his heart taking root in his body as she dips more fries in her Frosty and eats them unselfconsciously. It’s the first time he’s ever felt comfortable in his own skin all the way down to the bone. “I’m Michael Langdon,” he says. “It’s nice to meet you, Vee.”

[1] Hoozuki (pronounced “ho-oh-zuki,” not “who-zoo-kee”) can either mean groundcherries when it’s written as 「酸漿」, or “devil lantern” when it’s written as 「鬼灯」. Guess what kanji I used for Lyn.


[3] Genesis 6:1-4: “When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. […] The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them.”

[4] Penemue is described in 1 Enoch 68:9-16: “the name of the fourth is Penemue: he discovered to the children of men bitterness and sweetness, and pointed out to them every secret of their wisdom; he taught men to understand writing, and the use of ink and paper. Therefore numerous have been those who have gone astray from every period of the world, even to this day. For men were not born for this, thus with pen and with ink to confirm their faith; since they were not created, except that, like the angels, they might remain righteous and pure. Nor would death, which destroys everything, have affected them; but by this their knowledge they perish, and by this its power also consumes them.” Penemue is also named Muriel, Abraziel, Tamuel, Tamel, Tumael, Phanuel, Penuel, and Penemuel. Jeqon, Asbeel, Gadreel, Penemuel, and Tamiel were the angels who convinced the other Watchers to fall and fornicate with humans.

[5] Abaddon is mentioned in the Book of Job (26:6, 28:22, 31:12), the Book of Proverbs (15:11, 27:20), the Book of Revelation (9:7-11, 20:1-3) and Psalm 88:11. The Lanterne of Light (1409-1410) classifies Abaddon as the prince of sloth. Abaddon is also characterized and interpreted as another name for Satan, a bottomless pit located in the underworld, another name for Jesus, as the angel of death and destruction, and as the Antichrist. There’s no “canon” interpretation of Abaddon beyond the bible verses where he’s mentioned. Gnostic apocryphal texts do flesh the personification of Abaddon out (e.g. the Coptic manuscripts attributed to Bartholomew and “The Enthronement of Abbaton” by pseudo-Timothy of Alexandria), but I’m pretty much ignoring what doesn’t fit into my narrative. Y’know, like a significant number of Christians do with the bible.

[6] Dante Alighieri, Purgatory. We got all the circles of hell and whatnot from The Divine Comedy (1308-1320), not from any biblical text.

[7] Mimi DeLongpre was the Supreme at the turn of the twentieth century. Constance mentions that she has cousins with the surname DeLongpre in “Afterbirth” and she canonically had enough power to sense that Vivien was pregnant with Michael, so her being descended from a witch makes sense. Mimi is a nickname for Emilia.

[8] This is the only scientific way to explain how Michael aged more than a decade overnight, because such a rapid growth spurt would’ve required his cells to divide at a hyperaccelerated rate. It would also explain why he was able to heal injuries that should’ve been fatal in the darkest timeline. Most human somatic cells don’t produce active telomerase, which is actually a good thing because uninhibited telomerase causes irregular growth on a cellular level (i.e. cancer). It’s the enzyme that makes cancer cells immortal (i.e. able to divide infinitely without succumbing to senescence) and therefore could theoretically do the same for cells that aren’t malignant or carcinogenic. I’m
postulating that corporeal angels and demons and their descendants (i.e. witches, Nephilim) have a specific protein in their systems that prevents the enzyme from causing irregular cancerous growth.

[9] Michael is technically a three-year-old boy in the body of a teenager at this point. I’m writing him as being smarter and more perceptive than any three-year-old because physically and neurologically he’s 18-19 (i.e. he has a teenage body and a teenage brain), but magic and intelligence can’t totally supplant how childish his character is because psychologically and developmentally he’s still a three-year-old. Michael probably attended preschool early, but I doubt he went to kindergarten or elementary school. It’s more likely that Constance would’ve hired private tutors and educated him at home after his preternatural growth spurt. Which is why he can understand what telomeres are, but he still gets excited about chocolate milk and is proud of being able to tie his own shoes.

[10] Murder House is located at 1120 Westchester Place, while the Hotel Cortez is located at 317 South Spring Street. These locations are 4.4 miles away from each other, approximately. Sunset Boulevard is 4.8 miles northwest of the Murder House, in the opposite direction.
Vee introduces Michael to her adoptive parents and to Papa Legba, who pops in and informs her that Mallory came to him claiming that she averted the Apocalypse.

If you let me stay,
I'll let you cut your teeth on my heart
until it becomes a black forest beating
out of time, beating me out of this world.

Vandana Khanna, “The Goddess Shows Up Late for the End-of-the-World Party”

After she teaches him to consume human emotions without traumatizing or killing his victims, Vee drives him to a condominium in Petaluma. It’s a seven-hour trip up the Interstate, with the wind ruffling his hair and glimpses of Vee mouthing the lyrics to songs he can’t hear because she’s wearing one earbud and keeping her other ear open while she’s on the road.

“Why can’t I read your mind?” Michael asks her.

Vee doesn’t take her eyes off the highway. “Because I don’t want anyone but me inside my head,” she informs him, “and right now I’m more powerful than you are. So you can’t hear my thoughts unless I let you.”

“Why is that?” Michael wants to know. “What makes you more powerful than I am?”

Vee shrugs. “I’m older than you,” she says, “and you’ve been feeding on the emotions of one person sprinkled with small deaths. I feed on huge crowds of people,” she elaborates as she glances at the surface of her rearview mirror and checks her blind spot before she merges into the center lane to avoid taking the wrong exit, “I was feeding on the people at Sunset Boulevard while we were in the parking lot at Wendy’s. It’s what I do every time I go somewhere. I create a metaphysical dome and siphon all of the excess psychic energy in a certain radius: anywhere from one mile to a thousand. It’s more efficient than doing what I taught you: focusing on one person at a time.”

Michael frowns. “Why didn’t you teach me that?” he asks.

Vee shrugs again, cocking her head until her shoulder almost meets her earlobe. “Because I learned how to focus on one person at a time before I started doing that,” she explains. “I didn’t want to
overwhelm you on your first try. It would have been like teaching you to swim by throwing you in the deep end of a pool and yelling at you while you tried not to drown. Which seemed like something your grandmother would’ve done to you.”

Michael huffs indignantly at the blunt insinuation, even though he’s afraid that she might be right. “You don’t even know her,” he mutters petulantly.

Vee snorts. “I don’t need to,” she retorts, “I saw everything I needed to know about her when she grabbed my arm. Psychometrically.”

Michael frowns and chews on his bottom lip. “Psycho-what?”

Vee softly exhales a vociferous whoosh of air through the small gap between her top and bottom teeth. “Psychometry,” she explains, “the power to mindcast and obtain information about objects or people using physical contact or psychic means. It’s also called the Sight.”

“What did you see when I touched you before?” Michael asks, his tone shifting into something quiet and sharp.

Vee sighs. “Nothing,” she tells him. “I don’t like using Psychometry to read people. It’s overwhelming, like downloading and processing years of information all at once. I only read your grandmother because I wanted context for why she wasn’t calling 9-1-1 after you got hit by that car.”

Michael wants so badly to get inside her head. It’s frustrating, not being able to see into her soul. “Okay,” he says, “my grandma knows me better than anyone. So that means you know everything about me. I think you should tell me everything about you. It’s only fair.”

Michael learns everything he never knew he wanted to know about Vee in those seven hours: she’s twenty-four years old, her birthday is July twelfth, she’s literally been to Hell and back, all of her grandparents are dead, she’s abysmal at choosing her favorite things—favorite color (his is red), favorite book (his is Gooseberry Park by Cynthia Rylant), favorite movie (his is the Disney version of Sleeping Beauty), favorite song (his is the Patience and Prudence rendition of “Tonight You Belong to Me”), favorite drink (his is chocolate milk), favorite food (his is his grandma’s homemade mac ‘n’ cheese), favorite dessert (his is his grandma’s peanut pie)—because she loves different things for different reasons, she uses a cane because an incurable autoimmune disorder called rheumatoid arthritis caused a buildup of inflammatory sediment in her blood that permanently damaged the bones of her right wrist and perpetually inflamed her left ankle, she’s a pescatarian because she can eat fish but she’s allergic to the oligosaccharides in red meat and to the myosin light chains in white meat, she takes antidepressants every morning, she’s autistic (she described herself as “being on the spectrum” before she explained autism spectrum disorder to him and the conversation dissolved into a rant on how bullshit the labels of “high-functioning” and “low-functioning” are to both physically and mentally disabled people for half an hour), and she has political opinions that would make his conservative grandma shit a brick.

“When did you tap into the power you used to save me?” he wants to know. Constance had locked him in the closet when she caught him lighting her delicate conical taper candles with his mind. Michael didn’t cast after that unless something forced his power out of him, like the priest he killed.

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers and keeps her other hand on the wheel, her grip ironclad and immutable. “I started practicing magic when I was two,” she says and a gibbous smile unfurls from one corner of her lips at the memory, “I was counting the butterflies in a picture book about the rainforest as tall as I was, and I made them come to life. Conjuration, my first power. It freaked my mom the fuck out. I first used Vitalum Vitalis when I was seven to bring a dead kitten I found in the
woods back to life. When he died last year, I cried for like a week. I know sixteen years is a long and happy lifespan for an outdoor cat, but still.”

“I’m not a kitten,” Michael says, his voice coiling in his throat like a venomous snake. If she adopted the kitten she resurrected when she was seven and took care of that cat for sixteen years, is she doing the same thing with him? Michael doesn’t want her to see him as another stray cat, an anthropomorphic replacement for a dearly departed pet. It makes his stomach churn, being jealous of a dead animal—like the ones he used to skin and hang in the kitchen on Sunday mornings before his grandmother came home from church.

Vee glances at him over her shoulder. “I know,” she informs him matter-of-factly, “and I’m not adopting you because you remind me of my dead cat. I’m adopting you because you remind me of me,” she flicks her gaze to the screen of her phone in the cupholder before she says, “except you don’t have parents. Or a healthy, nontoxic support system. I know I’m being selfish, but I wish I had another Nephilim to talk to when I was growing up. I only had my father, and that was after I learned how to use Descensum and astral project myself into the pits of Hell. Which didn’t happen until I was sixteen. I can be there for you the same way that I wish someone had been there for me when I was your age.”

_Do unto others_, Michael thinks, _the golden rule. This woman—the offspring of a witch and a demon—is a better Christian than my grandmother. How ironic._

Michael has never been anywhere outside of Los Angeles: a glamourous sunlit cityscape full of dark corners even on the brightest days. Petaluma has a totally different atmosphere—nothing ominous looming in his periphery. Maybe because it’s part of Northern California. Or because this is the farthest he’s ever been from a hellmouth.

Vee parks in a handicapped space in front of a tricolored four-story Italianate condominium that sprawls along the street and turns around the corner of another in chunks of brick red, sage green, and burnished ochre. Those colorful edifices are punctuated by rows of windows, and sections with dome tops bookend the building that culminates in a tower with a conical spire. Almost like something out of a fairytale.

Michael has never seen anything like it before. “So,” he says as Vee pushes the button to lock up the MINI Cooper, “this is home?”

“No,” she says and ekes the _oh_ sound out as she hobbles over to the doorway at the foot of the tower on the corner, “this is where my parents are planning to retire. We’re staying here during the reunion because they’re between tenants and it’s cheaper than a hotel but less cramped than staying with my brothers or her sisters.”

Michael knows that her mother has three sisters—her Aunt Judith, Aunt Bex, and Aunt Ivy—and Vee has four siblings: Morty, Puck, Sadie, and Killian. When his stomach growled halfway to Petaluma, she took a detour and drew him a family tree in the composition book she keeps in her messenger bag while they ate dinner. Michael knows his grandmother has family in Virginia—her cousin Stephen DeLongpre and his wife Evaline—but he’s never met them, even though his fake birth certificate says he’s their son.

Vee steps into the sleek elevator when the sliding doors open and stands in the corner with her back against the wall. It’s the same thing she did at both restaurants: sitting at a corner booth and putting a wall between her and the rest of the world, like some kind of defense mechanism. “We’re going to the third floor,” she says as she tucks the handle of her cane in the crook of her elbow, “you can push
the button if you want.”

Michael pushes the button with a stab of his finger and watches it light up. “Stop treating me like a child,” he mutters.

Vee snorts. “So you’re a child when you’re begging your grandmother for another chance,” she says, “but you’re not a child now because you don’t like it when I treat you like one?”

*I’m sorry, but you can’t afford the luxury of being a child anymore. This world is going to chew you up and spit you out if you don’t grow the hell up. I’m going to do my best to help you, but I won’t baby you. I won’t lie to you, either—I can’t promise you that I won’t fuck things up, but I can promise you that.*

Michael blinks as those words float into his mind, like bubbles on a hot summer day. Only he can’t pop them one by one, because they’re not ephemeral. Vee is anything but that; she’s the most unfleeting person he’s ever met. From everything she’s told him about herself, she’s the kind of person who mates for life.

“I don’t want to push the button,” Vee clarifies out loud and snaps the gaping maw of her thoughts shut before he can look inside, “it hurts my wrist if I use my right hand and I need my other hand for my cane. Since you’re here and you’re able-bodied, I wanted you to do it. I wasn’t treating you like a child. I’m just compensating for my own weaknesses.”

Michael smiles at the sprinkle of bitterness in her soft voice. *What kinds of weaknesses do you hide behind your disabilities and disorders? he thinks. I want to see them all. Show me everything.* “Why didn’t you just use telekinesis?” he asks.

Vee flicks her gaze up and makes eye contact with the lens of the camera in the opposite corner of the ceiling as the sliding doors open. “I’m still too burned out…” she murmurs before she hobbles out of the elevator and into the hallway, “…and magic also makes my family uncomfortable. I accidentally incinerated my mom during a fight we had when I was a teenager. I brought her back to life and they forgave me because they know that I didn’t mean to hurt her, but…” she shrugs and smiles ruefully more to herself than at him as she extracts a key from one of the pockets on the front of her messenger bag, “…now they know what I’m capable of and they’re scared of that. I can’t blame them, because they’re only human.”

Michael hooks an arm around her shoulders and hugs her, his other arm snaking around waist to hold her against his chest. Vee exhales an eep of surprise before she forces herself not to panic and lets him put the pressure of his embrace on her; she inhales and smells his citrus shampoo and a whiff of dryer sheets mixed with hints of grease from the food he ate instead of the sulfurous odor of fire and brimstone, the fabric of his shirt is soft where the cotton touches her cheek and cocks her glasses askew, and she can feel the pulse of his heart beating under his flesh and bone. Michael squeezes her before he lets go and steps out of her personal bubble with his hands curling self-consciously at his sides, a flush of pink suffusing his cheeks.

Vee isn’t a hugger; in fact, physical contact with strangers freaks her the fuck out. Michael is the exception to her rule, apparently. Vee actually liked it when he hugged her. Something about him is either horribly wrong or horribly right, but she’s too tired to dwell on that. “Deep pressure stimulation is therapeutic for autistic people,” she blurs out as she adjusts her glasses and unlocks the door of the condo. “Temple Grandin—an autistic woman—invented a hug machine in 1965, but later said in her 2010 interview with *Time* magazine that she preferred to hug and be hugged by people. It’s okay if you’re a hugger, is what I’m saying.”

Michael shakes his head so fast he almost discombobulates himself. “I’m not,” he tells her, lying
through his teeth. “It just seemed like you needed one.”

“I did.” Vee tucks her keys in the open pocket on the front of her bag and squares her shoulders in a futile attempt to banish some of the anxiety from manifesting as knots in her muscles and threads of tension backstitched into the bend of her spine before she crosses over the threshold.

Despite them being part of her nontoxic system of unconditional love and support, she’s nervous about introducing the literal spawn of Satan—who looks like the illegitimate lovechild of Veronica Lake and Dorian Gray—to her parents. Vee has spent the better part of two decades compartmentalizing the demonic facets of herself and keeping them separate from the human aspects of her life, and now she might be rendering all of that effort moot because she found the Antichrist bleeding to death in the aftermath of a hit and run and she categorically refused to let him die. This might be the thing that makes her parents finally realize they made a terrible mistake when they chose to love her, in spite of what she is.

If they didn’t stop loving her after she accidentally incinerated her mother that one time, they probably never will. Unfortunately, her anxiety doesn’t agree with that puff of logic—especially when she sees both of her parents watching Michael shut the door behind him. It’s been almost eight hours since Vee texted her parents from the parking lot at Wendy’s to explain that she wasn’t alone, so they’ve had time to start getting used to the idea of Michael becoming part of their family.

“Michael,” Vee says as she props her cane in the corner by the doorway and puts one hand on the wall for balance as she kicks her shoes off, “this is Matthias Roscoe, my father, and Dr. Karen Roscoe, my mother. Mom and Dad, this is Michael Langdon. I found him after his grandmother kicked him out for being half-demon.”

Matt Roscoe, developmental psychologist and early childhood coordinator of the North Kitsap School District, is a thin six-foot tall man on the cusp of his sixtieth birthday with brown skin, eyes so dark brown they almost look black, and no hair on top of his head; the salt-and-pepper hair on the sides of his head is cut short in a no-nonsense style that grows from his trimmed sideburns into his close-cropped beard. Dr. Karen Roscoe, professor of psychology and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Seattle University, is a slim woman in her late sixties with fine gray hair that had been honey blonde once and warm green eyes, her wrinkled hands tipped with meticulously filed nails. According to Vee, they’ve been together for thirty-four years and married for twenty-nine years. Karen is French by way of backwater South Carolina. Matt is from cornfed Iowa and he’s part-Scottish, part-Ojibwe. Vee herself is Irish, Japanese, and Italian on her biological mother’s side. What his grandmother would call a mongrel, even without the dollop of fallen angel on her father’s side of the genetic equation.

Karen tugs Michael into a gentle hug, one that makes all of the nervousness toiling and troubling like a witch’s brew in his gut fly away. It’s the kind of hug that almost seems bigger than her body until she lets him go and smiles at him, warm and welcoming like the mother he never had. There are soft crinkles at the corners of her eyes and he desperately tries not to start thinking about his grandmother when he looks at her, because he doesn’t want to start crying again.

Matt stands up from where he was sitting on the couch and offers Michael his hand. Sometimes a handshake can moonlight as a display of male dominance or the gesture can disguise barely contained hostility as hospitality, but Matt Roscoe does neither of those unsavory things. Michael doesn’t know exactly what to expect from him or his wife, yet. It’s not every day your daughter adopts a stray demon child. Matt isn’t fazed, though; he’s used to his wife bringing home stray people and unwanted pets that grow on you like toe fungus to fill her empty nest every time one of their children moves out. “It’s nice to meet you, Michael,” he says, and he seems like he means it.
“Michael is a three-year-old in the body of a teenager,” Vee elaborates. “I made an appointment at a hospital in Mountain View to run tests and figure out how old he actually is, physically and mentally. So anything the family has planned for tomorrow isn’t going to work for me.”

Karen frowns at that. “Which hospital?” she asks.

Vee sighs. “El Camino,” she mumbles.[14]

Karen frowns exponentially harder. “El Camino Hospital’s CEO is the brother of the man who tried to steal your kidney,” she points out shrewdly, “and a member of the Cooperative.”

Vee cocks her head slantwise and shrugs. “Yeah,” she says, “and that means he knows exactly what I’ll do if he tries anything stupid. Better the devil worshipper you know, you know?”

Karen frowns so hard it makes her entire face go sour, like the spoiled milk of facial expressions. Michael can sense the worry oozing from her every pore; it’s so pervasive that he can almost taste her fear staining the artificially cool air flowing out of the vents in the walls. “I don’t like it,” she says, “not after what happened—”

“Noted,” Vee mutters, “but it’s the most technologically advanced hospital in the world and it’s run by a nonprofit organization. Unlike his brother, who sold his soul to the devil for profit, Dr. Wooster sold his soul for science.[15] So his cutting edge hospital is basically the only place capable of performing the kinds of tests Michael needs that won’t sell his blood on the black market or attempt to steal his kidney. ‘In hac spe vivo.’”[16]

Michael looks somewhat alarmed by that, his eyes going wide, his eyebrows slowly climbing his forehead. “Why would anyone want to buy my blood?” he asks.

Vee shrugs again. “Satanists would love to include ‘the blood of the Antichrist’ in their rituals,” she points out, “they’d probably consider it part of their unholy sacrament, like Christians drinking the blood of Christ but without bothering with transubstantiating consecrated red wine. Worst case scenario: they might use your blood in a spell to summon you or attempt to control you. Hemomancy is powerful shit, and magic gets stronger if you add the body parts of either the caster or the intended target of the spell—blood or flesh is the most potent, but hair or saliva or nail clippings work too.”[17]

Michael soaks up that information like a dry sponge and swallows thickly, his throat constricting while he thinks about the possibilities. “What’s the Cooperative?” he asks her.

Vee sighs with enough force to slump her entire body. “It’s a long story,” she mutters as she glances up the stairs and narrows her eyes at a wisp of hellsmoke[18] creeping out of the crack underneath her bedroom door. “Let’s go to my room, and I’ll tell you.”

There’s a man standing in the center of her room dressed in a white dress shirt, black dress pants, black leather boots, a long black coat trimmed with fur, a necklace strung with sharp animal teeth, and a black top hat with skulls perched on the brim. Underneath the bone white face paint that obscures most of his face, his skin is dark brown; his hair is twisted into dreadlocks that slink over his shoulders; his eyes are a hellish shade of red, and they shine in a certain slant of light.

“Uncle Elegua,” Vee says and glares at the fumes of smoke invading her space. “What brings you here?”[19]

Papa Legba slants his gaze to Michael before he grins at her, showing his teeth. “I’ve been visited by
“a witch,” he says, elongating the word until it grows an extra syllable and bites down on the *ch* sound, “a witch that claims to have slain the spawn of Satan and seeks a favor in return for averting the apocalypse, but I see that cannot possibly be the case.”

Vee groans internally, externally, eternally. “Show me,” she huffs.

Papa Legba smirks and takes her hand in both of his. Vee squeezes her eyelids shut as his lips ghost over her knuckles and sees more with her mind than with her eyes: the witch is a dishwater blonde with huge dark brown eyes that make her look younger than she probably is, a penchant for smoky eye makeup and an abundance of mascara, pale skin with peach and golden undertones, a delicate nose, an arch in her eyebrows, a soft rectangular chin, and tachyons stuck to her like superluminal glue.[20]

If they weren’t hypothetical particles that no one had seen before, Vee would’ve known she was looking at a time traveler. Unfortunately, that vital information slips her mind and she opens her eyes to focus on the fallen messenger in front of her.

Papa Legba scrapes his thumb over the heart and head lines on her palm before he lets go. “I left her waiting at the crossroads,” he says, “she thinks I came to collect his soul.”

Michael scowls at the fallen messenger. “Wait,” he says, “the witch who tried to kill me offered you my soul in exchange for a favor?”

Papa Legba hums, a low *mm-hum*.

Michael glares at him. “You can’t have my soul,” he says. “It’s mine and I’m not selling.”

Papa Legba guffaws and grins at him. “I’ll tell her what she wants to hear as soon as I return,” he says and flicks his gaze to Vee. “I have a hunch that you would prefer she continue to believe the Antichrist is dead,” he deduces.

Vee nods, a sharp descent of her chin. “I think Satan would also prefer that,” she points out.

“Agreed,” Papa Legba says before he vanishes in a haze of sulfurous fumes.

Michael blinks as the smoke floats into the ether. “Was that really your uncle?” he asks incredulously.

Vee nods again. “Technically he’s your uncle too,” she informs him. “Papa Legba is a crossroads demon. Vodou practitioners worship him as one of their loa. Christians syncretize him with St. Peter, St. Lazarus and St. Anthony. Which always makes him laugh, because he’s no saint. Anywho,” she says as she flops onto her bed and valiantly resists the urge to take off her bra, “you asked me about the Cooperative. It’s an offshoot of the Illuminati, an Enlightenment-era organization founded in Bavaria in 1776. Their society was formed to put an end to machinations of the state and of the church that caused injustice, to control governments and religious institutions without dominating them. Unfortunately the Cooperative is a totalitarian society, not a group of revolutionaries. Their agents have infiltrated every government in the world, most of the members are either corrupt politicians or capitalist pigs in charge of major corporations, and they all worship your father. If you want to destroy the world and bring on Armageddon, they’ll help you—they all think you’re the messiah they’ve been waiting for.”

Michael has read the epistles of John, where the only qualifier for being an anti-Christ is denying the existence of Jesus and of God. Or denying that Jesus is, in fact, the Son of God. There are passages about the false messiahs and false prophets who perform signs and omens—like magic—in the
gospels of Mark and Matthew. 2 Thessalonians mentions a “lawless one,” one destined for
destruction, but it never actually uses the term Antichrist. There isn’t much information about him
in the biblical texts his grandmother made him study. Jewish eschatological texts from medieval times
describe Armilus, the spawn of Satan and a virgin; he was destined to bring “much distress” to Israel
specifically.

According to the catechism of the Catholic church, the Antichrist is “a pseudo-messianism by which
man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.” Officially, the Catholic
church believes the Antichrist doesn’t exist. 666, the Mark or Number of the Beast, is from the Book
of Revelation. Which is where he found most of his information about the apocalypse, after the
ghost of his sister told him what he was.

I’m not your sister, Violet had snapped at him, you’re the monster that killed my mom. Please just go
away.

Michael sits on the edge of the mattress and hunches with his elbows perched on his knees. “What
do you think I am?” he wants to know.

Vee yawns and covers her mouth with one hand in a doomed attempt to muffle the sound. “I think
you’re a person who deserves to grow the hell up without me telling you who you should be,” she
murmurs, “or the Cooperative, or some prophecy, or Satan himself. It’s your choice, because you’re
half-human and that means you have free will.”

Michael glances at her over his shoulder and intertwines his fingers to stop himself from touching
her, from crawling on top of her to bury his nose in the pale crook of her neck. “What if I choose
wrong?” he asks.

Vee shrugs. “Then I guess I’ll see you in Hell,” she deadpans.


you would have them do unto you.”

[13] Michael was born in the Murder House and he was delivered by a ghost, so I doubt he has an actual birth
certificate. Constance probably got a fake one either way to throw the cops off in case they ever suspected that Violet
didn’t actually fuck off with her baby brother. I’m guessing it would’ve been modified after his growth spurt to reflect
his physical age, because that would contribute to her cover story about taking in her cousins’ kid.

[14] El Camino Hospital is the most technologically advanced hospital in the world; it opened in 1961 but it was
private until 2009, when the hospital in Mountain View became open to the public. There’s another hospital campus
in Los Gatos. It specializes in clinical services and community health services, and they own a lot of high-tech
machines that other medical facilities can’t afford. Their revenue in 2015 was a total of $781,451 (after deductions
from a gross revenue of $2,573,881), with a total of $705,663 in operating costs. I know a nonprofit hospital doesn’t
seem particularly Satanic, but I think some people might sell their soul to the devil for science.

[15] Dr. Wooster is a fictitious version of Dan Woods, the actual CEO of El Camino Hospital. Wooster is, of course, a
name scrunched from the P. G. Wodehouse novels about Jeeves.

[16] William Shakespeare, Pericles, Prince of Tyre (1608) II.ii.45. In hac spe vivo is Latin for “In this hope I live.”

[17] Fiona uses water combined with her spit to whammy the cops in “Boy Parts” into forgetting that Zoe cracked
under the pressure of their interrogation and confessed to murdering one of the fraternity bros who gangraped
Madison in “Bitchcraft.” Michael cuts his palm during his Test of the Seven Wonders in “Boy Wonder” and demonstrates the power of Pyrokinesis by dripping his blood onto the flame of a candle, so this could be considered canon.

[18] Where there’s hellsmoke, there’s hellfire! …I’m not as funny as I think I am.

[19] Elegua is a Yoruba deity who owns all roads and pathways, one of the Orisha. Papa Legba is conflated with Elegua. American Horror Story conflates him with Baron Samedi—another vodou loa—because they’re both found at the crossroads between the world of the living and Guinee, the spirit world.

[20] Tachyons are hypothetical particles that are faster than light. Hence, superluminal. Tachyons could theoretically be used to break the light-speed barrier and make it possible for people to travel back in time, like Mallory did.

[21] 1 John 2:18, 2:22, and 4:2-3, 2 John 1:7, Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 and 2:7-10. FUN FACT: the singular personified Antichrist doesn’t actually appear anywhere in the bible if you look at the original Hebrew and later Greek texts. There are many anti-Christs (or “deceivers”) in the New Testament, i.e. people who don’t believe that Jesus was the son of God or don’t believe in God at all. Basically, anyone who preaches false doctrines could be considered an antichrist or pseudokhrastos in Greek. There’s no mention of the Antichrist (or anti-Christs) in the Old Testament. Most of the modern perception of the Antichrist as a personified figure antithetical to Jesus is rooted in ancient Greco-Roman writings and ideologies.

[22] These eschatological texts are: the Sefer Zerubabbel (c. 7th century CE) and Midrash Voyosha (c. 11th century CE). Armilus also appears in the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, a Christian eschatological manuscript written in Syriac.

Chapter Summary

Vee explains the hierarchies of Heaven and Hell to Michael and takes him to a hospital in the heart of Silicon Valley, where a doctor who sold his soul for science runs diagnostic tests on the Antichrist. Until things go horribly wrong.

We’re all monsters. Being a monster is not the same as being a bad person. It just means you’re willing to eat the world if that’s what you have to do to keep yourself alive.

Mira Grant, *Chimera*

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*From Darkness to Promote Me*

Chapter 3

This Horror Will Grow Mild, This Darkness Light

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2015

Petaluma, CA

Vee startles awake at fuck off o’clock in the morning at the sound of footsteps in the hall outside the door of her bedroom. Michael knocks quietly and opens the door before she gives him permission to come in. Vee squints at him in the dark as she unfolds her glasses and puts them back on, groggily aware that she can’t get up because she’s not wearing any pants. Just a camisole and a pair of black silk and lace panties—and she’s only wearing the camisole because she was too exhausted to shed it like a snakeskin before she fell asleep. *I’m lucky I didn’t wake up with my tits out,* she thinks as her eyes adjust to the shadows and Michael shuffles into her room.

“I had a bad dream,” he mumbles, “can I sleep with you?”

Vee nods sluggishly and surreptitiously conjures the sweatpants in her suitcase on before she peels back the blankets. *Don’t make it weird,* she thinks as the Antichrist gets in bed with her, *he’s a three-year-old in the body of a teenager. I crawled into bed with my parents after I had nightmares when I was his age. This is the same thing.***

Michael lies on his side and puts his head on the opposite end of her pillow, his blond hair mingling with her dark tendrils. “Tell me about Hell,” he whispers.

Vee takes her glasses off, but she can still feel his smoldering gaze on her face. “It’s like a dark hallway,” she whispers back, “and every door leads to a pocket dimension that contains a personalized hellscape. There’s a gate at the end of the hallway, but only someone with angelic or demonic blood can pass through and stay alive. I met your father on the other side. It’s creepy how much you look alike in human form. I think he knew a hot guy in a suit would make me more uncomfortable than a guy with bat wings and cloven feet and the face of a feral goat.”

Michael gulps as a flush of heat creeps up the back of his neck and he blushes in the dark. “You
Vee huffs. “I thought your dad was hot,” she mumbles, “past tense. Lucifer burned that bridge to ash before you were even born. Anywho,” she says and stretches out the *ooh* sound awkwardly. “There are hierarchies in Heaven, and in Hell. God with a capital G is the be-all and end-all. This whole universe is their fault and they’ve been personified as male in almost every religion despite being a force of creation with no earthly gender to speak of. Kamimusubi, the Japanese creator gods, are probably the closest myth to the truth about our universe. Heaven has four realms: Atzilut, the World of Emanation; Beriah, the World of Creation; Yetzirah, the World of Formation, and Assiah, the World of Making. There are three spheres of angels: the first, second, and third sphere each consist of three orders.

Grigori, the awake ones or the Watchers, is the first sphere—they’re called that because they don’t sleep. Seraphim, the burning ones, is the highest order. Lucifer, Beelzebub, Asmodeus, and my father were all Seraphim before the Fall. Cherubim, the mighty ones, is the second order. Belial was part of that order before the Fall. Ophanim, the many-eyed ones, is the third order. It’s also called the order of Thrones, because they guard the Araboth—the holy throne of God. Mammon and Belphegor were members of that order. Most of the angels who fell with your father were Grigori, and those who fell are called the Irin.

Labbim, the healing ones, is the second angelic sphere. Erelim, the valiant ones, is the fourth order. It’s also called the order of Dominions, because they regulate the duties of the lower angels. Hashmallim, the virtuous ones, is the fifth order—they create signs or miracles in the world to help people find their path. Elohim, the godly ones, is the sixth order. It’s also called the order of Powers, and they regulate the cosmos.

Ishim, the guardians, is the third sphere. Eshim, the flaming ones, is the seventh order. It’s also called the order of Rulers, because they regulate the guidance and protection of nations and cultures. Tarshishim, the ardent ones or the archangels, is the eighth order. There are only ten archangels: Mikhail—your namesake—Gavriel, Uriel, Raphael, Camael, Sachiel, Raziel, Zaphiel, Metatron, and Sandalphon, and they’re elite warrior angels. Lucifer was the archangel Samael, before he ascended to the order of Seraphim. Malakhim, the messengers, is the ninth and lowest order. It’s basically a catchall term for angels who choose to become corporeal and spend time on earth, like guardian angels or the angels who report on earthly affairs to their superiors in Heaven. When angels take human form, they’re called Hayyoth. Sandalphon is the ruler of Assiah. Metatron is the ruler of the Seraphim. Gavriel is the ruler of the Cherubim. Raphael is the ruler of the Ophanim. Raziel is the ruler of the Erelim. Sachiel is the ruler of the Hashmallim. Camael is the ruler of the Elohim. Zaphiel is the ruler of the Eshim. Mikhail is the ruler of the Tarshishim. Uriel is the ruler of the Malakhim.

I should warn you that angels in lower orders aren’t necessarily less powerful than angels in higher orders. It’s more of a literal hierarchy in terms of ascent or descent: the lowest order is the closest to earth, while the highest order is closest to God.”

If she were the woman in the Garden of Eden instead of Eve, Vee would’ve eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree without the serpent beguiling her. Michael wants to her to teach him everything that she knows. “What about the hierarchy in Hell?” he asks.

“Hell is the same way, but in reverse,” Vee informs him, “the highest circle is closest to earth, the lowest one is where the Devil is. Lucifer or Satan is the counterpart of God in the hierarchy of Hell. Lilith or Mahlat is his bride. Which is why he had to imbue a ghost with his essence in order to create you: he’s the Devil, but he didn’t want to cheat on his wife. You have three half-sisters: the succubi Agrat, Naamah, and Eisheth. When demons have a child, that child shares power with their parents. If demons get married, that portion of shared power transfers from the parents to their spouse.
through ritual. Polygamy is seen as a sign of weakness. It’s common among the lower demons, but
uncommon among the ruling class. Most demons in the upper echelons have an heir and a spare.
Naamah is married to the fallen angel Azazel and Eisheth was cast out because she married a human,
so you’re the heir and crown princess Agrat is the spare.

There are nine circles of Hell. Purgatory is the first and lowest circle. It’s also called limbo, the plane
of existence between Heaven and Hell. Papa Legba guides souls through limbo into their personal
hell or heaven.

Upper Hell consists of the second, third, fourth and fifth circles. Lust, the second circle, is ruled by
the archdemon Asmodeus, the father of Lilith and ruler of all incubi and succubi. Gluttony, the third
circle, is ruled by the archdemon Belphegor, the sixth prince of Hell. Greed, the fourth circle, is ruled
by the archdemon Mammon, the fifth prince of Hell. Anger, the fifth circle, is ruled by the
archdemon Belial, the fourth prince of Hell.

Lower Hell consists of the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth circles. Heresy, the sixth circle, is ruled by
the archdemon Beelzebub, the first prince of Hell. Violence, the seventh circle, is ruled by Abaddon,
my father. It’s separated into three rings that surround the bottomless pit. Fraud, the eighth circle, is
ruled by Agrat, Naamah and Azazel. Treachery, the ninth circle, is where your father and Lilith sit
on their unholy thrones.\[26\]

Satan personifies the deadly sin of Wrath, and his angelic name was Samael. Beelzebub personifies
the deadly sin of Envy, and his angelic name was Gadreel. Asmodeus personifies the deadly sin of
Lust, and his angelic name was Asbeel. Abaddon personifies the deadly sin of Sloth, and his angelic
name was Penemuel. Belial personifies the deadly sin of Pride, and his angelic name was Barbiel.
Mammon personifies the deadly sin of Greed, and his angelic name was Jeqon. Belphegor
personifies the deadly sin of Gluttony, and his angelic name was Tamiel.\[27\]

There are three spheres of demons: archdemons, those who fell but were angels once before they
were cast out of Heaven and became the ruling class in Hell, urdemons, those who corrupt the soul
or mind, and cacodemons, those who corrupt the body or flesh.”

Michael smiles when she muffles a yawn in the hollow of her palm with both hands cupped over her
mouth and chin, her shoulders hunched underneath her earlobes; she took all three of the earrings in
each of her earlobes out, but not the silver and gold rose-shaped studs in the scapha of her right ear or
the titanium industrial piercing in her left ear. “Did they hurt?” he asks.

Vee opens her eyes and squints at him again. “What?”

Michael reaches out to skim the soft pad of his thumb over the anodized metal in her right ear. “Your
piercings,” he whispers.

Vee tries not to telegraph the shiver of warmth that sparked in the arch of her spine and shook her
heart out of sync until she forgot how to breathe for a fraction of a second. It’s been almost seven
years since anyone got close enough to make her feel anything like whatever the hell that shock to
her system was. This boy almost died today, she thinks, his grandmother called him a monster and
threw him out and I’m feeling all warm and fuzzy because he touched my ear. I’m the worst. “I’ve
been living with chronic pain since I was eighteen,” she whispers back, “piercings hurt, and so did
my tattoo, but that pain was my choice. There were so many painful things I didn’t have a choice
about, so.”

Michael frowns at her, his forehead crinkling with curiosity. “Your mom said a member of the
Cooperative tried to steal your kidney,” he says.
Vee sighs. “How much do you know about DNA?” she asks.

“DNA is deoxyribonucleic acid,” Michael says, “the macromolecule that contains our genetic code. It’s made of four nucleotides—guanine, cytosine, adenine and guanine—and those nucleobases form hydrogen bonds to create polymers or base pairs called polynucleotides. DNA is made of five chemical elements: hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, and phosphorus.”

Vee hums in the back of her throat, a soft mm-hmm. Michael had a private tutor who taught him science—chemistry, biology, and physics—at a high school level in the aftermath of his growth spurt. According to the progress reports his tutor submitted to his grandmother, it took him three months to learn what most high school students learn in three or four years. “G-C-A-T base pairs form a double helix and human DNA is double-stranded,” she murmurs, “but Nephilim and witches and corporeal angels and demons have triple-stranded DNA. It contains a strand of daemonine in between the base pairs, so our nucleotide sequence is G-C-D-A-T. This nucleotide regulates our telomerase and stops our cells from becoming malignant or cancerous without inhibiting our immortality. It’s also the root of all magic, because RNA that contains daemonine encodes a sulfurous proteinogenic amino acid called angelosine specific to semi-divine and quasi-divine beings. There’s a database curated and compiled by the Cooperative that contains the genetic sequences of almost everyone in the world, including an archive of whose euchromatin contains daemonine and whose proteins contain angelosine. Nephilim have a higher concentration of angelosine in our bodies than witches do because we’re half-demon. When the Cooperative sequenced my genome five years ago, they assumed that I was their messiah.”

“But you’re not,” Michael says, anger rising in his gut and churning in his chest because he knows the Cooperative did something to punish her for not being him before he was born.

Vee shakes her head slowly. “After they found out that I wasn’t the Antichrist,” she says, “they asked me for things in order to further their research on the supernatural: blood samples, tissue samples, cerebrospinal fluid, bone marrow. Some of them wanted to harvest my eggs and impregnate women from their fertility clinics with quasi-demon children without their consent using IVF. One of them wanted my kidney, because theoretically I can regrow my organs and he thought using my body for spare parts would be efficient. When I refused to cooperate with them—pun intended—they had agents steal my blood and used hemomancy to summon me to an undisclosed location where they planned to cut me open without my permission. After that didn’t work, they threatened my family. So I killed all of the agents they planted in every government agency in the country using a map as a catalyst to induce spontaneous human combustion. Thousands of people were immolated with no external source of ignition because I cursed them. After that,” she bites down on the consonant and lets the bitterness and rage bleed into her voice, “I focused on the asshole who asked for my kidney. I destroyed his life, bankrupted his corporations, ruined his business reputation, his relationships with his associates and acquaintances, his friends, his wife and children, his mistress. When he asked the innermost circle of the Cooperative for help, I teleported into their boardroom and conjured up hellfire to incinerate him in front of them. I said ‘This is what happens when you fuck with me. So don’t.’ When you incinerate someone with hellfire, you burn them body and soul. There’s nothing left for them. No heaven. No hell. No future.”

Michael glares and even though she knows he isn’t angry with her, Vee still flinches when his eyes go pitch black until his blue gaze is obscured by a bottomless pit of wrath. Vee stares at him, with his eyes so dark they look almost like the depths of the abyss in which her unholy father dwells and a pale white face. Michael blinks in shock when she offers him a look at her own demonic face: her eyes going from pale gray to incandescent white, her skin unblemished by freckles and gone sallow like old paper overexposed to sunlight. I know that face, he thinks. I don’t know how, but I know what this means. “‘I looked,’” he says, “‘and behold a pale horse: and her name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with her, and power was given unto her over a quarter of the world to kill
by sword, by hunger and by plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

Vee frowns at him, the space between her eyebrows furrowing. “You think I’m one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse?” she asks.

Michael nods. “You’re the pale rider, the fourth seal undone. You were meant to find me,” he says and smiles at her with his eyes still blacked out. “You’re my harbinger of Death.”

After the Antichrist falls asleep next to her, Vee flops onto her back and shuts her eyes as the questions start brewing in the deep cauldron of her mind. Why didn’t her father tell her that she was one of the Four Horsemen? Maybe he knew she would hate the idea of having an apocalyptic destiny. Or any kind of destiny. Vee belongs to herself and she makes her own choices. What if she doesn’t want to bring on the end of the world as she knows it? Did no one in Heaven and Hell think of that?

This whole burdened with glorious purpose thing isn’t gonna work for me, she thinks. Also, if I’m Death and Michael is Conquest, where are War and Famine? I’m not going to end up adopting more toddlers in the bodies of pretty teenagers, am I? Because if that’s my destiny, I’m not here for it. I don’t even like kids.

Still, this explains that immutable force she felt in the street. Vee doesn’t believe in fate, but this was irrevocably meant to happen. Knowing that someone—or something—is pushing and pulling her around like her autonomy is a cosmic joke to them tastes like ashes in her mouth. Vee squirms onto her side and turns her back on the spawn of the Devil, hiding her face in the bend of her elbow as she yanks the blankets up over her head. Not today, Satan, she thinks. Not today.

Michael wakes up with the sound of the shower tinkling in his ears, the noise muffled by the closed door. Which explains why Vee’s not in bed with him. Michael blinks as his eyes adjust to the slivers of sunlight beaming in through the cracks in the blinds. It’s brighter than the artificial light spilling out from under the door of the bathroom, in spite of the shadows.

When she emerges from the bathroom, Vee is fully dressed in a yellow sundress patterned with black roses over a black sleeveless button down blouse with a club-style round collar and a pair of sheer black stockings; her damp brown hair is twisted up into a bun, and she put a small white towel around her neck to keep the residual water from staining her shirt and trickling down her back. If you didn’t know she wasn’t 100% human, you’d still be able to sense the otherness that emanates from her like heat from a sidewalk. Vee wasn’t broadcasting hellfire and brimstone yesterday, but today it’s on full blast.

Michael narrows his eyes at her as she folds herself onto the edge of the bed and laces up her black combat boots. There’s a .38 Special Ruger LCR revolver in the holster on her right thigh. It’s pitch black with a shiny chrome trigger and cylinder. California gun laws stipulate that a person can open carry a loaded handgun in any county if they believe they’re in grave danger. Michael doesn’t think Vee needs a gun because she’s magic, but maybe carrying a firearm makes her feel safer—like a security blanket full of .357 caliber bullets. “What’s wrong?” he wants to know.

Vee sighs ruefully. “When I last saw Dr. Wooster, I was sedated with his scalpel about to cut into my left upper quadrant,” she informs him. “I made an example of his brother and extorted an obscene amount of money from the inner circle of the Cooperative—they deposit a hundred million dollars into an offshore account for me every month. Which is more cash than I’m ever gonna need, but I anonymously donate three quarters of it to libraries and scholarship funds and rape crisis and recovery centers and medical research every year. It’s also how I can afford to adopt you. Anywho,”
she says and uses telekinesis to grab her cane from where she left it propped in the corner by the door of her bedroom, “the Cooperative hasn’t seen me for almost four years. I stay out of their way, and they all stay the hell away from me. Dr. Wooster might’ve forgotten what I’m capable of and I don’t project an aura of badassery unless I let my essence leak out. I thought about wearing all black everything like witches do whenever they’re feeling ceremonial, but then I thought it might be overkill.”

Michael smiles at her and his gaze snags on her thigh-highs. Since her thigh holster isn’t connected to her corset belt, it must be strapped to the garter belt under her skirt. Constance once said that sometimes women wear their pretty clothes and jewelry like armor, their makeup like war paint. Vee is dressed to kill in a sundress and lingerie. “I like your dress,” he tells her, “you look nice.”

Vee awkwardly fidgets with the handle of her cane. There’s nothing wrong with being nice, but nice is boring and bland. It’s the bare minimum of human interaction, and being the bare minimum won’t strike fear in the hearts of devil worshippers. Michael probably didn’t mean it that way, though. “Not exactly what I was going for,” she says, “but thank you.”

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2015
Mountain View, CA

El Camino Hospital is a modern building formed out of convex and concave surfaces punctuated by minimalist windows, the glimmering rectangular panes of glass framed by lustrous chrome and steel. There are two El Camino hospital campuses and two satellite clinics, one hospital in Mountain View and one in Los Gatos; the main campus in Mountain View consists of a main building, a women’s hospital, a radiotherapy and radiosurgery center, five pavilions and eleven parking destinations. It took an hour and a half to drive from Petaluma to Silicon Valley, during which Michael conjured himself some clothes and Vee had to lecture him about the laws of metaphysics. Specifically that conjuring is not, in fact, the ability to create something out of nothing; anything you conjure up comes from somewhere, meaning he stole the clothes he’s wearing.

Unfortunately he looks good in all black everything: a soft black t-shirt and faded black jeans tucked into a pair of black combat boots that almost match hers, except his shoelaces are black. Vee’s shoelaces are neon green patterned with sunny yellow daisies. Their disk flowers are bright pink.

It’s because she understands that in nature, being colorful means Do Not Fucking Touch Me.

Michael also conjured her a bright pink dwarf chrysanthemum. Its bloom is fluffy, the wild magic in the petals and stem keeping the flower alive. Michael told her that someone named Billie had said they mean strength and protection. Billie had worn a white chrysanthemum pinned to her blouse when she visited his grandmother because she thought it might protect her from him.[30] Vee took it and tucked its stem under the circle of her hair tie, so the blossom sat on top of her head; she didn’t have the heart to tell him what a pink chrysanthemum actually means. Billie shouldn’t’ve worn a white one, because they mean hope or truth. If the flowers are given as a romantic overture, they can mean loyalty or devotion instead. Billie didn’t know enough about herbology to know purple chrysanthemums mean power and protection. Michael doesn’t seem to know red chrysanthemums mean true love, and pink is a shade of red.

Vee parks in the lot adjacent to the main entrance and unbuckles her seatbelt before she offers her hand to him, palm down like a princess or a queen. Michael takes it, curving his fingers around hers before she teleports with him into Conference Room A.
Vee knows how to make an entrance. When she appears in the conference room, the lights flicker ominously and magic gnaws on the sterile air like sharp teeth. There’s a middle-aged bespectacled man seated at the table in the center of the room; he’s dressed in suit and tie but he’s wearing a white coat instead of a tailored jacket, an amalgam of styles that encapsulates him in his role as both a research scientist and a CEO of a nonprofit organization.

Dr. Wooster blinks at her like a deer caught in the headlights of a heavy duty truck before he stares at Michael with a rapturous expression on his face. “This is… *him*?” he asks.

Vee sighs. “If you’re going to act like a starstruck zealot the entire time,” she says, “I’ll take Michael somewhere else. I can always use Concililum to make you forget he was here—”

“No!” Dr. Wooster shouts and scrambles out of his chair so fast his glasses almost fall off.

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers and shoots him a caustic sliver of a smile. It would be a nightmare, she thinks, to see the son of your dark lord in the flesh and be forced to forget such a religious experience. Never forget that I can make your worst nightmare come true.

Michael can feel her feeding on the fear and panic emanating from the doctor and he watches her, enchanted. There’s a difference between consuming emotions that people are feeling in proximity to you, and feeding on emotions that you incited. “Vee,” he says, “you’re glowing.”

Vee blushes from the roots of her hair to the collar of her blouse and below as she dims the luminescence of the magic coalescing under her skin. It’s embarrassing to throw off a visible energy signature, something that any witch could sense; the cloaking spell on her industrial piercing is supposed to stop that from happening. Maybe it’s only Michael who can see through her wards and break down her walls. Because he’s the harbinger of Conquest. Because his magic is equal to hers, even though his power isn’t. Because he’s the only other one of her kind.

According to the files she conjured out of his grandmother’s house, Michael doesn’t have a real birth certificate. There’s a fake one in the folder with his adoption paperwork. It says he’s seventeen years old, but his MRI says his frontal lobe is fully developed. Which doesn’t happen until your early twenties. Chronologically, he’s a three-year-old. Biologically, he’s nineteen. Neurologically, he’s the same age as her.

Constance didn’t vaccinate him or take him to the doctor, even though he’s gotten sick before. When he was a toddler, he had colic triggered by a subdural hematoma. It spontaneously healed by itself.

_Most subdural bleeds in children are caused by abusive head trauma_, Vee thinks. _I didn’t see Constance shake him in any of her memories, so I know it wasn’t her. Maybe the medium who told him about chrysanthemums shook him. Or the nanny he murdered hurt his head.[31]_

Michael didn’t complain about the needles or the machines—he took a nap during the MRI and he was fascinated by the Lodox. DNA results take at least twenty-four hours to process, so they both have something to look forward to. Michael showed no signs of physical abuse in any of his scans—no remodeled bones or evidence of blunt trauma. Dr. Wooster suggested removing his appendix to see if his vermiform process would regenerate. Vee told him that he could go fuck himself. Dr. Wooster left them both in the conference room after that and went to monitor the blood tests so none of the Antichrist’s lab results end up falling into the wrong hands. Michael is looking at her with the same eerie smoldering focus that makes her feel unequivocally seen through as she folds herself into one of the chairs, tucking her inflamed left ankle in the hollow crook behind her right knee.

“When I incinerated Mr. Wooster,” Vee says to break the quiet that stretches out like strands of taffy in the sterile air, “your father was angry because I destroyed a soul that had been sold to him. It
didn’t help that I’m half-human. Satan has hated humankind since God created us, but he can’t
manifest on this plane of existence without a human host. In 1965, he was cast back into the pits of
Hell by his cousin Shachath—the angel of death who replaced my father after the Fall.[32] Satan
didn’t manifest for almost fifty years after that, until he used your biological parents as conduits to
create you. This was a year before that, almost two years before you were born. Abaddon told Satan
that attempting to bind me for eternity and steal my power from him would be considered an act of
war against him. Since my father commands more legions than all of the other princes of Hell
combined, your father offered me a deal instead. I’d choose a contest and if I lost, he could take my
soul. Satan was so arrogant that he agreed to give me anything I wanted if I won, because he didn’t
think I could win against him. I challenged the Devil to a word search—”

“What?” Michael asks, because he wasn’t expecting that. Satan himself didn’t expect her to pick a
word puzzle instead of a strategic game with more variables, like chess. Although he didn’t expect
Sylvester to beat him in a game of dice, either.[33]

“—a word search,” Vee says, “they print them in the Seattle Times every day. You find the hidden
words in the grid and circle the letters, and at the end the remaining letters become a secret word. I
challenged your father to a word search, and I won.”

Michael smiles at the viciousness caught in one corner of her mouth. “What did you ask him for?” he
wants to know.

It was located in the ancient Middle East at the confluence of four rivers—including the Tigris and
Euphrates—but two of the rivers dried up thousands of years ago, after the interdimensional rift
connecting heaven and earth closed. I bled on them and planted them and my tree of life has been
growing ever since. It should bear fruit soon.”[34]

Michael laughs, low and delighted. “I knew it,” he tells her, “I knew you were the kind of person
who’d eat the forbidden fruit.”

Vee shrugs. “Knowledge is power,” she murmurs, “but I’m not just going to eat the fruit. I—”

Michael doesn’t hear the other plans she has for her own forbidden tree because something whizzes
to puncture the hollow below the curve of her skull—the craniovertebral junction. Dr. Wooster is
thinking it, of the first cervical vertebrae and tectorial membrane and other medical terms he doesn’t
know. Michael screams and incinerates another tranquilizer dart before it sticks in his throat.

Dr. Wooster yells something he can’t overhear with the cacophony of gunfire ricocheting in his ears
and his men, a squadron of five spooks that belongs to a black ops paramilitary organization formed
by the Cooperative, keep shooting at them until he makes their heads explode with the power of his
mind. It’s almost comical, watching the vivid red blood and pink squiggles of their brains splatter all
over the conference room; wall-to-wall gore, from the floor to the ceiling. When he looks down at his
hands, he blinks in shock because his fingers and palms are trembling from the spikes of adrenaline
shivering underneath his skin at the sensation of their skulls popping like overinflated balloons.
Something hisses and twists in the back of his throat, pandemonium choking him.

Fuck. Michael winces at the heavy dull pulse of incongruously soundless noise reverberating in his
ears and glances at the black dome obscuring the camera in the corner of the room before he looks at
Vee, slumped over in her chair with the dart stuck in the nape of her neck. Vee brought him to this
place to help him learn more about himself and these men conspired to hurt her, so death is the very
least they deserved. Michael gently pulls the dart out and tucks it into the front pocket of her purse.
Something tells him that Vee would probably want him to keep it, if she were awake.
Someone fades into the room and Michael yelps, his chair wobbling precariously when he scrambles out of his seat to put himself in between Vee and the woman in black who materializes with her pitch dark wings unfurled.

“Hello, nephew,” the angel of death says in a mellifluous, otherworldly voice. “Don’t worry. I’m not here for her.”

Michael glares at her. “You’re Shachath,” he deduces.

“I am,” Shachath murmurs, “and you’re the spawn of Satan.”

Michael nods, a sharp descent of his chin; defiant. “I am,” he retorts. “When you bring these souls to Hell where they belong, tell my father I said Hi.”

Shachath flicks her gaze to her niece. “Death has touched her,” she says gravely, “but so has life. When she wakes, please tell her that.”

Michael nods again, even though he has no idea what that means. Death isn’t always the end of things and life is the antithesis of antimatter, the answer to the unsolved problem of baryogenesis; but she might be speaking metaphorically, not metaphysically. Shachath offers him a slip of a smile before she fades out of the room.

[24] There are many angelic hierarchies. Mine is a combination of the hierarchies found in The Divine Comedy and De Coelesti Hierarchia with a dash of Jewish angelic hierarchies from the Hebrew Bible:

First Sphere: Grigori, the awake ones; also called the watchers.
First Order: Seraphim, the burning ones.
Second Order: Cherubim, the mighty ones.
Third Order: Ophanim, the many-eyed ones.
Second Sphere: Labbim, the healing ones.
Fourth Order: Erelim, the valiant ones; also called the order of Dominions.
Fifth Order: Hashmallim, the virtuous ones; also called the order of Virtues.*
Sixth Order: Elohim, the godly ones; also called the order of Powers.
Third Sphere: Ishim, the guardians.**
Seventh Order: Eshim, the flaming ones; also called the order of Rulers or Principalities.
Eighth Order: Tarshishim, the ardent ones; also called archangels.***
Ninth Order: Malakhim, the messengers. Also called Hayyoth.

* Hashmallim or Hamshalim are often equated with the order of Dominions, but their name literally means “the virtuous ones” or “the shining ones” in Hebrew, so they’re equated with the order of Virtues in this fic instead.

** Ishim also translates as “men” or “manlike beings.” Which is the perfect name for a sphere that deals almost exclusively with humans and other earthly things.

*** Tarshishim are equated with Cherubim, but I wanted them to have their own angelic order and I wanted to give the order of archangels a collective name. Malakhi Elohim (tr. angels of God) is the precursor to “archangel” in Hebrew—the English modernization of the word is rooted in the ancient Greek arkh (ἀρχή), meaning “ruler,” and ángelos (άνγγελος), meaning “messenger.”

[25] Agrat bat Mahlat is a succubus from Jewish mysticism whose name literally translates from Hebrew as “Agrat, daughter of Mahlat.” Lilith is either her mother or grandmother, depending on what source text you’re reading. Which is why I’m saying that Mahlat is another name for Lilith. According to the Kabbalah, Asmodeus is her cambion (half-human, half-incubus) son with the biblical King David. Naamah and Eisheth are succubi from the Zohar. Eisheth
Zenunim, whose name translates as “woman of whoredom,” is the princess and ruler of the Kabbalistic evil realm of Sathariel. Naamah is the woman who corrupted Semyaza and Azazel, two of the Grigori who fell in the Book of Enoch.

[26] Dante Alighieri created nine circles of Hell in *The Divine Comedy*:

**Limbo.** Papa Legba and Mephistopheles dwell here. Purgatory is also located here.

**Upper Hell:**
- *Lust.* Asmodeus, second prince of Hell, rules this circle with his wife, Amaymon, a princess and prime minister of Hell.
- *Greed.* Mammon, fifth prince of Hell, rules this circle.
- *Anger.* Belial, fourth prince of Hell, rules this circle.

**Lower Hell:**
- *Heresy.* Beelzebub, first prince of Hell, rules this circle with his wife, Berith, a princess and chief archivist of Hell.
- *Violence,* separated into three concentric rings. Abaddon, third prince of Hell, rules this circle with his wife, Lyn Hoozuki.
- *Fraud.* Agrat, Namaah and Azazel reign here.

**Treachery,** separated into the four rings that surround the center where Satan lives.

[27] There were originally eight deadly sins, defined as “evil thoughts” by a monk named Evagrius Ponticus in the fourth century in Greek and later translated into Latin:

- Gastrimargia/Gula, or Gluttony.
- Porneia/Luxuria, or Fornication (i.e. Lust).
- Philargyria/Avaritia, or Avarice (i.e. Greed).
- Hyperephania/Superbia, or Pride.
- Lype/Tristitia, or Sorrows (i.e. Envy).
- Orge/Ira, or Wrath.
- Kenodoxia/Vanagloria, or Vainglory. (This later fell under the umbrella of Pride.)
- Akedia/Acedia, or Sloth.

These “evil thoughts” were categorized into three varieties: bodily appetites or sins of the flesh (fornication, avarice, gluttony), irascibility (wrath), and mental corruption or sins of the mind (vainglory, sorrow, pride and sloth).

Jeqon, Asbeel, Gadreel, Penemuel, and Tamiel were the Grigori in the Book of Enoch who led the other Watchers to fall and fornicate with humans, as mentioned in one of the annotations from Chapter 1. Samael means “severity of God.” Gadreel means “wall of God” (it’s phonetically similar to the name of the archangel Gavriel/Gabriel/Jibrail, meaning “God is my strength,” but they aren’t the same angel). Asbeel means “greatness of God.” Penemuel means “face of God.” Bardiel means “humiliated son of God.” Jeqon means “he [God] shall rise.” Tamiel means “perfection of God.” So, they all changed their names after the Fall—for reasons that should be obvious.

[28] Etymologically, the word “demon” is rooted in the ancient Greek “daímōn” (δαίμων), meaning “deity” or “divine power.” Which in turn comes from the ancient Greek “daíomai” (δαίομαι), meaning “to dispense” or “to divide.” So, the nucleotide that creates magical genetic potential is dæmonine. Methionine (chemical formula: C₅H₁₁NO₂S, an essential amino acid in humans) and Cysteine (chemical formula: HO₂CCH(NH₂)CH₂SH, a semiessential proteinogenic amino acid) both contain sulfur. So, the existence of angelosine isn’t unprecedented.

[29] Revelation 6:8. Michael is Conquest, the rider of the white horse described in Revelation 6:2: “I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him held a bow: and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”

There are seven symbolic seals in the Book of Revelation: the first, second, third, and fourth seals are broken when the Lamb of God opens them and summons the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Conquest rides a white horse, War rides
a red horse, Famine rides a black horse, and Death rides a pale horse; Death is the only rider who is explicitly named in the biblical text. Pestilence is another name for Conquest, who is also interpreted as either a representation of the Holy Spirit or Christ. Conquest and War are both sometimes interpreted as the Antichrist.

[30] I haven’t watched American Horror Story: Hotel, but it’s canon that Billie couldn’t defend herself psychically against the spirits or the Afflicted at the Hotel Cortez. Which ostensibly means that she and her white spirit light couldn’t do much against the Antichrist, either. Cordelia mentioned chrysanthemums in “The Axeman Cometh,” and both characters are portrayed by the same actress so I snuck that in here. It’s kind of ironic that Cordelia said chrysanthemums wouldn’t pull in love, because generally that’s what they mean in Western flower language: red chrysanthemums mean true love, white chrysanthemums mean devoted love, yellow chrysanthemums mean unrequited love, and orange chrysanthemums mean platonic love.

[31] Abusive head trauma (AHT) is commonly known as shaken baby syndrome (SBS). It occurs most frequently with children that are less than five years old.

[32] Shachath casts the Devil back into Hell after Sister Mary Eunice dies in “The Name Game,” the tenth episode of American Horror Story: Asylum. Abaddon was called the destroyer. Shachath as a proper noun means “destroyer” in Hebrew; as a verb it can mean “to destroy,” “to ruin,” “to corrupt,” “to spoil” or “to decay.”

[33] Pope Sylvester II (b.946 CE – d.1003 CE) was a scholar and a scientist and supposedly a sorcerer who ascended to the papal throne after he either allegedly made a deal with a demoness named Meridiana or won a game of dice with the Devil.

[34] There are two specific trees in the Book of Genesis: the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Most scholars believe that “knowledge of good and evil” means “knowledge of everything,” rather than a moral concept. These specific trees are often conflated into one tree; the Quran refers to it as the tree of immortality, and the Devil says those who eat the fruit become immortal beings (i.e. angels) in order to tempt Eve.

[35] Baryogenesis is the process by which the inequality of matter and antimatter particles developed in the observable universe. I’m postulating that alternate dimensions like Heaven and Hell are made of unobservable antimatter.
Better to Reign in Hell

Chapter Summary

Vee and Michael have a philosophical discussion about what souls are made of and an ethical discussion about murder.

Start by pulling him out of the fire and hoping that he will forget the smell.
He was supposed to be an angel but they took him from that light and turned him into something hungry, something that forgets what his hands are for when they aren’t shaking.

He will lose so much, and you will watch it all happen because you had him first, and you would let the world break its own neck if it means keeping him.

Start by wiping the blood off of his chin and pretending to understand.
Repeat to yourself
“I won’t leave you, I won’t leave you” until you fall asleep and dream of the place where nothing is red.

When is a monster not a monster?
Oh, when you love it.

Caitlyn Siehl, “Start Here”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 4
Better to Reign in Hell

2015
Mountain View, CA

Vee wakes up with her face smooshed against the unyielding surface of the conference room table, her glasses cockeyed, her heart fluttering like the wings of a legion of angels. When she licks her lips, she tastes blood on her mouth. It takes an eternity to open her eyes, like whatever drug they used to anesthetize her welded her eyelids shut. Drowsiness, she thinks groggily, increased heart rate… that fucker sedated me. Michael, she groans in the back of her throat and flops awkwardly in her chair because she doesn’t have the strength to sit up. What did that fucker do with Michael while I was unconscious?
“What the hell,” she mumbles and slurs the double hockey sticks in *hell*.

A warm palm cups her cheek and lifts her face up, trembling fingers adjusting her glasses behind her ears so they aren’t cockeyed anymore. Vee blinks sluggishly and squints until Michael blurs into focus. There’s blood splattered on his clothes and congealing in his soft blond curls again, but today it’s not his own blood. Michael looks at her and his smile is beautiful and terrible, like the fallen angel who made him.

Vee slants her gaze back over her shoulder and bile rises in her throat at the sight and stink of six headless corpses: one is wearing a bloodstained white coat with dura matter sprinkled on the back, the other five are dressed in gruesome black ops gear. Dr. Wooster must’ve called in the Co-op mercenaries after she called him to schedule the appointment for Michael. “I wish you’d left one of them alive,” she mumbles, “or left his brain intact so I could reanimate his head and interrogate him.”

Michael reluctantly stops touching her face and sulks like a kicked puppy in the chair next to her. When he killed things before, his grandmother would spend hours in her rose garden burying his offerings to her and she always smelled afraid for days afterward, the scent of fear wafting from her pores like an expensive perfume. Michael doesn’t want to disappoint Vee or scare her away. “I’m sorry,” he says, “I wasn’t thinking.”

Vee shakes her head slowly and reaches out to touch the hair curling over his forehead that hasn’t gone from gold to rust. “I’m not mad at you,” she tells him softly. “How long was I unconscious?”

Michael glances at the clock on the wall before he answers. Vee isn’t horrified by the massacre he made of the room and none of her anxiety is directed at him, so maybe he did something right for once. “Only a few hours,” he says.

Vee frowns. “Why hasn’t anyone from the hospital called the cops?” she asks.

“I asked them not to,” Michael tells her with another sweet devilish smile, “I said please.”

Vee frowns exponentially harder. *Concilium*, she deduces before she wonders, did he ensorcel the entire hospital? Well, let’s not look a gift Horseman in the mouth. I’d be dead or worse if Michael wasn’t here.

“I put the dart they shot you with in your bag,” Michael says.

Vee nods and looks over at the camera in the corner. Dr. Wooster probably would’ve disabled the live video feed in the conference room because he was planning to kill or abduct her. There’s still a slim chance that he caught the Antichrist committing mass murder on camera. *Michael probably used telekinetic combustion to blow their minds from the inside out*, she thinks as she extracts the tranq from the pocket on the front of her purse, so the footage won’t incriminate him. *I’m the one who brought a gun into the hospital and it would be a piece of cake for them to frame me for this, but that would be a mistake. I doubt the Cooperative would come after me with dirty cops, because they should know I won’t hesitate to egocissor or eliminate them and they don’t want to lose any more agents or plants.*[^36] It’s been almost five years and they still haven’t replaced half the people I killed after they fucked with me, and framing me for mass murder or blackmailing me with the threat of being arrested for mass murder wouldn’t stop me from escalating and destroying their entire organization. I doubt any of them would be that stupid. Not when they have so much to lose if they fuck with me again. Dr. Wooster probably wanted to avenge his brother, and he did this without permission or cooperation from the other members of the inner circle. Pun intended. Or the other members of inner circle gave him tacit permission because they would benefit from my downfall, but they’ll deny they were involved when I confront them about it because Dr. Wooster failed to deliver. “Ketamine,” she murmurs after she absorbs the jumbled sense memories from the object, “that fucker
shot me with enough sedative to drop a rhinoceros. I metabolized a normal human dose too quickly when he drugged me four years ago.”[37]

Michael plucks the flower he gave her from on top of her head, snapping the fragile stem of the chrysanthemum and crushing the bloom in his fist to squeeze the last dregs of its magic out before he stuffs the husk in the pocket of his jeans. “I’m sorry it didn’t protect you,” he says.

Vee tugs the broken stem out of her bun and tucks it into the front pocket of her purse with the dart instead of dropping it onto the floor. “No,” she says, “you protected me. Which is more than good enough.”

Michael swallows hard and blushes hot at her words, his cheeks flushed, his ears going pink. No one has ever said that he was good enough. Or more than good enough. No one has ever said that he was good. Michael is overwhelmed by the urge to kiss her again, to get as close to her as humanly—and inhumanly—possible.

Vee extracts her phone from her purse, accesses an app to spoof her location just in case the Cooperative tries to frame her anyway despite her analysis of the situation, and texts a contact whose name in her phone is Kolya an eye emoji. It’s their code for Hack the Shit Out of This and Destroy Any Evidence That We Were Ever Here, because Vee isn’t stupid and walking into El Camino without contingency plans would’ve been stupid. This is Plan C. Kolya responds with a bee emoji, their code for Be Careful.

“Who’s Kolya?” Michael asks, unabashedly peering down at the screen of her phone.

Vee clicks the button on the side of her phone that makes the screen go black. “When a witch creates a familiar,” she murmurs, “they summon a lesser demon and offer the body and soul of a small animal—like a cat—to name the demon and bind it both to the body and to them in eternal servitude. I bound the lesser demon I summoned to a braindead IT guy named Nikolai Feng whose body had no soul, but whose bodily functions were being sustained by life support machines. Kolya is the Russian diminutive of Nikolai.[38] It’s also the name I used to bind my familiar. Kolya is a hellhound, but in human form. Unless I tell him otherwise. I probably should’ve brought him with me because I knew I was going to the Hotel Cortez to get blood from the Afflicted for a spell I’m working on, but someone had to feed and walk the dogs and I wasn’t allowed to miss the family reunion.”

Michael nods. Vee had told him about the dogs the day before: her family has two poodles, because her younger brother Killian has asthma and poodles are hypoallergenic dogs. Shadow is a black standard, and Mocha is a brown crossbreed between a teacup and a toy. Vee got Mocha from her parents as a twelfth birthday gift. Shadow is the family dog, and she has been since Vee was nine and Killian was six. “You made a human familiar,” he says.

Vee shrugs. “I wanted to see if I could,” she informs him. “Most demons would love to possess a braindead corpse, but demonic essence devours flesh so hosts without a human soul trapped inside them don’t last very long. I used my blood and magic to bind Kolya, so his body has accelerated healing that counteracts the decay caused by a demonic soul inside a human body.”

Michael frowns. “I thought demons didn’t have souls,” he says.

Vee shakes her head slowly. “If you want to get technical,” she says, “a soul is anything that exudes magical energy. All souls emanate a passive field of magic, but in humans that aren’t witches or Nephilim that emanation is only enough to keep their bodies alive for maybe a century. Usually less. It’s just their aura or their life force, not magical energy they can actually use. So, everything has a
soul: humans, angels, demons, animals, plants, mountains, oceans. Those who can use that magical energy, both their own emanation and energy from external sources, are either—” she holds up one finger, “—semidivine beings created by God with the capacity to use magic, or—” she holds up a second finger, “—quasi-divine beings created by semidivine beings. So, angels—fallen or otherwise—are semidivine while demons, witches, and Nephilim are quasi-divine. There are gods, lowercase G, but they get their energy from worship: prayers, sacrifices, beliefs. Unfortunately, godhood has a huge drawback: becoming a god means losing your free will. If you ever asked yourself why God with a capital G doesn’t answer your prayers, that’s why. Because for every person who prays for something and believes something about God, another devout worshipper believes the opposite. After over a hundred thousand of years of worship in their different aspects as the creator of the world, God has no free will left. Scáthach—the first Supreme witch—learned magic from the fallen ones who became the Celtic and Greco-Roman gods and she was worshipped as Arduinna, a Gallo-Roman goddess of the hunt.[39] After she came to the colonies, a group of British soldiers burned her at the stake. Scáthach became a shadow of her former self, like so many of the eldritch old gods. There’s a Blood Moon in October, and when the moon is full she goes through the motions of her sacrifice to the gods who made her what she is because she doesn’t remember how to do or to be anything else.”[40]

Michael frowns even harder, his forehead crumpling in confusion. “So how does my father still have free will?” he wants to know.

“Satan has a loophole,” Vee explains as she unfolds herself from her chair and teleports to the doorway to avoid stepping in the gruesome mess of blood and brains on the floor and waits for Michael to follow in her footsteps, “he takes offerings and energy and sacrifices from his worshippers but isn’t constrained by their prayers specifically because they see your father as the anti-God. Papa Legba didn’t lose his freedom either because vodou practitioners and Santería believers worship him as a spirit guide, not a god. Since the other princes of Hell are often conflated with Satan by their worshippers, they’re anti-gods too. When humans were given dominion over the earth, we were given dominion over God. Satan has always hated us, because he knew humans could do what he couldn’t. God created us to be free, and freedom has a way of destroying things.”[41]

Vee gets a call before she pulls the MINI Cooper out of the parking lot from one of the other members of the inner circle, apologizing for Dr. Wooster and offering to clean up his mess. It’s not Jeff Pfister or Mutt Nutter, whom she half expected because their robotics lab is also in Silicon Valley. Vee blocked them, but they’re both smart enough to get around that if they wanted to talk to her even if they’ve spent the better part of a decade snorting cocaine and destroying their neurons. Their dual Faustian deal means they can’t overdose or die from doing coke, but when their neurons regenerate they don’t get to keep the memories or knowledge stored in the clusters of neurons they killed. Only the habit-forming addiction to crack remains hardwired in their brains.[42] Supposedly they’ve invented a machine designed to preserve their memories and intelligence and they reload periodically, like cyborgs downloading system upgrades before they break down. Vee doesn’t know whether to feel intrigued or horrified by the implications of that dystopian technology, but they don’t have any plans to implant the minds of old one-percenter into the bodies of the younger and healthier victims among the masses they would use as vessels or cure dementia because they’d rather build sex androids.

After she makes sure no one is going to frame her or blackmail her or use this against her or Michael in any capacity, she slumps in her seat and groans out loud for a solid minute while the Antichrist sits in the passenger seat and stares at her in her periphery. “This sucked,” she tells him softly, but vehemently. “Today sucked. Thanks! I hate it.”
Michael has read enough minds to understand that Vee is quoting a meme, but knowing that doesn’t answer the question that has been gnawing at him since they walked out of the hospital. “Why don’t you hate me?” he asks. “I killed six people. Wasn’t that wrong?”

Vee arches her eyebrows until they vanish under the sweep of her blunt brown bangs. “I’ve killed thousands of people,” she reminds him, her soft voice devoid of emotion. “So hating you for the six men that you killed this afternoon would make me a massive hypocrite.”

Michael hasn’t seen this side of her until now, her soft voice like a door slamming and a deadbolt locking with a final clicking sound. It makes him want to see inside of her. Michael is startled by that, by the burning desire to make her talk until she opens the door herself and lets him in. “How did it feel?” he asks, doing his best to keep his insatiable curiosity from bleeding into his words. “When you killed all those members of the Cooperative, you must have felt something.”

“There’s a difference between murder and killing,” Vee informs him, “murder is hurting the innocent: someone who never did anything to you or anyone else to deserve being murdered. I don’t hurt anyone who hasn’t tried to hurt me. I don’t go looking for people to kill. I don’t like killing most of the time, but I don’t lose sleep over it either. When I kill,” she adjusts her grip on the wheel and flicks her gaze to the side mirrors before she says, “I do it because it’s me or them or to protect the people I love from them. I’m a survivor, and I’m not going to apologize for prioritizing myself—my family and my safety and my mental and physical health—over the people who tried to make me a victim. No one from the Cooperative is anywhere in the vicinity of innocent. It’s an organization that wants to control the world so they can nuke it and help you remake society from scratch, only in their dystopian image. When you’re dealing with people like the members of the Cooperative—people who want to rule the world or believe they already do—you need to let them know that you can hit them where it hurts the most by gunning for their influence, money and power. I didn’t feel anything when I cast my spontaneous human combustion spell because those deaths weren’t personal. I was sending a message. I…” she bites her lip and chews for a few seconds before she confesses, “…I liked killing Mr. Wooster, because he saw my body as something he could violate. Not in a sexual way, but still. I believe the world is a better place because he’s dead, and I feel the same way about his brother.”

Michael can smell a lie the way most people can smell a rotten egg. It’s painfully obvious to him when someone doesn’t believe what they’re saying. Michael also knows that people lie to themselves, but he doesn’t get a whiff of dishonesty from Vee. It’s one of his favorite things about her: what he sees is what he gets, and he likes what he sees. Michael smiles more to himself than at her. “You do?” he asks.

Vee catches sight of him in her periphery and smiles back, shyly. “Yeah,” she says. It’s quiet for a spell, until she gnaws anxiously on the inside of her cheek and starts talking again to break the silence. “When I was in junior high,” she says, “I was bullied. Girls pinched me because they wanted to show me where I needed to lose weight. Boys knocked me down in the hallways and pulled my chairs out from under me during class and tore pages from my books when I dropped them. I had my head shoved in a toilet more than once until my throat was so bruised I couldn’t talk for a week afterward. When those bullies were touching me, I absorbed their memories and thoughts. I hoped…” she inhales deeply through her nose and exhales with enough force to flare her nostrils in a sharp huff, “…I hoped I would see a reason for what they were doing, because the bullies always had tragic reasons for hurting people in movies and TV shows: their parents or their siblings abused them so they picked on the weak and helpless because they felt weak and helpless. Only that’s not what I saw. I saw that my bullies were cruel because they could be, and because they liked hurting people. I was fat and I didn’t have any friends and my personal hygiene was horrible because of the undiagnosed clinical depression, so I was an easy target for kids like that.”
Michael turns and looks at her over his shoulder in shock. “Why didn’t you make them stop?” he asks, his voice brimming with unmitigated bewilderment.

Vee shrugs, her freckled shoulders hunching up beneath her earlobes. “I didn’t want to disappoint my parents by killing my classmates,” she answers, “but I learned something in junior high: that Satan was right. When he started a war in Heaven, it was because he thought humans were fundamentally bad. Not inherently evil, but selfish and more interested in instant gratification than the greater good. So, after God created Eden and gave humans dominion over the earth, Satan tempted Eve as the Serpent to prove his point and that’s how the war in Heaven started: with the Fall of humankind. Not with the angels falling, because that didn’t happen all at once. Since then, mankind has perpetrated each other because of shit like skin color and religion and gender and sexuality, we’ve committed genocides and created nuclear weapons and we’ve even used them. Hitler was human. There are people who think he was the son of the Devil because only the Antichrist would incite something as horrible as the Holocaust, but they’re wrong. I’d be lying to you if I said the idea of blowing up the world and remaking it from scratch didn’t appeal to me on some level, because it does. Sometimes I get so pissed off at the way the world is and I hate everyone on this fucking planet. I think your father was right,” she sighs with her whole body and slumps in her seat again before she says, “but I still believe in people. I believe in my family, in my favorite authors, in my professors from college, even in some politicians, and I believe in you.”

Michael swallows hard at the vicious truth in her words. Knowledge is power. Feeling how much she believes in him is more addictive than any drug.

“I was unconscious and you’ve only known me for a day,” Vee says, “but your instincts still told you to protect me. If you were like your father, you would’ve let them abduct me and slice me open. Hell,” she exhales a caustic laugh, “you would’ve asked to watch and laughed while they extracted my eggs and pulled out my internal organs and then you would’ve appeared to me in the aftermath to gloat and tell me what a fool I was to trust you.”

Michael gapes at her. Knowing that she has faith in him is one thing, but that level of conviction is another. Michael can’t sense any doubt, but he still can’t bring himself to believe her. “You trust me?” he asks incredulously.

“I do.” Vee nods succinctly, her voice unwavering. “So far.”

Michael exhales sharply through his nose, his throat gone hot and dry, a flush crawling over his skin. “I won’t let anyone hurt you,” he tells her fervently. “Never.”

Vee smiles that shy grin of hers—the one that begins at the left corner of her mouth and unfurls in a crooked line. “You have integrity,” she murmurs. “Your father doesn’t have any.”

Michael beams at her before his expression clouds over. “I saw the angel of death,” he says after a quiet moment, “she had a message for you. ‘Death has touched you, but so has life.’”

Vee scowls at how cryptic the message is. Most angels have the gift of gab, meaning they can speak any language, but they never say what they mean. “What the hell did Shacath mean by that?” she asks.

Michael sighs. “I don’t know,” he says.

“Awesome.” Vee snarls her shoulders and gnarls her tiny hands into fists around the steering wheel before she makes a U-turn and cuts across the highway.

Michael narrows his eyes at her as her turn signal clicks off and she shrugs in a futile attempt to
unclench. “Where are we going?” he wants to know.

“Back to the city of angels,” Vee says.

[36] Egocissor is a type of telepathy from Ilona Andrews' Hidden Legacy series. I just finished the first trilogy. Egocissor telepaths are called Dominators or Manipulators, because they specifically control minds and impose their will on others. It’s basically another name for Concilium.

[37] Ketamine is a drug commonly used for anesthesia; it’s not a primary anesthetic because the drug sometimes causes hallucinations, but it’s perfect for emergency surgical procedures because ventilation is not required for patients who’ve been sedated with it. Other uses include pain management when combined with opioids, bronchodilation for people with asthma, and treatment for people with depression. Ketamine stimulates the sympathetic nervous system instead of suppressing it. Side effects can include arrhythmia, bradycardia, tachycardia, hypertension, hypotension, an increase in intracranial pressure, nausea, an increase in salivation, diplopia, an increase in interocular pressure, nystagmus, apnea, hypoventilation, and tonic-clonic movements. It takes between thirty minutes and maybe two hours for someone who took a normal intramuscular dose of the drug to regain consciousness. Vee woke up after five minutes when Dr. Wooster used a normal dose on her.

[38] Nikolai is the Russian and Slavic version of the ancient Greek name Nikolaos (Νικόλαος), meaning “victory of the people.” It matches Vee’s name. Veronica is the modern version of Berenice. Which is the Latin derivative of the Macedonian Greek name Pherenike (Φερενίκη), meaning “bringer of victory.” Feng is a Chinese surname that can mean “horse” (馮), but it can also be written as “phoenix” (鳳).

[39] If you’re confused about the mechanics of this: some angels fell and became the archdemons who rule in Hell while others fell and ended up being worshipped by humans as gods on earth. These angels took on the characteristics of the cultures who worshipped them (e.g. Papa Legba, who is worshipped by Santería believers as Elegua and Haitian vodou practitioners as Atibon Legba, is a black man) and those worshipped by multiple cultures (e.g. Remiel, whose name means “thunder of god,” was worshipped as Zeus/Jupiter by the ancient Greeks/Romans and as Thor by ancient Norwegians/Scandinavians) now have multiple divine aspects. On the bright side, godhood allows semidivine and quasidivine beings to manifest on earth in corporeal form. Satan can’t manifest without a human host because he’s worshipped as the anti-God. God can’t manifest either because some Christians believe God is a white guy in the sky and that humans were created in His image, while others believe God is everywhere in spirit but He has no physical form. I love metaphysics.

[40] Scáthach appears in American Horror Story: Roanoke. It’s been confirmed by Ryan Murphy that she was the first Supreme witch. This fic is taking place in the summer of 2015, before My Roanoke Nightmare airs in the fall, but after the canon events of that season. My Roanoke Nightmare is being filmed elsewhere during these chapters.


[42] This is your brain on cocaine: the drug inhibits your neurons from reabsorbing dopamine and increases stress hormones like cortisol, which raises blood pressure and damages the cardiovascular system, which restricts blood flow to the structures of your brain, which causes thrombosis, which causes strokes or seizures. Longterm use of cocaine sometimes causes seizure disorders. It can also induce paranoia, restlessness, psychosis, and sometimes causes auditory hallucinations. When you come down from a cocaine high, depression ensues. So, Jeff and Mutt ostensibly made a Faustian deal to avoid the side effects of cocaine. How would they do that, physiologically? I’m guessing by regenerating the damaged blood vessels and brain structures to combat the effects of the drug. This would have other side effects, because damaged neurons cannot be regenerated—they can theoretically be regrown, but the new clusters of neurons wouldn’t contain the knowledge or memories stored in their damaged predecessors.
Shapes and Forms Excelling Human

Chapter Summary

Vee returns to the murder house with Michael in order to test her theory about what Shacath meant by her cryptic “life and death” message.

The road ahead bends sideways and I lurch within myself.
I’m full of ugly feelings, awful thoughts, bad dreams of doom, and so much love left unspoken.

_Is mercury in retrograde?_ someone asks.
Someone answers, _No, it’s something else like that though_. Something else like that.
That should be my name.

When you ask me, am I really a woman, a human being, a coherent identity, I’ll say _No, I’m something else like that, though._

_A true citizen of planet earth closes their eyes and says what they are before the mirror._
_A good person gives and asks for nothing in return._
I give and I ask for only one thing—

_Hear me. Hear me. Hear me. Hear me. Hear me._
_Hear me. Bear the weight of my voice and don’t forget—things haunt. Things exist long after they are killed._

Joshua J. Espinoza, “Things Haunt”

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From Darkness to Promote Me

Chapter 5

Shapes and Forms Excelling Human

2015

Los Angeles, CA

It’s a six-hour drive from Mountain View to Los Angeles. Vee stops for dinner after she hears his stomach growl and gurgle, but spends the meal and most of the drive brainstorming instead of paying attention to him. Michael really hates not being able to read her mind, because he doesn’t know her well enough to decipher every shifting expression on her face. Not knowing what she’s thinking is driving him crazy. It occurs to him that he could just ask her. Vee isn’t the kind of person who plays mind games, and she would tell him what she thought in a heartbeat. Michael skims two of his
fingertips over the soft curve of her upper arm to get her attention, below her shoulder but above the sharp jut of her elbow. Vee responds by flinching with her whole body and whispering a quiet but vehement “fuck” under her breath. Michael has to bite his lip hard to stop himself from laughing.

“What do you think Shacath meant?” he asks her when she glares at him out of the corner of her eye.

Vee makes the herculean effort to unclench and focuses on the road in front of her. “I think she meant that I can bring people back to life,” she answers.

“I thought all witches could do that,” Michael says, “with the power of Vitalum Vitalis.”

Vee snorts. “Only the most powerful witches are capable of casting Vitalum Vitalis,” she says, “it’s one of the Seven Wonders.\[43\] Those with the power of Resurgence can also bring the dead back to life, but resurrection always requires a catalyst. Like the remains of the person you want to resurrect, and your own life force. There are levels of difficulty, too: the longer something has been dead, the more energy it takes to perform the resurrection. Also, if the remains are damaged, you have to put them back together. Necromancy requires a blood sacrifice—the death of another person or animal in exchange for reanimation—but that’s not true resurrection. It’s zombification. Unbeing dead isn’t being alive.”

Michael blinks as Vee turns onto a familiar street and sucks in a sharp breath at the spike of panic that constricts in his gut like a coiled snake. “So you’re going to see if you can bring someone back to life without a catalyst,” he deduces.

Vee parks across the street from his grandmother’s house and hums softly as the light from the street lamp spills over her face in dark shades of gold, bringing out strands of burnished umber in her brown hair. “Not just anyone,” she says. “I’m going to bring your family back from the dead.”

Michael doesn’t want to see his family—he doesn’t even want to think about them. It hurts like a fist squeezing his heart into a gory mess of flesh and blood. “I don’t want to go back to that house,” he tells her, his voice brittle and cracked like cheap glass. “I don’t want to see my grandmother or speak to her ever again, not after she watched me die and did nothing—”

“Okay,” Vee says and holds up her hands in surrender before she unbuckles her seatbelt, “but I’m going to shut the hellmouth. If you don’t want to see your family, you can wait in the car.”

When she walks into the murder house, Vee puts the hand she isn’t using to grip her cane on the doorknob for balance out of habit and wishes she hadn’t as soon as her palm curves over the wood. All of the residual sense memories from the hellmouth flood her mind, ninety-three years of torment and terror pouring over her like the bucket of blood that Chris Hargensen dumped on Carrie White at the prom.\[44\] 100% undiluted high-octane horror fills her nostrils, rises in the back of her throat and sticks to her tongue like the blackest of bile. Vee screws her eyelids shut and forces herself to process the information, to see it all instead of feeling it raw: the decay, the destruction, the death. There are forty people stuck in the house, forty lost souls trapped in the liminal space between life and death.\[45\] Jill, the first person to die in here, was a nurse killed by the dhampir Vee agreed to ensorcell in exchange for blood from the Afflicted.\[46\]

Vee opens her eyes and tries not to choke on the vile aftertaste of pure malevolence. Satan is watching her from somewhere in the house—she can feel him like a hole in the head. 1120 Westchester Place is one of two locations in the Pacific Northwest where he can manifest, in his own way; one of his footholds on earth, his place of power. Satan has spent over three hundred thousand years trying to sink his teeth into the mortal realm and take a bite—the Hotel Cortez and this house
are like a pair of vampire fangs exsanguinating the earth one tortured soul at a time. Vee knows he won’t make this easy for her.

“Tired of looking after my grandson already?”

Vee sighs at the voice of Constance Langdon; her Southern belle affectation sounds like peaches and cream, laced with arsenic. “Well,” she retorts, “if I was, I couldn’t pass him back to you like a hot potato. Since you’re dead.”

Constance smiles at her, all glamour and poison. There’s something rotten about her under that polished veneer; something broken. Constance walks down the stairs into the kitchen to fix herself a drink. Vee sits at the small round table in the breakfast nook and starts banishing the ghosts to limbo, beginning with the Montgomerys. Abaddon became the first of many angels of death before mankind walked the earth, so the ability to send the souls of the dead to the afterlife is almost second nature to his daughter. Satan doesn’t even try to stop her. Although he can’t even try, because their Faustian deal stipulates that he can’t do any harm to her under any circumstances.

“I’d offer you a glass of Crown Royal,” Constance says, “but I’m fresh out of Southern hospitality.”

Vee shrugs, one-shouldered; the number of souls in the house is down to a dozen now. There are a few whose bodies are still on the property, and those are going to require a more thorough form of exorcism. “I don’t drink alcohol,” she retorts, “so your ‘hospitality’—” she crooks her fingers like quotation marks around the word, “—would be wasted on me if you had any.”

Constance takes a sip of her drink and swallows before she narrows her eyes at the girl in the chair. Now that she’s dead, she can see a strange otherworldly glow about her. Like a pair of phantom wings. “You’re no angel,” she says, her voice equal parts incredulity and dread.

Vee shakes her head slowly. “No,” she agrees, “but my biological father was.”

Constance has always thought of herself as a good Christian, but having faith in God is one thing. Sitting at a table across from a girl who claims she’s the daughter of a fallen angel—for only a fallen angel would fornicate with a human woman—is another. Constance drains her glass of Crown Royal down to the dregs and sets the empty receptacle on the tabletop without bothering to blunt the harsh impact of brittle translucence against solid wood. “So why did you come back here?” she asks. “Was my grandson too much for someone like you to handle?”

Vee snorts derisively, but doesn’t answer. She doesn’t owe this woman an explanation. Vee almost feels sorry for Constance. She traded her dream of movie stardom for a life as a homemaker. She caught her husband trying to have sex with another woman in their bed. She outlived all four of her children. She’s only human. She did her best with Michael, and it wasn’t her fault that her best wasn’t good enough. But it’s difficult to sympathize with someone who kept her disabled son locked in the attic for most of his life and then seduced her neighbor into smothering him with a pillow because child protective services wanted to take him away.

Constance threw Michael away, got drunk, smoked her last cigarette, and fell asleep on the couch after she took enough pills to make sure that she would never wake up. This half-assed afterlife is hell for every other soul trapped in the house, but for her it’s heaven on earth.

Vee doesn’t think she deserves a happy ending.

“Michael was born right here in this house to a mother and a family ultimately marked for death,” Constance tells her. “When his mother died pushing him out into the world, I gladly assumed the burden of raising him. I made a few mistakes with my own children, but Michael…” she exhales a
wistful sigh as she recalls what a sweet baby her grandson was, “…my God, he was such a perfect little angel of light. I thought he was my chance for a do-over. I was born to be a mother.”[47]

Vee bites down on the inside of her cheek to stop herself from scoffing at that because anyone who came up with something as twisted as the ableist “bad girl closet” that Michael told her about never should’ve had children. It was created to punish his aunt, a girl born with Down’s Syndrome, by making her feel bad about herself. Vee keeps gnawing on the inside of her cheek to stop herself from talking back. If you’re quiet, chances are other people will inevitably start talking to break your silence. Vee infodumps and she overshares her thoughts sometimes, but she also knows when to stop talking and listen.

“I always felt that to raise a great man was the most admirable and selfless act a woman could aspire to,” Constance says with that sprinkle of wistfulness still tangled in the cadence of her voice. “Michael was my destiny. Oh, he was such a beautiful child with such a cheerful disposition—” she pauses to pour another drink from the crystal bottle she brought to the table before she adds, “—even when he was committing unspeakable acts. It was trivial at first, of course: I’d find dead flies in his crib with their wings shorn off, and then as he got older I’d find small rodents. I had seen enough Discovery Channel specials to know exactly what evolutionary tree he was shimmying up. Bundy, Dahmer…” she gesticulates as she talks and stops gesturing to get out the words, “…they started with small animals, too. Until they graduated to grander things.”

Vee exhales with enough force to flare her nostrils. Jeffrey Dahmer was, in fact, possessed by a lesser demon; but he wasn’t possessed until 1987,[48] so the demon wasn’t a contributing factor in his crimes until then. Ted Bundy was human, but he would’ve made a much better host for a demon. Jeffery Dahmer was a necrophiliac who drugged his victims, so his proclivities weren’t conducive to making them suffer as much as possible before he killed them—the demon was disgruntled by that and it eventually transmigrated into another host to kill him. Christopher Scarver confessed that God told him to do it, but he couldn’t have been more wrong.

“Michael left dead mice nailed to my door,” Constance tells her after she takes another drag of Crown Royal, “he said they were presents. Because he loved me. Oh, and his love did flow…” her voice wobbles as she puts her glass down and says, “…and as enjoyable as it was to have a child so committed to expressing his love for me, I did try to encourage him to find another…avenue of expression. Still, nothing I could say would get him to cease and every time I would dutifully bury one of those gifts along with a little piece of my soul. It was Michael who made me realize that I was put on this earth to raise the monsters. I have been burdened with heartbreak my whole life—broken dreams, broken promises, broken marriages—but he shattered me beyond recovery. So after you left yesterday, I came here. I awoke to find myself surrounded by my precious children. Well, minus my beloved Addy. God rest her soul. But the others are here. All of them with me, forever. I bound my soul to this place because, like I said earlier, I was born to be a mother. So why not die to be one, too?” the smile on her face withers and dies before she says, “and I never wanted to see my grandson again.”

Vee looks past Constance and catches sight of Michael, who followed her into the house and found the body on the couch before he heard their voices in the kitchen. There are tears caught in his eyelashes and shining on his cheeks, and she can almost hear the sound of his broken heart shattering all over again. Vee bites her lip and is startled by the sharp furious twist of anger that coils in her throat and clenches in her chest—not at him, but for the child he was. “Your grandmother was a former Supreme,” she murmurs. “You know witches and demons are real. Michael has special needs because he’s half-human. You can’t raise the child of a fallen angel the same way a human mother would raise a human child. We are monsters, but that doesn’t make us evil. You should have left this house thirty years ago, after Rose got sick and died. It would’ve been the right thing for your
children, but instead your obsession got them all killed. I hope you’re happy.”

“How dare you—” Constance snaps and vanishes midsentence as a gust of transcendent magic knocks her spirit from one realm into the next.

Vee slumps over the small round table and shuts her eyes, one hand shaking as she blots the sweat beaded at her hairline under the sweep of her bangs and mumbles an incantation to incinerate four bodies without bothering to conjure three of them out of their shallow graves. There are only six ghosts left in the house now: two Langdons and four Harmons. Vee tries not to dwell on the Infantata lurking in the basement. Thaddeus Montgomery is a unique magical specimen—one that she wants to study, even though she knows he would do his best to kill her if she tried. Kyle Spencer is the only other revenant in existence that she knows of, a frat boy resurrected by a Montgomery witch, but none of his body parts have any magical ancestry. Thaddeus does.

“Where is she?” Michael asks, his voice raw from crying.

Vee points downward with one finger. It’s not a scientifically accurate gesticulation, since Hell isn’t precisely down and Heaven isn’t precisely up, but sometimes the metaphor is enough. “Where she belongs,” she deadpans before she opens her bag and extracts one of the footlong sandwiches that she bought at Subway on their way to Los Angeles. Vee always special orders the same thing: shredded Monterrey jack, pickles, onions, and green peppers on Italian herbs and cheese bread with a soda and a bag of Lays potato chips.

After she eats the sub and crumples the empty bag of chips inside the wrapper, she extracts four objects from her messenger bag: a mason jar of garden soil, a gauzy drawstring bag full of black feathers, a string of pearls, and a red candle she made out of beeswax and coconut oil in another mason jar.

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers before she uses telekinesis to slice her pale forearm open from the inside of her wrist to the bend of her elbow. Michael stares at her in horror until he sees the wound is healing as she drips her blood in a perfect circle on top of the table in the breakfast nook. Vee plucks a packet from one of the pockets on the front of her bag and rips the paper to reveal an alcohol swab that she uses to disinfect the shallow cut. When she throws the swab away, the skin of her arm has magically knit itself back together. Vee arranges her symbolic objects at each cardinal point of her blood circle and Michael startles at the dull pulse he feels in the pit of his stomach as the raw magic is shaped until it flows like a snake eating its own tail. “This is a basic circle,” she informs him, because she might as well make this experiment a teachable moment, “each of the items I’m using symbolizes one of the four tangible magical elements or properties that emanate from the four heavenly realms: the soil in the north corner signifies Earth or inertia, the red candle in the south corner signifies Fire or ignition, the feathers in the east corner signify Air or expansion, and the pearls in the west corner signify Water or cohesion. I chose pearls and feathers instead of a chalice and a ceremonial athame because I can bring them on a plane. There’s a fifth intangible element: Spirit or quintessence. Spirit is ambient magic, the celestial energy that floats everywhere unseen—natural phenomena like gravity and natural disasters and weather and electromagnetic pulses and even sunlight or moonlight can be converted into supernatural power if you know how. There’s always a risk involved with using ambient magic, but adding that extra power makes any spell more potent if you’re capable of controlling it. Most warlocks rely heavily on ambient magic because testosterone inhibits and subsequently limits their innate magical abilities. Witches cast a circle and call the corners to balance all five elements, because lack of balance can either cause a spell to fail or create magical consequences the caster didn’t intend. This circle is meant to contain the resurrection spell I’m going to cast, so the ambient magic doesn’t run with my intention and drain the neighbors of their life force to power the casting or bring any beloved dead pets back to life or whatever.”
“What makes you think we want you to resurrect us?” a sardonic female voice interjects.

Michael swallows hard at the sight of his family gathered at the other entrance to the kitchen. Violet is wearing a floral print shapeless dress with a long skirt over a long-sleeved burgundy shirt and a baggy cardigan that doesn’t match the midsummer heat sweltering outside the house. Ben is holding the baby, Jeffrey, who seems to have slept through all of the exorcisms. Vivien is watching him with sorrowful eyes, seeing through him and looking at what she thinks he could have—or should have—been. Tate is glaring at them while his sister Rose blinks, eyelids fluttering over the empty sockets of her eyes. Violet and her parents can’t see him, but Michael can.

Vee shrugs. “Because the Devil is going to feed on you for all eternity if I don’t get you out of here,” she says, “making your ex rape and impregnate your mother was his idea of a feast. This house is a hellmouth, and you’re doomed to spend the rest of your afterlife getting eaten. I’m not diminishing what happened to you,” she flicks her gaze to Vivien and forces herself to make eye contact before she elaborates, “I was raped when I was sixteen. I know how traumatizing it can be. But he’s not the one who did that to you. Satan did. Tate didn’t have a choice.”

Michael exhales with enough force to flare his nostrils and clenches his fists as the lights flicker until one of the lightbulbs shatters with a fizzle and a pop that makes everyone flinch, including Vee. I’m a survivor, she told him. Michael didn’t understand what she meant by that, but he’s read enough minds to know everything he never wanted to know about sexual assault. Violence and desire, in his experience, can get all tangled up together. It’s horrifying, but humans are horrifying sometimes. No wonder his father wants to blow up the planet. Whoever raped Vee deserves to burn in Hell.

“I’m sorry,” Vivien says, because she doesn’t know how else to respond to that. Vee nods, a sharp descent of her chin and a nonverbal Me too.

Ben turns and looks over his shoulder at the gangly boy in the striped green and black sweater. “You’re saying the Devil made him rape my wife?” he asks dubiously.

Tate scoffs. “If I was possessed by Satan,” he says, “I think I would know.”

Vee huffs. “No,” she retorts, “you wouldn’t. Satan possesses a power that witches call Egocissor. Concilium, one of the Seven Wonders, is the power of coercion. If a person has a strong will or strong magic, they can fight or even break the compulsion. Although resistance has been known to induce an increase in intracranial pressure that can make your head explode. Egocissor is Concilium in its purest form: unbreakable mind control that requires more finesse than simply imposing the will of the caster on the victim. Concilium is the ability to control the body and mind. Egocissor is the ability to control the soul. If you’re powerful enough and precise enough, your victim won’t even be aware they’re under compulsion. Anything they do while they’re under your influence will seem like it was their idea.”

Silence unfurls in the kitchen like a black umbrella opened indoors, casting a shadow of superstition and speculation over everyone in the room. It begs the question: how many of the horrors that happened in the house were rooted in coercion and compulsion? Charles Montgomery performing unsafe abortions. Dr. Curran sedating and raping his patients. Lorraine Harvey murdering her daughters and committing suicide in the aftermath. Tate shooting up Westfield High. Constance being obsessed with the house. It would be kinder to blame the Devil for everything, but the sad truth is that Satan typically doesn’t force his victims to commit unspeakable acts because doing dirty deeds is something that comes naturally to human beings.

Ben clears his throat and shakes his head to sweep away the cobwebs. “So,” he says, “how do you plan to bring us back to life?”
“I’m going to say an incantation,” Vee informs him. “If the spell does everything I want it to do, reality will shift and realign. There won’t be a record of your deaths. No one will remember that you died. This house will belong to your family, and it won’t be a hellmouth anymore.”

Violet narrows her eyes skeptically. “You can do that?” she asks.

“I don’t know.” Vee shrugs again. “I’ve never even attempted such an intricate spell. That’s why I want to do it,” she murmurs and smiles her brilliant shy grin, “I love being a witch. Michael,” she slants her gaze to him before she says, “I’m going to draw power from underneath the earth and from the wildfires burning in three counties right now, but I might need even more. May I harness your power?”

Michael blinks, nonplussed. “Will it hurt?”

Vee smiles and shakes her head slowly. “No,” she says.

“Okay.” Michael smiles back and folds himself into the chair beside her, perpendicular to the feathers and pearls. “Use me.”

Vee exhales a vociferous puff of air. “I need to hold your hand,” she mumbles, “physical contact makes it easier.”

Michael holds his hand out, palm up. Vee interlaces her fingers with his until they’re palm to palm, her fingertips slipping over his knuckles. Michael is hot, his palm smooth and warm all the way through like the blue heart of a flame.

Earth is her element, but Fire is his. It makes her wonder if Famine and War are Water and Air.

Michael tentatively squeezes her hand and lets his thoughts echo in the space between them, jittery and unfocused. Where she’s anxious with anticipation, he’s electrified and excited. Michael is new to magic, and she has so much to show him.

Vee squeezes back and glances over her shoulder at Ben. “Okay,” she says, “put your son on the table. I think one of you should be inside the circle, like a fulcrum.”

Ben reluctantly bends down to put Jeffrey in the center of the Ouroboros.

Vee screws her eyelids shut and tilts her head up while she inhales, slow and calm before the brewing storm. When she opens them, her eyes are glowing an incandescent shade of white. “Mors certa, vita incerta. Nex in vita. Mors certa, hora incerta.”

Hours tick by quietly after she casts her spell. Unfortunately, reality is too complex to shift all at once. Vee doesn’t move, doesn’t keep her pale eyes open, doesn’t let go. Midnight strikes and crepuscular energy flows into her before the night sky fades into the gradual break of dawn. It’s a marathon, she almost hears her dad say as the baby wails like a banshee and squirms on the tabletop until someone picks him up, not a sprint.

Vee opens her eyes again when the earth beneath the house begins to shake. Quakes aren’t out of place in California, but this one is supernatural. Vee splays her other hand flat over the trembling table and reaches out for the ambient magic emanating from the rift between Hell and earth, her stomach quivering and roiling at the reek of sulfur that claws at her nose and throat. Disfactum, she thinks and uses the kotodama power she inherited from her biological mother to put a tremor of intention and free will into the word. Don’t make me get out the needle and thread. I will Thaumaturge the hell out of this if I have to. Literally.
Plan A was incantation; Plan B was Thaumaturgy. Thaumaturgy, the power of working a miracle, is what the coven of Salem descendants call the Supremacy: the power that epitomizes all powers. If she couldn’t get an incantation to work, Vee planned to imbue a torn square of fabric with every drop of power she could harness and stitch the pieces together. Which, magically, would shut the hellmouth. It would have sucked her dry and drained her down to the dregs of her power. Which is why Thaumaturgy was Plan B. Only desperate witches call on all their powers at once.

Michael squeezes her hand again, his excitement spilling over her. “It’s working,” he whispers conspiratorially and beams at her.

Vee nods, the left corner of her mouth unraveling into an ecstatic smile. “I know,” she whispers back. “I can feel it.”

Michael abruptly cups her face in his other hand and kisses her, his mouth clumsy and intolerably soft. Vee resists the urge to spontaneously combust from the unholy combination of embarrassment and elation before she breaks the kiss and takes her hand away from him.

“No,” she says.

It’s a powerful word, even without the kotodama. Michael wilts like a flower deprived of sunshine, his shoulders hunched in a defensive attempt to make himself look smaller. “I’m sorry,” he says. “I didn’t mean to. I just…”

Vee bites her lip and blushes from the roots of her hair to the hollow of her throat. What the actual fuck, she thinks. “I’m using chthonic magic,” she informs him, “energy from the earth. It can be…” she flails the hand he was holding obliquely before settling on the word, “…stimulating. Just don’t make a habit of kissing people without their explicit permission. It’s rude.”

Then her eyes roll back in her head and he grabs her wrist before she falls out of her chair and cracks her skull on the kitchen floor. Michael looks at Rose, who stares at him with the same blue eyes he sees whenever he looks in a mirror. “What happened to her eyes before she died?” he wants to know.

“Staph infection,” Tate mutters, “the bacteria ate both her corneas before it killed her. Rose was allergic to penicillin, so the doctors couldn’t treat it.”

Michael cocks his head and makes a noise in his throat, a soft huh. Vee slumps over and he takes her glasses off for her, folding them and putting them inside her magic circle.

“Is she okay?” Violet asks.

Michael nods. “I think she needs to sleep it off,” he says.

“What about you?” Ben wants to know.

Michael frowns at him. “What do you mean?”

“Viv is your mother,” Ben says. “I can’t help but think of you as my son,” he looks at his wife before he says hopefully, “we could be a family. All of us.”

Michael shakes his head. Vee shut the hellmouth and undid the deaths of his family, but he’s still the Antichrist. Michael will never be a Harmon, and he doesn’t want to be. Whatever he is, his future isn’t here in this house. “I’m not like you,” he says matter-of-factly, “I’m not human. I never will be. Vee is the only person who understands that…” he licks his suddenly dry lips and is sad that he can’t taste her on them, “…she understands me better than I do. I…”
Tate looks at Violet with something dark and deep smoldering in his eyes. “You want her,” he says.

Michael smiles as Vee snuggles into the crook of her elbow and snores like a foghorn. “Yes,” he says. “I do.”

Vee wakes up screaming later that afternoon, her legs tangled in the sheets on the queen-sized bed in the guestroom. Jeffrey startles awake in his nursery and shrieks in echo. Vee wheezes and hyperventilates as Michael—who fell asleep next to her on top of the duvet—asks her what happened and hugs her when she doesn’t answer.

Satan had slithered into her mind and told her something before she cast her kotodama spell and shut the hellmouth in his face. Someday you will be desperate enough to make another deal, he’d hissed, and on that day, you will offer me a new body.

Not today, Satan. Vee forces herself to breathe and sucks in a shuddering gulp of air through her mouth and nose. Not today.

[43] Myrtle says the test of the Seven Wonders is conducted in order by level of difficulty, but in Coven they conducted the test out of order. So I’m going with the order that Cordelia used to test Michael in Apocalypse to measure the difficulty of each power:

1: Telekinesis
2: Concilium
3: Transmutation
4: Divination
5: Pyrokinesis
6: Vitalum Vitalis
7: Descensum


[45] Here is a comprehensive list of the canon residents of the Murder House (c. 2015):

1: Jill, the nurse who helped with the botched abortion of Bartholomew (d. 1926)
2: Thaddeus Montgomery, a.k.a. the Infantata (d. 1926 and resurrected in 1926)
3: Charles Montgomery (d. 1926)
4: Nora Montgomery (d. 1926)
5: Chelsea, the murdered bride from You’re Going to Die in There (d. 1944)
6: Elizabeth Short, a.k.a. the Black Dahlia (d. 1947)
7: William Baxter, from You’re Going to Die in There (d. 1957)
8: Loraine Baxter, his wife (d. 1957)
9: Celia Jacobs, their friend (d. 1957)
10: Gladys, one of the nurses murdered by R. Franklin (d. 1968)
11: Maria, one of the nurses murdered by R. Franklin (d. 1968)
12: Kate, Alex’s sister from You’re Going to Die in There (d. 1971)
13: Bryan (d. 1978)
14: Troy (d. 1978)
15: Moira O’Hara (d. 1983)
16: Hugo Langdon (d. 1983)
17: Rose Langdon (d. 1984)
18: Stanley Argento, from You’re Going to Die in There (d. 1984)
19: Maria Argento, his wife (d. 1984)
20: Angela Harvey (d. 1993)
21: Margaret Harvey (d. 1993)
22: Lorraine Harvey (d. 1993)
23: Beau Langdon (d. 1994)
24: Tate Langdon (d. 1994)
25: V, the mysophobe from You’re Going to Die in There (d. 2001)
26: V’s spouse (d. 2001)
27: V’s child (d. 2001)
28: Chad Warwick (d. 2010)
29: Patrick (d. 2010)
30: Fiona, R. Franklin fangirl (d. 2011)
31: Dallas, R. Franklin fanboy (d. 2011)
32: Hayden McClaine (d. 2011)
33: Joe Escandarian (d. 2011)
34: Travis Wanderly (d. 2011)
35: Violet Harmon (d. 2011)
36: Phil Critter (d. 2011)
37: Vivien Harmon (d. 2012)
38: Jeffrey Harmon (d. 2012)
39: Ben Harmon (d. 2012)
40: Constance Langdon (d. 2015)

Madison and Behold are told by the realtor in “Return to Murder House” that 36 people died in the house (c. 2017). I count 42 canonically including the characters from You’re Going to Die in There, Grace and Casey—the lesbian couple Michael killed in the darkest timeline—and Constance. Not including the souls of the fetuses that Charles Montgomery aborted.

[46] Bartholomew is the half-human and half-Afflicted son of Elizabeth—the Countess—and James Patrick March who appears in American Horror Story: Hotel. Vee offered to cast a spell that would help him grow out of his perpetual infancy, in exchange for vampire blood. I’m calling him a dhampir, because he’s half-human and half-vampire.

[47] If you’re wondering why Constance didn’t want Vee to unbury and exorcise Moira from the house in exchange for information about Michael like she canonically did with Madison and Behold, it’s because this version of Constance hasn’t been trapped in the house with Moira for two and a half years.

[48] Jeffrey Dahmer murdered his first victim in 1978 and raped at least two other men during his military service in between 1979 and 1981. Then, in 1986, he drugged and raped at least twelve men in gay bathhouses. Dahmer murdered Steven Tuomi in 1987 and claimed to have no memory of beating him to death, confessing that he only planned to drug and rape him while he was unconscious. It’s possible—and probable—that he lied, but he offered no excuses for every other crime he committed so I don’t think he did.

[49] I’m a slut for magical theory, but essentially: the four tangible elements can be accessed both internally and externally (i.e. a witch or warlock can draw on their internal power or draw power from an external source) while spirit can only be accessed externally. There are spells or powers that require a caster to draw on a specific element (e.g. pyrokinesis is fire, hydrokinesis is water, aerokinesis is air, geokinesis is earth), but most are complex and require balancing two or more elements in order to perform the power or cast the spell. I’m borrowing the Buddhist conceptualization of the four elements or properties of magic: water is cohesion, air is expansion, earth is inertia, and fire is ignition. Quintessence is the Latinate alchemical name for spirit or aether.

[50] Mors certa, vita incerta is a quote from Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) by Philip K. Dick. It means “death is certain, life is uncertain.” Nex in vita means “death in life,” with the caveat that nex means a murder or a violent death as opposed to a natural one. Mors certa, hora incerta means “death is certain, its hour is uncertain.”
[51] *Disfactum* means “unmake” in Latin. It’s conjugated in the supine or accusative case, used to denote purpose. *Kotodama* ｢言霊｣ translates as “spirit words,” but it means the power of words to alter reality.

[52] Persephone and Hades were worshipped by ancient cults who performed chthonic rites and ritual sacrifices called *khthonie* and *khthonios*, literally meaning “subterranean.” Offerings to chthonic deities were burned whole or buried instead of cooked and eaten by the worshippers. Vee’s use of the word “chthonic” is purely literal: she’s drawing on the ambient magic underneath the surface of the earth.
Madison Montgomery has never thought of herself as optimistic. Narcissistic, obviously. Opportunistic, of course. Nihilistic, in the aftermath of her first resurrection. But going to her own personal hell after she died (again) changed all that. Nothing like endless customer service to make a bitch regret throwing a diva tantrum and threatening to betray her coven. This is her third shot at life, and chances are she’s not going to get another one. Madison is going to make it work, even if that means taking a taxi straight from LAX to Arlington Heights when she could be shopping on Melrose Avenue or Rodeo Drive.

Six days ago, Cordelia felt someone draw an immense amount of power from the earth. Whatever spell was cast triggered a series of minor earthquakes that emanated from a neighborhood in California and shook across the country. There were no casualties and they caused minimal damage, but Cordelia was still concerned about leaving such a powerful witch unchecked.

Ariel Augustus—the Grand Chancellor of the Council—insisted that whoever caused the quakes might not be a witch at all, but a warlock. Their so-called Alpha, whose existence was prophesized by former Supreme Marianne Wharton. After the Hawthorne School for Exceptional Young Men in Calabasas was attacked by a mob with Molotov cocktails instead of the classic pitchforks and torches, Cordelia purchased the houses and a few other buildings across the street from Robichaux and offered the boys a new home. When the Supreme offers you something, you take it. So, for the first time in centuries, witches and warlocks aren’t segregated anymore. Robichaux is becoming less of a boarding school for young witches and more of a college-esque co-ed campus. Madison had been thrilled by all of the shiny new boys moving in, but then Cordelia had ordered her to go on a
reconnaissance mission with Mallory of all people.

Mallory DeLongpre—the witch who rescued her from retail hell—sticks out like a sore thumb in her flowy white dress, studded black faux leather belt and black ankle boots with low heels, her delicate fingers encircled by mismatched rings and a circlet of gold-plated roses crowning hair in serious need of a new dye job.[53] Mal dresses like a knockoff Roman goddess from a low-budget movie. Or a lost performance artist who should be doused in metallic body paint and posing as a statue down on the boardwalk at the Santa Monica Pier.

_This is the house where the Antichrist was born, Mallory thinks, and something’s changed about the place. I don’t know how or what, but I can feel it. Whoever cast the spell that caused the quakes did something to alter reality—not Tempus Infinituum, but something—and that can’t be a coincidence. I killed the Antichrist. Papa Legba wouldn’t have set Misty and Madison free for nothing. Unless…_

Unless the Devil told him to, but that doesn’t make sense. Whoever cast the spell that caused the quakes shut the hellmouth in the process. There’s no way Michael could’ve done that even if he’d wanted to—he didn’t have that kind of power in 2015 and such a prodigal son wouldn’t’ve destroyed anything that his father created. Satan himself couldn’t’ve saved Michael from her. There’s no way he’s still breathing.

Logically, the earthquakes were the preternatural consequence of shutting that interdimensional rift. Whoever cast the spell was powerful enough to keep the ambient magic floating all over the continent from amping up the quakes and killing millions of people. No untrained witch is capable of controlling ambient magic to that extent—an untrained spellcaster couldn’t even attempt it. Whoever cast the spell is someone with the potential to become the next Supreme. Cordelia doesn’t know Mallory ascended in the darkest timeline, so she thinks this spellcaster could be her successor.

Mallory is probably the only witch in the coven who never dreamed of becoming the next Supreme. It only happened in the darkest timeline because she had the power to avert Armageddon and Cordelia didn’t. Mallory had desperately wanted to belong somewhere when she came to Robichaux and being the next Supreme never crossed her mind, even after her power had begun to blossom. Cordelia isn’t fading in this new version of reality, and Mallory hopes that her reign outlasts every Supreme who came before her.

“Shit!”

Madison stomps back across the street, her stiletto heels stabbing at the asphalt as she conjures a cigarette out of her designer purse and lights it pyrokinetically instead of bothering with the pretense of a lighter.

“What?” Mallory asks.

Madison huffs before she takes a long drag from her cigarette, its red tip smoldering between her fingers. “This place is fucking _warded_,” she says and spits the word out like a piece of gristle with the gall to get caught in her teeth, “with enough power to stop me from crossing the property line. Unless I want to die again. Which I do not want. Obviously.”

Mallory frowns and shakes her head slowly. “Aspidakinesis is a myth,” she says and even as the words fall out of her mouth, they sound gutwrenchingly hollow. Tempus Infinituum had been a myth, too.[54]

Madison rolls her eyes. “Not anymore,” she snarks back succinctly. “This bitch isn’t some untrained witch. No fucking neophyte has enough power to shake the continent and cast an impenetrable ward in the aftermath. Hey!” she whirls and stomps back across the street to yell at the pair of teenagers
who crossed the ward and opened the gate, a teenage boy decked out in a black t-shirt he obviously
got at Hot Topic and jeans and a girl wearing a loose gray dress and a wide-brimmed hat. “Do you
live here?” Madison asks them sharply as Mallory looks both ways and crosses the street to back her
up.

“Yeah,” Violet says. “So?”

Tate narrows his eyes at her. “If you’re one of those fucking tourists—”

“We’re not tourists,” Mallory says. “I’m Mallory, and this is Madison Montgomery.”

Violet stays behind the boundary of the ward and raises her eyebrows to accompany an appraising,
judgmental look that only a teenage girl could pull off. “You’re witches,” she deduces.

“We are,” Mallory says and squints at the ward shimmering between them like heat rising from the
pavement. It looks almost like a trick of the light, something that is only visible out of the corner of
your eye.

Madison offers them her best Hollywood smile. It does nothing to warm up the abrasive tilt of her
chin or soften the aggression in the line of her shoulders to her hands: one still holding a lit cigarette
between two fingers, the other splayed over one of her hips. “Who spelled the ward around your
house?” she asks.

“Sorry,” Violet says, “I can’t tell you that. I can tell you that she knew someone named Cordelia
would send you to investigate the cause of the quakes. I’m supposed to give you guys a message.”

Madison lets the smile wither and scowls at them instead. “What message?” she wants to know.

“This witch doesn’t need the coven who excommunicated her mother,” Violet says, “she doesn’t
hold a grudge against you for what someone named Fiona did before she was born, but she’s not
interested in being part of your sisterhood either. Unless she casts a spell to shut another hellmouth,
she won’t cause another quake anytime soon.”

Tate looks from Madison to Mallory with his brow furrowed in suspicion. “Just don’t go looking for
her,” he says, “because she doesn’t wanna be found.”

2015
New Orleans, LA

Los Angelus has a hellmouth, but Louisiana can feel like hell on earth in the summer. Madison is
sweating through her tank top by the time she emerges from the car their Supreme had sent to pick
up her girls at MSY. Cordelia holds a sundown gathering that afternoon, after they both have a
chance to shower and unpack. Mallory is awakened from a blissful nap by Kyle, who’s not wearing
his butler uniform anymore because he’s back to being a student. Cordelia had concocted a potion to
counteract the cognitive deficits he was stuck with after his death and resurrection as a revenant, and
he studied his ass off to get into the School of Science and Engineering at Tulane again. Zoe cast a
spell to erase all knowledge of his previous enrollment, and of his death in the bus crash that
Madison had caused. Kyle commutes to campus from Robichaux instead of living in the dorms
because he wants to spend as much time with his girlfriend as possible, and he’s not at school now
because he’s not taking any summer courses.

Mallory steps into the solarium at dusk and sees the Council assembled: Cordelia seated on a wicker
bench with Misty beside her, the long skirt of her dress tucked gracefully beneath her thighs. Zoe folds herself into a wicker chair to her left and Kyle stands off to one side behind her instead of sitting down. Queenie is seated by the round wicker table on her right with a long-stemmed glass of dark red wine in front of her. Gabriel, her warlock boyfriend, wasn’t invited. Mallory takes a seat on the bench across from Cordelia and Madison sits beside her at the opposite end; where Mallory folds her hands in her lap and sits on the edge of the bench with her back straight, Madison slouches in her seat and folds her arms tight across her chest like armor to hide her heart.

Cordelia shuts the door to the solarium with a flick of her fingers. “This witch said her mother was excommunicated from the coven,” she says without preamble.

“We didn’t actually meet her,” Madison clarifies, “but that was the gist of the message she left for us.”

Cordelia exhales sharply through her nose. “Lyn’s daughter,” she whispers more to herself than anyone else in the room, “she’s alive.”

“Who?” Misty asks.

Cordelia squeezes her hand before she answers the question. “Lyn Hoozuki,” she says, “was a student here thirty years ago. Vincent, her father, was a warlock descended from our former Supreme Marianne Wharton, and her mother was Hoozuki Sei, the former Supreme of the Kamo coven, one that predates ours by over a thousand years. We attended the same lessons even though I was younger than she was, and…” she bites her bottom lip before she says, “…she was my first love. But tragically, she was heterosexual.”

“Don’t feel bad.” Misty squeezes back and grins at her. “Crushin’ on a straight girl is a rite of passage for every queer woman out there.”

Cordelia smiles wistfully, almost forlornly. “When she was eighteen,” she says, “Lyn could perform six of the Seven Wonders and she was practicing the seventh. We all thought she would be the next Supreme. After she found out she was pregnant, my mother tried to convince the Council to execute her because she claimed the father of her child was a powerful demon. Abaddon, the destroyer, one of the six princes of Hell.”

“Then why did her daughter close the hellmouth?” Queenie wonders. “If she’s Nephilim, wouldn’t she want to keep it open?”

Madison scowls at the unfamiliar word. “When the hell is a Nephilim?”

“It’s what the offspring of a human and a fallen angel were called in the Book of Genesis,” Zoe informs her. “Nephilim, from the Hebrew nefilim and later the ancient Greek peptokotes or gigantes, meaning ‘the fallen ones’ or ‘the earth-born.’ It’s written as ‘giants’ in most English translations of the Bible.”

“Nephilim aren’t evil, though,” Kyle points out. “Sometimes they’re heroes, like demigods in Greek and Roman mythology.”

Mallory gulps as dread spikes along her spine and sinks into the pit of her stomach. Abaddon is sometimes an epithet for Satan. Whoever cast the spell that caused the quakes could be a female Antichrist, one uninhibited by testosterone and primed for Armageddon. It almost makes her wish she’d told Cordelia everything about the apocalyptic future that she thought she averted with Tempus Infinituum, but she doesn’t want to throw the coven into crisis mode. Cordelia had begun to fade because of her before the bombs fell, and Mallory doesn’t want the quickening to begin yet again.
Once was enough.

“Look,” Madison says, “with all due respect, the big lesbian crush you had on her mom isn’t a valid reason to let her join our coven. If she doesn’t want to be found, we shouldn’t be looking for her.”

Zoe nods, a slow descent of her chin. “I hate to agree with Madison,” she says, “but we should focus on the girls who actually want to be here.”

“If she ever changes her mind,” Queenie says, “she knows where to find us.”

Yeah, Mallory thinks with silent apprehension clawing at her throat from the inside out, that’s what I’m afraid of.

2016
Poulsbo, WA

It’s been a year since Michael got on a plane and flew to Seattle with Vee, and he’s never looked back.

Vee helped him open a checking and savings account with automatic weekly deposits of $9,999 from her offshore tax haven account—the account where she keeps the protection racket money from the Cooperative—and got him a library card because he read every book in the house in a handful of months.[58] After he aced the four GED tests and got his certificate of high school equivalency, he started taking classes at the community college where Vee went before she transferred to Seattle University. Vee is going to graduate school at the University of Washington in the fall because SU doesn’t have a library science program. After he graduates, he wants to transfer to UW so they’ll be going to school on the same campus for a year.

Michael sat with her family at the beginning of the summer and watched her mother push her onstage in her wheelchair during commencement, because Vee didn’t have the spoons to stand during the ceremony. When she told him to get in the pictures with her in the aftermath, he was overwhelmed by a monstrous sense of belonging. Michael has also become more aware of his desire to dominate her, but he’s not sure how to proceed; one of the coping mechanisms caused by her trauma is being oblivious to male attention, and he’s the furthest thing from her type. Which, in the fantasies she projects in high-definition during the vulnerable seconds before she orgasms and reboots her psychic shield in the afterglow, is experienced older men who can make her feel comfortable and safe. Or sometimes women.

Vee is a control freak who is always submissive in her fantasies, because she wants someone to make her feel dominated and safe enough to lose control in a controlled environment. Michael wants to fulfill those fantasies of hers someday, but he’s not going to get impatient and force her or coerce her into doing what he wants. It won’t mean anything if she doesn’t love or need or want him back.

Getting his AA and transferring to a four-year university to get a Bachelor’s degree is a means to three ends for Michael. First: he wants to learn more about the world and going to college and interacting with other people is the best way he can think of to do that. Second: Vee is older than him, arguably smarter than him, and more powerful than him. Maybe when he catches up with her academically, she’ll stop thinking of him as a child and start thinking of him as a man. Specifically, a man that she could fall for—a man that she wants to touch and be touched by without the pretense of sharing power to cast a spell. Third: the main campus in Bremerton is littered with emotions for Nephilim to feed on. Finals week is like a quarterly feast, and it’s fun to play devil’s advocate during political and philosophical debates and watch his classmates get worked up. Vee disapproves of his
methods, but he craves the chaos.

Vee craves destruction instead. It’s the reason she learned to shoot a gun and why she has a standing appointment at Rage Industry once a month. Cruelty-free demolition for only $30. Michael has never seen anything more beautiful than her smashing a broken old toilet into dust with a sledgehammer. Vee shouldn’t even be able to lift a sledgehammer because of her RA, but magic can make impossible things possible.

Michael flies to New York two days after she graduates and visits the Church of Satan headquarters in Hell’s Kitchen. Satanism as practiced and preached by Anton Szandor LaVey is more atheistic than anything else. According to his Satanic Bible, God is the externalized personification of the self and Satan is a symbol or a metaphor rather than a demon or a deity. LaVey believed in indulging in sin in order to achieve personal gratification. Which is exactly what his father hates the most about humanity as a species, even though he feeds on their excess. LaVey also believed in social Darwinism, specifically the notion that humans are predators who don’t owe anything to each other and that all weaklings and deviants should be killed. It’s a notion that has been consistently used to perpetuate atrocities such as slavery, eugenics, cultural elitism, white supremacy, scientific racism, misogyny, and even genocide. Michael knows better. Vee taught him that humans are pack animals who can’t function without a society or a social hierarchy, and natural selection doesn’t mean that only the physically strong are capable of surviving and thriving. Michael took great pleasure in revealing himself as the prodigal son of Satan to their congregation and debunking their materialistic religion simply by existing.

Vee wouldn’t accompany him to New York no matter how nicely he asked, because she hates flying with the fire of a thousand suns. Planes are sensory hell, she said, and being disabled at the airport is asking for an invasive patdown followed by a panic attack. No thanks.

Michael has been texting her almost incessantly, but he wants to hear her voice. It’s pathetic how much he misses her. “Season of the Witch” starts thrumming from his phone and he swipes his thumb over the screen to answer her. “I was thinking about calling you,” he says.

Vee deadpans. “How’s Manhattan?”

Michael smiles and inhales deeply through his nose. “It’s disgusting,” he tells her. “There are so many people on this island, and so much chaos that I can taste it.”

“66,940 people per square mile,” Vee says, “the highest population density in America.”

Michael hums, a soft mm-hmm. “Why’d you call?” he asks before he says in mock horror, “don’t tell me you missed me. I’ve only been gone for a few days.”

Vee snorts at his blatant, if totally innocuous, attempt to manipulate her into telling him that she misses him. Michael can be needy sometimes, but he seems to think his desire for affirmation and affection is a weakness. So instead of telling her that he misses her, he plays mind games. Michael is his father’s son, and Satan has been influencing him into thinking that his human emotions make him weak. Vee hopes like hell that his humanity won’t become yet another casualty of the unholy war between God and the Devil. “I called because the apples on the tree of knowledge are ripe,” she informs him, “I don’t want to eat them without you.”

Michael rolls his eyes at her even though he knows she can’t see what he’s doing. “You’re the worst liar I know,” he says. “You can’t even lie over the phone.”

“Okay,” Vee says and stretches the ay sound out awkwardly. “I do want to eat them—for science!—but having three subjects for this experiment would make any data I gather more conclusive.”
Michael frowns. “Who’s the third?” he asks.

“Kolya.”

Michael grits his teeth. There’s no way in hell he’s going to let Kolya be the symbolic Adam to her scientific Eve. Michael knows the hellhound is devoted to Vee in the same way that a faithful dog is devoted to its master, but he’s still irrationally jealous of their unbreakable bond. “Wait for me,” he tells her. “I’ll be home sooner than you think.”

There were only half a dozen apples on the forbidden tree, because Vee used the other branches to make a book she calls the Codex Arcanum. It’s a magical text archiving every potion, every charm, every spell, every curse, every ritual, and every hex in the history of the world. Vee spent almost six months accumulating enough power to create the book. It’s the first in a five-volume series: volume two is the Codex Infernum, a definitive compendium of demons, volume three is the Codex Angelorum, a definitive compendium of angels, volume four is the Codex Deitatum, a definitive compendium of gods and every aspect of the myths that humans built around them, and volume five is the index for all the codices. Basically, the unholy grail of otherworldly reference material.

When the original twenty legions of Irin descended to earth, they fed their human wives the fruit of the forbidden tree. It made them into the first witches, and some of them were able to survive the birth of their half-angel children because the forbidden fruit fortified their fragile bodies. There are no records of Nephilim eating the fruit of knowledge, but as far as Vee knows, all of the other Nephilim died before they were born.

Michael had thought the apples would be red—the color of sin—but they’re not. Their skin is such a dark shade of green that it looks almost black, with a gilded sheen that glitters in the light. Vee takes a bite of hers and inside they’re pale gold made flesh.

“I’m going to make a pie with the rest,” she informs him after she chews and swallows, “and homemade ice cream.”

Kolya stares at her, head cocked in confusion. “You don’t like pie,” he says before he takes a bite out of his apple.

“No,” Vee says, “but Michael does. I’ll put one and a half in a pie for him, and one and a half in a sweet-savory casserole for me.”

Kolya side-eyes her. It’s eerie because his eyes are a dark, auriferous shade of yellow. After she bound him to her, Kolya altered the body of Nikolai Feng in small ways: his eyes are gold now and his black hair is the black of a raven’s wing, with every hue of the rainbow caught in the highlights like an oil spill without the viscosity. When light refracts in the dark, his eyes shine with his choroidal tapetum cellulosum, a lucid extra layer of retroreflective tissue commonly found in carnivorous animals. Kolya is also a shapeshifter, one of the creatures who inspired the myths of the black dog or shuck in the British Isles; hellhounds like Kolya were originally created to accompany the angels of death and track earthbound souls clinging to a plane of existence where they no longer belonged. Vee chose a hellhound as her familiar because she didn’t want a lesser demon to teach her magic in exchange for a taste of corporeality—she wanted a loyal companion and protector. “What about me?” Kolya asks.

“I don’t think you should eat this fruit more than once,” Vee informs him, “your kind were created after Eden was destroyed. There’s no record of any lesser demon eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, and you’re not just a lesser demon anymore—you’re a unique human-demon hybrid. I have no
idea how your body will react to the fruit. It could make you more powerful, but also…” she shrugs and splays her fingers with her palms skyward before she says, “…you could die.”

Kolya nods. “Fair enough,” he says before he takes another bite of his apple.

Vee flips open her research notebook—a composition book with bees and honeycomb printed on the cover—and writes Subject #1: VER. N, FAHWH. Subject #2: MTL. N, FAHWH-A. Subject #3: K. F, HDH-H. Subjects each consumed one apple on Monday, 20 June 2016. Seeds were harvested and set out to dry as a precursor to preservation. Subjects 1&2 will eat another apple and a half in a followup experiment involving potato apple bake and a pie on Tuesday, 21 June 2016.[63]

Kolya starts picking the seeds out of the core of his apple for her and eats his seedless core in two bites. Vee hobbles over to the kitchen sink to rinse the seeds and drops them in a paper bowl to dry for two days. If you keep them cold in moist peat moss soil for three months after they’re dry, they can be planted in a pot to germinate and their seedlings can be transplanted into the garden at the beginning of the next growing season. Vee is wearing a green sundress and no bra underneath, the jagged hem of her skirt undulating around her freckled knees as she moves; the five years of ballet lessons that she took as a child echo in the pretty and precise movements of her arms, the delicate ways she puts her weight on her heels and toes. Michael tries not to stare at her breasts and fails miserably.

“Original sin,” he says, “in Greek they called it the sins of the forefathers. St. Paul believed the primeval sin couldn’t be redeemed by human effort. Other ancient Greek theologians believed that our world is a fallen world, but Adam and Eve’s transgression wasn’t such a bad thing because it set us free. St. Augustine believed our depravity was transmitted by concupiscence, metaphysical desires that condemn all of humanity.”

Vee snorts. “St. Augustine believed that all passion was profane,” she retorts, “and St. Paul believed in Jesus as the redeemer of the original sin. If his idea of redemption was right, then our world hasn’t been a fallen world for over two thousand years.”

“What do you believe?” Michael wants to know.

Vee should be immune to his smoldering gaze by now, but she’s not. Michael looks at her and she is terrified by his intensity, by the catastrophic potential of his eyes on her. Vee isn’t scared of him, though. What scares her is the destructive potential in her that matches his perfectly. “Our sins aren’t hereditary,” she says, “they’re choices people make. If they weren’t, humans wouldn’t have free will. Your father hates all of humanity because he was able to sow what the Book of Esdras called the seeds of evil by tempting Eve into eating the fruit of the forbidden tree,” she says, “but Satan didn’t condemn us. We did that all by ourselves.”[64]

Vee falls asleep at nine in the afternoon that night and wakes up buzzing with energy from the solstice, her mouth dry and her skin twitchy with the sparks of freshly squeezed magic seeping into her veins. It’s been more than seven hours since they nommed on the forbidden fruit, but nothing feels out of the ordinary. Although, what’s ordinary for someone like Vee isn’t normal for anyone else.

Kolya is asleep in dog form on his gargantuan bed in her reading nook, at the foot of her giant papasan chair with its back to a narrow single-pane window that overlooks the front yard. Despite being eternally grateful to her for the options of opposable thumbs and human speech and internet access, he’s still a hellhound at heart and he shifts from bipedal to quadrupedal when he wants to relax. If he’s snoozing the night away instead of growling at something unseen, evil isn’t afoot. Vee
yawns before she nestles her face back into the softness of her pillow and folds her wings up over her head to block the inevitable spires of sunlight that prick through her blinds like bright shiny thorns.

*Wait,* she thinks as she blinks groggily and opens her eyes again as the covert feathers that she didn’t have a few hours ago fluff up with agitation over her shoulders. *my what?*

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[53] Mimi DeLongpre had two children with her lover, Tate: Sebastian and Titania. Titania married a man named Michael Beauregard and they had a daughter: Constance. Sebastian had twin sons named Malcolm, who is married to Miranda, and Stephen, who is married to Evaline. Malcolm and Miranda had a daughter: Mallory. Since the magic in her family skipped at least two generations, her parents were horrified when she levitated in her sleep and that’s why she was sent to Robichaux.

[54] Aspidakinesis comes from the ancient Greek noun *aspída* (ασπίδα), meaning “shield” or “protection.” Oddly, the Egyptians repurposed the parts of this word into their name for a cobra: asp.

[55] When in doubt, I write TV characters as being the same age as the actors or actresses who portray them. Cordelia was born in 1974, three years after her mother ascended to become the Supreme. Lyn was born in 1972, and she was 19 when Vee was born.

[56] Sei 「斎」 is written using a kanji that means either “purification” or “worship.” Kamo no Tadayuki 「賀茂 忠行」 and his son Kamo no Yasunori 「賀茂 保憲」 (b. 917 CE – d. 977 CE) were onmyouji 「陰陽師」, practitioners of Japanese esoteric cosmology that combines natural sciences and occultism called onmyoudou 「陰陽道」. Abe no Seimei 「安倍 晴明」 (b. 922 CE – d. 1005 CE) is arguably the most famous onmyouji in history, and he was a disciple of Kamo no Tadayuki and Kamo no Yasunori; in this fic, Abe no Seimei married the daughter of Kamo no Yasunori, so Vee is descended from them both through her mother. 「賀茂」 in modern Japanese can be read as “kamono” or just as “kamo.” Hence the name of the coven. I know the show is called *American Horror Story,* but it bothers me that canonically the first Supreme was born in the sixteenth century. There are types of magic and witches that predate this country, and I wanted to include that in this story. Although the Japanese coven doesn’t call their leader a Supreme. Their actual terminology is different. Hell, onmyouji was originally a government rank or title during the Heian period. Their leader would probably be called something like majochou-sama 「魔女長様」, the greatest of all witches.

[57] Genesis 6:4 says “These [Nephilim] were the heroes of old, warriors of renown.” So, being the offspring of the fallen doesn’t automatically make them evil.

[58] Some countries have either very low or nonexistent rates of taxation for people who aren’t citizens. Offshore bank accounts can be tax havens, but having undeclared income that isn’t taxed is super illegal. Vee uses an overseas bank account to avoid the American regulations that would require her to declare the money from the Cooperative as part of her income and explain where it’s coming from. Since the IRS has to investigate any deposit of $10,000 or more by law, Vee sets the amount at one dollar less because she thinks it’s funny.

[59] Rage Industry is a place in Seattle where you can pay to destroy stuff. It was inspired by the movie *Zombieland* (2009).

[60] It’s hilarious that a fictional version of LaVey appeared in Apocalypse, because his flavor of Satanism doesn’t involve worshipping Satan or any external devils or deities or demons at all. Also, he thought magic was “sanctimonious fraud” and “hoary misinformation.” So, the Church of Satan that Michael canonically visited in “Sojourne” was probably run by a heretical sect of Satanists who actually believe in and worship the Devil.

[61] This is the name of the book of all magic in the *World of the Lupi* urban fantasy series by Eileen Wilks, which I just finished rereading. *The Codex,* the fifteenth and final book in the series, hasn’t been published yet. *Codex Arcanum* means “book of secrets” or “book of the hidden.” *Codex Infernum* means “book of Hell” or “book of the

[62] According to the *Book of Enoch*, twenty fallen angels were Grigori chiefs of tens. So each of them led a legion that consisted of ten angels total.

[63] VER is shorthand for Veronica Enid Roscoe. N is shorthand for Nephilim. FAHWH is shorthand for fallen angel, human and witch hybrid. A is shorthand for Antichrist. MTL is shorthand for Michael Tate Langdon. F is shorthand for familiar. HDH is shorthand for human-demon hybrid. H is shorthand for hellhound. Vee writes in shorthand partly for efficiency and partly for a semblance of secrecy. 20 June 2016 was Midsummer’s Night, and 21 June 2016 was Midsummer’s Day. So this experiment was conducted during the summer solstice.

[64] Iraneus (b. 130 CE – d. 202 CE), a Greek cleric and martyr, first alluded to the concept of original sin in the second century of the Common Era. St. Paul or Saul of Tarsus (b. 5 CE – d. 64 CE or 67 CE) taught the gospel of Christ in the first century of the Common Era, and he supposedly wrote thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament (also called the Pauline epistles), although the authorship of six of those epistles is a subject of academic controversy. When people say that Jesus died for your sins, they’re preaching the Pauline doctrine of Jesus as the redeemer. St. Augustine of Hippo (b. 354 CE – d. 430 CE) was a Roman-African philosopher and theologian from Algeria who believed that free will itself was moral evil, but it couldn’t be called a sin because the descendants of Adam didn’t consent to the original sin. Augustine wrote in his letters to Julian of Eclanum (b. 386 CE – d. 455 CE) that Satan had sown the seeds of *radix Mali*, the root of all evil, that caused the fall of man.
She Forms Imaginations

Chapter Summary

Cordelia has a vision of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Vee is conflicted about Michael, who’s growing up too fast.

Forgive me,
I can’t repair
any beginning.
This inheritance damns us;
remembers.

Hannah Cohen, “Some Covenant”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 7
She Forms Imaginations

2016
Poulsbo, WA

Michael stares at her when she hobbles downstairs the next morning in bat symbol boxer shorts and a scoop neck black tank top that has *We Are Not Things* slashed across the front in hot pink letters,\(^{[65]}\) her wings halfway unfurled so her second pair of elbows are bent up above her pale freckled shoulders with her feathers ruffled anxiously. Those feathers are black in the same variegated way that Kolya’s hair is black: a paradoxical shade that shines with every hue of the rainbow. Abaddon had wings that shone with the same vibrance before he fell, but now the black of his feathers is dark enough to swallow the sun and every star in the cosmos whole.

Vee yawns into the hollow of her palm and shuffles into the kitchen. After she opens the refrigerator with a clunk and winces as the sound collides with her tension headache like a closed fist, she pours herself a glass of strawberry lemonade and pops two pills—one SSRI, one acetaminophen—in her mouth before she flops into the chair at the foot of the dining room table and swallows them along with a gulp of pink liquid.

Matt glances up from his sandwich and smiles at his daughter as she makes a face of pure unadulterated revulsion at the aftertaste of her medication, her tongue curling up against the backs of her teeth in disgust. “Good morning, sunshine,” he says, his voice teasing but affectionate.

Vee rolls her eyes at him. “Ugh,” she groans, short and sweet.

Michael ficks his gaze to Matt and narrows his eyes at the older man in confusion. “You don’t seem particularly surprised that she grew wings,” he says.
“We knew about the wings,” Matt informs him matter-of-factly before he takes another bite of his lunch. “We’ve known for years.”

It never ceases to amaze Michael how well the Roscoes, both of whom are sickeningly normal, have adapted to meet the needs of their supernatural child. Matt and Karen are unequivocally the holy grail of human parents. If she hadn’t welcomed him wholeheartedly into their home, Michael would’ve been horrendously envious of Vee. Although some dark part of him wonders what it would take to break them all, to drag the evil hidden deep within their weak human hearts to the surface; to strip away everything that Vee knows, everything she loves, until all she has left is him.

“I got my period when I was nine,” Vee says. “No one expects to start menstruating in the fourth grade, so I thought the cramps were symptomatic of appendicitis or something. I went to the doctor, who said it couldn’t be appendicitis because the pain was localized on the wrong side and ordered a CT. They saw my uterus eating itself with a side of vestigial wings. I used Concilium, a power I didn’t know I had until that moment, to force them to destroy the scan and forget everything they saw. I’ve felt the wings growing under my skin for years, but Nephilim are functionally immortal so I figured they would take decades or even centuries to break the skin and get big enough to let me defy gravity. I guess eating that apple escalated things. There wasn’t anything vestigial on your CT scan. Which is probably why eating the fruit of the forbidden tree didn’t give you wings or horns…” she yawns as her wings furl in fluffy curves around her body and scrunches her shoulders up awkwardly at the unfamiliar sensation of new ligaments moving under new flesh, “…or caprine legs and cloven feet. These new muscles feel weird.”

Michael holds up one hand tentatively, his fingertips curling unconsciously with the burning desire to touch her. “Can I…?” he asks.

Vee shrugs, one-shouldered. Since her wings sprout from anchorage sockets in her scapulae, shrugging makes them hunch too. “Okay,” she murmurs.

Michael splays his fingers over the down and semiplume feathers on top of her wings and strokes up the silky velutinous curve to the bend of her secondary elbows. When his thumbs dig into the divots of her secondary wrists to where her alulae overlay her remiges, she makes a sweet little sound in the back of her throat and stares at him with her pale eyes wide behind her glasses. Michael knows how sensitive Vee is—she can’t wear certain kinds of fabric because of sensory issues—but he still didn’t expect to illicit that response from her. It makes him smile as his hands skim the soft vanes of her primaries. “These are crenulated,” he says.

“They’re serrated like owl feathers,” Vee informs him, “probably for turbulence and stealth.”

Michael hums low in his throat, a soft *hmm*. “Your wingspan must be over eighty feet,” he says. “You might actually be able to fly.”

“Not today.” Vee conjures up a grilled cheese sandwich, a pickle spear, and a small pile of potato chips when her stomach growls and gurgles at her ominously. “I called your sister,” she says before she bites into her pickle spear with a satisfying crunch.

Michael leans one elbow on the wooden tabletop and watches her intently as she meticulously folds her wings behind her back. “Violet?” he asks.

“No.” Vee shakes her head slowly. “Eisheth.”

Eisheth, one of his cambion half-sisters, was cast out of Hell for marrying a human. Unlike other demonic races, succubi and incubi are capable of indefinitely taking possession of their host bodies in
order to feed because their food and drink is carnal pleasure—pleasure of the flesh.[69] Eisheth fell in love, had a child who inherited none of her magical abilities or demonic traits, and would’ve lived happily ever after if her husband hadn’t cheated on her with a younger woman a decade into their marriage. After that, Eisheth did what any scorned princess of Hell would’ve done: she drained him and his lover dry, dropped her son off with his spinster aunts, and shacked up with the archangel Raphael, the patron saint of Seattle, who descended to earth in order to fulfill his calling as one of the four Lords of Spirits.[70] Vee knows Eisheth because Raphael comes to visit her sometimes. Apparently he likes to think of himself as her “cool uncle.” Michael hasn’t met either of them yet, but that doesn’t mean he’s not curious. “Why?” he asks.

“Because her host is Nēmakinetic,” Vee says,[71] “and I’m gonna need someone to alter my clothes to accommodate these…” she flails one hand back over her shoulder at her wings before she mumbles, “…I’m lucky that I can still wear a bra.”

Michael surreptitiously glances down at the smattering of freckles like sprinkles on top of her pale breasts, his gaze lingering on the deep shadows of cleavage visible above the scoop neckline of her shirt. *Debatable,* he thinks.

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**2021**

**New Orleans, LA**

Black clouds swoop across the sky with no warning, strangling the daylight out of the heavens. They flood the earth with a hellish, bruised light from one horizon to the next until the skyline blares red beneath that swollen nimbus. Vermillion flares burst across the firmament, shedding a radiance that screams like thunder. Along with the sharp tang of lightning in the air comes an acrid undercurrent that coats her tongue, dark and bittersweet. Four demons stand in the crimson slant of light cast by that sky: one with a white face, one with black feathery wings, one with red eyes, and one who looks almost familiar.

Cordelia struggles to breathe as shards of panic stab white-hot through her chest, her lungs, her heart. Fingers dig into her shoulders as she hyperventilates and voices fill her ears but she’s too hysterical to recognize who they belong to, let alone make sense of them. Until one speaks her name, the backwater twang warming her from the inside out.

Misty has learned that shaking her does no good during one of her visions: her body doesn’t go anywhere, but she’s not there anymore until she snaps out of whatever elsewhere—or elsewhen—her Sight dragged her into, mind first instead of headfirst. Cordelia gasps and grabs her forearms with trembling hands, careful not to dig her nails in. Misty smiles and cups her face in both palms as the other girls crowd in around them at the edge of her bedframe. Cordelia turns and looks at Mallory with hysterical clarity before she grabs her wrist and spirals into another string of visions so intense that her head flops back against her pillows: a sequence of events from a past and present that never came to pass. Misty stares at Mallory with her brow furrowed in confusion as Cordelia lets her go, her breath sharp and heavy in the shuddering depths of her lungs.

“What did you see?” an unmistakably male voice asks in the periphery of their sisterhood.

Ariel is silhouetted in the doorway of her bedroom, backlit by sundown; he’s forgone the sinister black cape in deference to the heat and humidity of summer in Nawlins, and he still looks at her with the eyes of a shark who caught the scent of fresh blood in the water. Hawthorne’s was founded in Calabasas during the Gilded Age, and he’s been Grand Chancellor since Cordelia was a teenager. Ariel has no hope of further ascension in the ranks of the coven, and he hates her because she
became the Supreme after decades of being suppressed by her mother.

“I saw the end of the world,” Cordelia rasps, “the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” One of whom, she thinks, is sitting in this very room. Although she doesn’t seem to know it.

Mallory being one of the Four Horseman has sent her mind reeling. There’s no malevolence to her magic. Nothing about her feels demonic, but maybe that’s by design. Or maybe she was put on this earth without any knowledge of who or what she is, like some kind of infernal sleeper agent. Mallory couldn’t have faked how badly she wanted to belong somewhere before she came to Robichaux, could she?

“Armageddon,” Ariel says and skepticism drips from his tone, “you saw the harbingers of the Apocalypse.”

Cordelia exhales with enough force to flare her nostrils and rises to her feet, scattering her girls from where they crowded around her bedside to sit in the chairs at the small wooden table by her bedroom window or stand on either side of her as she stares down the disgruntled warlock. “I will discuss my visions with the Council tomorrow,” she retorts, “but tonight I need to speak with my sisters.”

Ariel sneers at her before he turns on his heels and stomps down the hall. It’s difficult to sympathize with someone who thinks she oppresses him with the fact of her existence, and tonight she isn’t in the mood to coddle his fragile male ego. Ariel can wait; these revelations can’t.

Cordelia narrows her eyes at Mallory and shuts her bedroom doors with a flick of her wrist. “You’re from the future,” she says as the sound of his petulant footsteps on the hardwood floor of the hallway fades out.

Mallory swallows thickly as everyone turns and gapes at her. “I was,” she whispers. Because she couldn’t keep her secrets now, even if she wanted to.

Cordelia had seen one demon in her vision from the darkest timeline. Not four. Mallory reordered time to save the world, but maybe she made things worse by assuming that a hit and run would kill the only son of Satan. Papa Legba allowed her to bring back Misty and Madison, but she had no way of knowing if the soul of the Antichrist had actually crossed over.

Mallory didn’t want to know, didn’t want to live through a second apocalypse, didn’t want to lose her sisters or become the next Supreme (again). “I used Tempus Infinituum to avert the apocalypse,” she clarifies after her sisters stop talking all at once, “the bombs were supposed to drop last year. But they didn’t. I thought it was because I killed the man who made it happen in the other timeline.”

Zoe frowns at her. “What man?” she asks.

“Michael Langdon,” Mallory says, “the Antichrist. I went to Los Angeles, to a time before he sold his soul to his father and inherited his demonic power, and ran him down. It should have killed him, but...”

Queenie stares at her in horror as comprehension dawns. “…but if one of the other Horsemen got to him before he crossed over,” she says, “he could’ve survived.”

“There are four harbingers of the apocalypse in the Book of Revelation,” Zoe says, “but only two of them are interpreted as the Antichrist: Conquest, and War. Although neither of them are named in the text itself. Death is the only Horseman mentioned by name in the bible.”

Madison folds her arms tight across her chest. “If the Antichrist has been alive this whole time,” she says, “why hasn’t he dropped the bombs yet? What changed his mind?”
“I don’t know,” Mallory snaps. “It doesn’t make any sense.”

Madison smirks at the way she bites back. “So let’s find out,” she says, “let’s find Michael Langdon.”

“What if nothing actually changed his mind?” Misty asks.

Queenie shrugs. After the death of Marie Laveau, a caplata named Dinah Stevens became the next Voodoo Queen of New Orleans and then abandoned her kingdom for profit by practicing in Beverly Hills instead of the Quarter. Queenie, who still had the grimoire that Marie left in her possession, became a witch Queen in her own right when she decided to serve the loa with both hands as a female bokor. “Then we kill him,” she says, “before he gets another chance to destroy the world.”

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2021
Poulsbo, WA

*I’ve got 99 problems, Vee thinks, and Michael’s crush on me is all of them.*

After six years of watching the Antichrist grow up too fast, her bubble of denial was popped mercilessly. Vee is oblivious to most forms of male attention, but she’s not stupid; and even a blind woman could see that Michael is obsessed with her.

Vee thinks of Nephilim as their own distinct hybrid species, in the way that a liger is different from a lion or a tiger despite being a crossbreed. Michael is the sole male of her species that she’s ever met, and she’s the first girl who ever treated him with kindness and respect. So his crush on her was pretty much inevitable, from a scientific perspective. Psychological. Biological. Unequivocal.

Only it’s not just a crush anymore. Michael has seen and heard her burp, heard and smelled her farts, seen her spit in the kitchen sink because one of the side effects of her immunosuppressant medication is excessive salivation, watched her power through her period every four weeks like clockwork and witnessed the aftermath of her arthrodesis surgery, when she wore a cast for three months because she concocted a potion to make herself heal human slow and went through excruciating oxy withdrawal. Nothing as fragile as infatuation would’ve survived more than half a decade of cohabitation. There’s a grotesque kind of intimacy that comes with living in the same house and sharing the same bathroom. Michael doesn’t piss all over the floor like Killian did when he was younger, though. Nor does he leave dirty socks full of semen in the laundry basket they share.¹⁷²

Maybe if she keeps thinking about how gross boys are, she won’t have to dwell on how gross Michael isn’t. Not even his weird tendency to dress like the vampire Lestat—with dramatic eye makeup and sometimes an honest to God cravat—has stopped her from having all kinds of feelings about him. It’s hellishly awkward. Vee even has feelings about the arch of his fucking eyebrows. There must be something terribly, horribly wrong with her.

It doesn’t help that he’s physically older than her these days. Michael had another preternatural growth spurt a year ago. Vee keeps reminding herself that he’s chronologically nine years old, but he looks more like a man than a boy now and that’s been messing with her head. Which only makes her feel worse, because that’s precisely what pedophiles and other assorted creeps say to underage boys and girls to groom them. It doesn’t matter that Michael has a fully developed frontal lobe or that he’s reached his third and ostensibly final evolutionary stage like some kind of infernal Pokémon. Technically, he isn’t a consenting adult by human standards. So that means he should be off-limits.

Only he’s not human, and neither is she. Which complicates things.
Vee wishes she could forget the elusive sweetness of his lips on hers, but the memory of that first kiss is scorching in her mind. It wasn’t even that good, as kisses go, but she felt more from the clumsy slant of his mouth than she’s ever felt with anyone else. Michael looks at her sometimes like he knows she’s thought about kissing him again, like it’s just a matter of time.

I’m too old for this, she thinks, but not old enough that our age gap doesn’t seem like such a big deal. I’m on the cusp of turning thirty, I’ve never had consensual sex with anything other than my vibrator, and I wanna bang the Antichrist like a screen door in a hurricane. Seriously, fuck my life—

Vee derails that mortifying train of thought as panic trickles down her spine and spikes heavy in her chest because something crossed the metaphysical threshold of her ward, a kind of magic she never saw coming.

Oh hell no, she thinks as she teleports downstairs and telekinetically flings open the front door in time to see Kolya shapeshift and lunge at a slim blonde girl. It’s the girl who tried to kill Michael, the witch in the flowy black dress.

But she’s not just some girl and she’s not just a witch—she’s another Nephilim.


[66] So, anatomically, bird wings bend at three joints: shoulders, elbows and wrists. Their arm muscles and ligaments are attached to pectoral muscles. So, for humanoid creatures, wings are basically a pair of long fingerless arms. Possibly with feathers. They’d need a wingspan of approximately eighty feet or more to make flight possible. Vee’s wings anatomically consist of: skeletal barbs to strengthen her ribcage, anchorage sockets in her scapulae (i.e. shoulder girdles), a secondary pair of humeri, elbow joints, ulnae and radii, wrist joints, and a pair of manus (i.e. bird hands), which consist of alulae (i.e. winglets, the avian equivalent of thumbs), carpometacarpus, digits and terminal phalanges. Also dozens of extra ligaments, muscles, and tendons. Vee’s musculature is very different from a bird’s: her supracoracoideus muscles and trapezius muscles work together in the same way a bird’s pectoral muscles and supracoracoideus muscles do (i.e. to flap her wings). Those secondary bones are hollow (i.e. with no marrow) but strengthened by trabeculae and extensive air sacs to oxygenate the wings. I chose this hypothetical anatomy over one with a secondary pair of shoulder girdles below the primary scapulae because that would make wearing a bra impossible and no one with DD-cup tits wants that.

[67] There are seven varieties of feathers: primary remiges, secondary remiges, primary coverts, secondary coverts, marginal coverts, alulae, and scapulars. Primaries are rooted in the bones of the manus or hand. Secondaries are rooted in the bones of the radius or forearm. When folded, the secondaries cover the primaries.

[68] Owls fly silently because their primary feathers have serrated leading edges that break down turbulence into microturbulence and shift the sound energy created by airflow over their flapping wings to a higher frequency their prey can’t hear. It makes them damn good predators.

[69] Unlike other demons, incubi and succubi have symbiotic relationships with their host bodies (i.e. they don’t just take over). So the humans possessed by a succubus or incubus are getting something out of the deal, whether it’s something they would’ve sold their soul for or just hella good sex. This doesn’t necessarily make incubi and succubi more ethical than other demons, especially since consent to sex with a succubus or incubus is dubious at best and coercion at worst. Raphael is one of the only beings on the planet capable of having consensual sex with Eisheth, because he’s an archangel and therefore immune to her powers of seduction.

[70] According to the Book of Enoch, four angels were designated as the four Lords of Spirits: ‘‘This first is Mikhail, the merciful and long-suffering: and the second, who is set over all the diseases and all the wounds of the children of men, is Raphael: and the third, who is set over all the powers, is Gavriel: and the fourth, who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life, is named Phanuel.’ And these are the four angels of the Lord of Spirits and
the four voices I heard in those days” (1 Enoch 40:9). These four are sometimes conflated with the Seven Spirits of God that appear in the Book of Revelation or with the seven archangels: Mikhail, Uriel, Raphael, Suriel, Gavriel, Raguel, and Phanuel. Phanuel can also be written as Penuel or Penemuel, meaning “face of God.” Sometimes he’s equated with God, or he’s an angel of penance, an angel of judgment, an angel of exorcism, and he was considered the ruler of the Ophanim. Phanuel is heard “fending off the adversaries or accusers and forbidding them to come before the Lord of spirits to accuse them who dwell on the earth” (1 Enoch 40:7) and ironically “adversaries or accusers” is later translated as “Satans.” It’s possible that Penemue the fallen angel and Phanuel are different figures, but their name is the same in Hebrew so I’m conflating them.

[71] Nêmakinesis is the ability to manipulate cloth. It’s rooted in the Latin word for “thread” or “yarn.” Which is rooted in the ancient Greek nêma (νῆμα), meaning “thread” or “silk” or literally “that which is spun.”

[72] It’s painfully obvious that I have three brothers and I grew up sharing a bathroom with one of them. I’m 27 now, but I’m still traumatized from stepping in splashes of urine in the middle of the night when I was a teenager. Seriously, boys are gross. Michael being the kind of guy that remembers not to leave the toilet seat up might be the most blatant wish-fulfillment in this entire story.
Betwixt the World Destroyed and World Restored

Chapter Summary

Vee meets the coven and Mallory is confronted with her true identity as one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

I don’t mistake
survival for song, kneeling
for prayer. I beg to be let out
of my mouth.

Like a god, I have
no name but the one
you never wanted
to learn.

Kristin Chang, “Etymology”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 8
Betwixt the World Destroyed and World Restored

2018
Poulsbo, WA

Poulsbo, Washington advertises itself as a Viking town despite the inherent historical inaccuracy.[73] There’s a twelve-foot statue of a Norse warrior towering over the western edge of town at the intersection of Viking Avenue and Lindvig Way, and a street fair called Viking Fest is held every year on the second weekend in May. Vee talked Michael into riding the Ferris wheel during his first Viking Fest, but he couldn’t talk her into going on any of the more intense thrill rides with him. After he wheedled her into riding the Tilt-a-Whirl, she almost threw up all over his shoes. Vee is a powerful witch and mentally she’s one of the strongest people he’s ever met, but she’s also physically disabled and she has a weak stomach. According to her, no fleeting adrenaline rush is worth the ensuing throes of nausea.

Viking Fest can seem like hell on earth if you think of hell as a small town festooned with droves of tourists, its arteries clogged by wooden blockades on half the main roads to keep traffic out of the makeshift fairgrounds. Which brings Michael to Central Market on the night before the first day of the festival, to help Vee pick up groceries so her parents won’t have to drive through the kitschy chaos of downtown on Saturday.

Central is one of two grocery stores located within a three-mile radius of the Roscoe house; the other
is a Safeway, where her parents typically shop for most of their groceries because the market is more
high-end and therefore more expensive. Vee is technically a multimillionaire, but since both of her
parents grew up poor, she inherited their penchant for being thrifty; and she’s pathologically an all or
nothing kind of girl, to the point that she actually slept on a mattress with a giant dent in the middle
for over a year, until Karen found out about it and bought her a new bed set. Central is where her
family goes for good produce, fresh high-quality fish, local beer for her dad, red wine for her mom,
and Vee’s favorite cheese pizza.

So when Vee stops like a deer caught in the headlights of a semitruck on a dark roadway before she
gets in line at the pizzeria, Michael puts his hand on her shoulder and opens his mouth to ask if she’s
okay. Only he never gets the words out, because a litany of sensations crash into him: suffocating
fabric in her face, a hand pinning her wrists above her head and knees on the backs of her thighs
pinning her down and keeping her legs spread, and something hard moving shallowly inside cut with
a hauntingly familiar voice screaming “NO, NO, NO!”

Michael snaps back to himself at the sharp intake of breath from the woman beside him and uproots
the fingers that had begun to dig into the pale flesh of her shoulder, his palm obscuring the words
tattooed on her skin—ink she got seven years after she was raped to remind herself that the body she
has now is a body her rapist has never touched. Sic gorgiamus allos subjectatos nunc: we gladly
feast on those who would subdue us.

It doesn’t take a warlock to locate the source of her anxiety: a gangly man with shaggy dark curls
and patches of wispy facial hair trying and failing to become a full beard in line at the pizzeria who
has the gall to smile and wave at her before Michael ruptures one of the arteries in his brain and
watches his body hit the linoleum.

Vee is staring at him with an unreadable look on her face. Which is odd, for someone whose heart
seems permanently affixed to her sleeve. Michael looks at her until she looks away first; he’s almost
blind to the chaos swirling around them as one customer squats to check his pulse and a boy working
behind the counter frantically dials 9-1-1, because she eclipses everything else.

I saw what he did to you, Michael thinks, knowing she can’t help but hear him when he
telepathically projects his thoughts. Why didn’t you kill him yourself?

Vee ignores the question and hobbles around the still-warm human corpse on the floor to order her
three slices of cheese pizza. Then she fills all three of the free drinks that come with her slices and
carries her pizza box and the paper cupholder out to her MINI Cooper in deafening silence while
Michael pushes the cart laden with groceries they already paid for. Vee folds herself into her car and
buckles her seatbelt before she answers. “After he raped me,” she murmurs, “I was afraid I would
lose control and destroy the whole neighborhood along with him. I almost murdered my own mother
because she pissed me off, and I love her…” she pauses to gnaw on the inside her cheek anxiously
before she says, “…I was terrified by what I might be able to do to someone I didn’t love, someone
who hurt me. After I started going to therapy, getting better was my only priority. Not revenge on
him. Because he isn’t worth it.”

Michael balances her pizza box and cup holder in his lap and holds her gaze. “No,” he says, “but
you are. You’re worth it, Vee. Never say that you’re not.”

Vee bites her lip and breaks eye contact as something warm and sweet blooms in her chest, suffusing
her from the crown of her head to the tips of her toes. Because it’s one thing to tell yourself that
you’re worth it, but listening to someone else say it out loud feels like something more. Vee looks up
into his eyes again and smiles at him shyly.

Michael swallows hard, his Adam’s apple bobbing in his throat, and licks his lips because he
desperately wants to kiss her again; but he’s not going to kiss her today, not with the echoes of her past trauma still disturbingly fresh in his mind.

Vee feels her cheeks flush hot as she looks away to avoid the heat of his eyes, blue and burning hotter than the flames of hell. “Sounds fake,” she deadpans to break the spell of electrified silence, “but okay.”

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2021
Poulsbo, WA

Mallory feels the ward siphon all of her magic out of her as she crosses over its threshold. Fear makes her breath snag in her throat at the sensation of her powers being leeched away, and a surge of adrenaline congeals sharp and cold in her lungs before the hellhound pins her down.

It can only be a hellhound. There’s no other word to describe a hulking five-hundred-pound beast with unearthly black fur, evil yellow eyes, and wickedly sharp white teeth. Sulfurous globs of drool ooze and fume like dark smoke out of its gaping maw to dangle perilously close to her cheeks as metallic growls snarl in his powerful chest and claw up into his throat.

Mallory tries to move and catches sight of a snake in her periphery: an albino Burmese python with firelit eyes, its lemon yellow and creamy white scales glittering ominously in the sunshine peeking out through the wispy clouds wafting across the firmament above her.

“Kolya,” a quiet female voice says, “back off.” It’s an order, soft and ferocious. Mallory feels her voice resonate like thunder suffusing the summer air, like an earthquake trembling underneath her, like an electric shock radiating through her body and snatching a gasp out of her throat as the strongest magic she’s ever felt prickles over her arms.

Mallory flinches as the snake flicks its forked black tongue out at her. When she twists her head and looks past the hellhound with her heart in her throat, she catches sight of a bespectacled woman: her gunmetal eyes are framed by a pair of black glasses with thick plastic frames and harsh daylight makes her irises look molten, her nose is tiny and snubbed at the blunt tip, her face is all soft angles, her thin upper lip curves like a bow over a full bottom lip, her chin is stubborn, her wavy brown hair is glowing with a raucous copper burnish in the sunlight, and she has a voluptuous body reminiscent of a forties pinup girl. If a forties pinup wore a black sundress blooming with yellow and white daisies, the sweetheart neckline and knee-length A-line circle skirt highlighting her hourglass figure. Mallory used to think that Michael in his prime had been the most powerful witch or warlock the world had ever seen, but she was wrong. This woman is more powerful than him, more powerful than any of them. It pulses beneath her skin like bright threads of incandescent lightning in her veins, paradoxically dark and neon bright.

When the coven had gone head to head with the Antichrist in the darkest timeline, she didn’t have time to wonder why he let them live long enough to fight back. It was something that had occurred to Mallory after she reordered time. Michael could’ve snapped their necks or made all of their heads explode with a snap of his fingers, but instead he offered to spare their lives because he was a conqueror and he wanted them to accept him as their lord and savior. Or maybe he just didn’t want to face an eternity of being alone in the post-apocalyptic hellscape that he created, with no one but his demonic father and a killer robot shaped like his surrogate mother and irradiated hordes of mutant cannibals to keep him company.

Michael isn’t alone now. Because of her. Michael, who isn’t dressed in a dark suit with a bloodred
cravat, but in faded black jeans, a black t-shirt stained with sweat, old faux leather work boots, and a pair of goatskin gardening gloves flecked with potting soil. Which doesn’t make any sense to Mallory, who never in her wildest dreams could’ve imagined the Antichrist gardening on a hot summer day. It just. Does. Not. Compute.

“Kolya,” the most powerful witch on the planet murmurs as she hobbles over to crouch next to the terrified time traveler, “shift back to human form before the neighbors call animal control again.” Mallory flinches and watches her face contort as she skims two fingertips over her forearm and a pop of psychic energy makes her skin crawl. “I don’t have the spoons to Egocissor anyone today.”

Michael peels his gloves off as his damp golden hair attempts to escape from the messy knot at the nape of his neck and falls over his eyes. “I do,” he says.

Vee glances over her shoulder and narrows her eyes at him. “Were you transplanting my cuttings?” she asks. “I told you—”

Michael folds his arms and arches his eyebrows at her like a challenge. “You shouldn’t even be out of bed,” he retorts. “Your meds—”

This is obviously an old argument that Mallory doesn’t have context for, but she’s not okay with them carrying on a conversation while she’s stuck sprawled on their lush front lawn being eyeballed by a giant albino snake that seems like it wants to eat her for dinner. “Aren’t you going to kill me?” she asks.

Michael frowns at her. “You’re here to die?” he asks her incredulously.

“No,” Vee says, “but she’s the one who tried to kill you the day we met. Y’know, the one who ran you over and tried to trade your immortal soul to Uncle Elegua in exchange for her sisters.”

Mallory gapes at her as she awkwardly sits up and scrambles back to her feet. Elegua is another name for Papa Legba, but it’s surreal to hear someone call one of the loa her uncle. “How do you know about that?” she wants to know.

Vee shrugs, one-shouldered. “Uncle Elegua came to see me while you were at the crossroads,” she explains. “I’m the one who told him to let you think Michael was dead.”

Michael frowns exponentially harder at the rest of the coven, who are still on the other side of the ward. “What the hell are they doing?” he wonders.

Vee shrugs again before she hobbles over to one of the gates in the black chain-link fence that surrounds the front yard. Misty, the swamp witch that possesses the legendary power of Resurgence, is squinting at her with confusion in her eyes and caught at the corners of her scowl. Cordelia is looking at her like she’s seen a ghost. Which is weird, because she doesn’t look much like her biological mother. Zoe, the head of the Council, is eyeing her suspiciously; she reeks of succubus, but she’s not half-demon. Maybe a quarter, at most. Queenie, the Voodoo Queen of Nawlins and a member of the Council, is staring at her with a fearless look in her deep brown eyes. Papa Legba only had nice things to say about her when Vee asked. Madison, who doesn’t have an official rank within the coven despite being capable of casting six of the Seven Wonders, is looking at Michael like she thinks he’s a snack. “Who here knows the difference between a ward and an aura shield?” she asks.

“One is a protection spell,” Zoe says, “an aura shield is supposed to make a location impossible to find. It can also keep your enemies out if they’re powerful enough to bypass the dislocation aspect of the spell and find you. But wards are different, because they don’t just keep your enemies out—they
Vee grins, sweet and vicious. “Exactly,” she says before she alters the boundaries of the ward and welcomes the coven into her home by draining the magic of their sisterhood in one fell swoop.

Queenie pulls a gun on her as the gate swings open and drops it almost immediately when Kolya, in human form, brings a butterfly knife to a gunfight and chops her hand off before she pulls the trigger. Michael bursts out laughing as her severed hand flops onto the ground at her feet and covers his mouth with one palm to muffle the sound.

Vee sighs and conjures the firearm into her hand. “Blessed rounds,” she observes as she unloads a magazine packed with a dozen silver cartridges. “Nice try.”

Queenie clutches her wrist in horror as Vee picks up her severed hand and side-eyes her familiar. Kolya cleans the blade of his butterfly knife with his tongue, his evil yellow eyes illuminated with hellfire. Queenie stares at her wrist in disbelief as vivid blood drips viscously down her forearm.

Vee exhales with enough force to flap her lips. “I’m sorry,” she says. “Kolya sometimes forgets that witches can’t regrow limbs if they lose them.”

“So you could regrow a hand if someone chopped one of yours off?” Queenie asks shrilly.

Vee shrugs, one-shouldered. “I don’t know,” she says as she holds the severed hand above the gory wrist and starts magically reattaching the veins and nerves before she concentrates on the musculature. “I’ve never lost a hand,” she clarifies. “I did regrow my tongue once after some asshole cut it out, though.”

“Someone cut your tongue out?” Cordelia asks, her voice full of rage. It’s not just because this woman is Lyn’s daughter. Cordelia would be infuriated by the knowledge that any witch had been mutilated in her territory, because all of the witches in North America are under her protection whether they choose to join the coven and study at Robichaux or not.

Vee hums, a quiet mm-hmm. “Yeah,” she says as she knits the dark skin back together and smooths out a faint circle of scar tissue until the lower extremity looks as though it was never dismembered at all, “he thought not having a tongue would stop me from casting.”

“But it didn’t,” Zoe deduces.

Vee shakes her head slowly and lets Queenie go. “No,” she says and smiles ruefully, “it didn’t.”

“So you don’t use verbal incantations?” Misty asks.

Vee shakes her head again. “I use them for kotodama,” she says, “and I use quotes or phrases I like to imbue the magic with my intention when I make up new spells—like the undoing I used to shut the hellmouth six years ago. It took two separate incantations and telepathically bitching at Satan to make that work. Otherwise? No, I don’t need verbal incantations to cast.”

“Vee also doesn’t hurt anyone, unless they try to harm her,” Michael adds, and the ice forming behind his blue eyes says and I’ll end you before you get a chance to try again. Those eyes scream mine, mine, mine. It seems as though the Antichrist is afraid their coven might take his favorite toy away.

Vee smiles at him, oblivious to the chill of his possessiveness. “I meant it when I said I don’t have a grudge against your coven,” she says. “Or any coven, since my witch bloodlines go back a hell of a lot further than Salem.”
“Then why didn’t you come to New Orleans?” Cordelia wants to know.

Vee gnaws on the inside of her cheek before she answers that question. “Because I’m not a witch,” she says, “not really. Nephilim are our own hybrid species that isn’t human or angel or demon or witch, like how a liger isn’t a lion or a tiger and a red wolf isn’t actually a wolf or a coyote. I call myself a witch sometimes and I can practice witchcraft, but that’s not what I really am.”

Cordelia gasps when she unfurls her wings, her variegated feathers refracting the sunlight in prismatic glints as the witches all gawk at her.

Vee furls them behind her back and exhales a vociferous gust of air. “Yeah,” she mumbles, “I’m not a witch. I never was.”

“Holy shit,” Zoe intones.


“Speaking of unholy shit,” Misty says and side-eyes the snake in the grass. “What the hell is that?”

Michael grins as the python slithers up his legs to drape over his shoulders. “This is Tiamat,” he says, “my familiar. Since pythons aren’t poisonous or venomous, I chose to summon and bind an Udug—a kind of poisonous demon. Alû, the spirits of the Udug who once walked the earth, are enforcers in Hell.”[76]

“I take it the hellhound is your familiar,” Cordelia deduces. True familiars are rare because they’re demons, and witches rebranded to distance themselves from negative stereotypes associated with their craft after the Salem Trials.[77] Modern witches sometimes have beloved animal companions, but they don’t have familiars in the traditional sense because most witches aren’t powerful enough to bind demons into their service. Kolya has a human form, so the body Vee used to bind him must have been a human corpse. It’s not something that could be done to a living breathing person, because a human possessed by a demon becomes a slave trapped in their own body and a witch or warlock possessed by a demon becomes a sorceress or sorcerer. Kolya only has a singular essence. Cordelia is shaken to her core by that, because demons aren’t supposed to have a soul.

Vee nods, a sharp descent of her chin. “I needed a protector,” she explains, “and hellhounds are my father’s creations. There are three different kinds: guardians, hunters, and guides. Guardians, of course, are guard dogs—like Cerberus from Greek mythology. Hunters are deployed to track down wayward souls that haven’t crossed over or demons who hitchhike into our realm without permission from their superiors. Guides help souls find limbo, and they’re sent to their own personal hell or heavenly pocket dimension from there.”

Kolya shoots her a look that says Judging you. “These bitches are here to kill you,” he snaps, “not listen to you infodump about hellhounds.”

Vee rolls her eyes at him before she turns and looks at Cordelia. I’m too autistic for this, she thinks, and this is what happens when you can’t read social cues to save your life—literally. “What do you want?” she asks.

“We want to stop him from kickstarting the Apocalypse,” Mallory tells her.

Vee cocks her head and narrows her eyes at the blonde waif behind her glasses. “So I’m guessing your Supreme didn’t tell you that you’re Famine,” she retorts, “one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse? Which is why only you were capable of crossing the threshold of the ward I cast around this house: because I didn’t ward against other Nephilim. I didn’t think I had to.”
Mallory whirls to face Cordelia, hurt flooding her brown eyes. “You knew,” she whispers, her voice shattering on her tongue like broken glass. “How long—”

Vee wobbles on her feet and conjures her cane out of thin air from where she left it propped up against the bifurcated wall in one corner of her room. “Okay,” she mutters and gnashes her teeth around the word. “I don’t have the spoons to stand up anymore. If you want to talk about the impending Apocalypse, come inside and have lunch with me. Or get off my lawn and fly back to New Orleans. It’s your choice.”

[73] Poulsbo was originally inhabited by the Suquamish tribe, before colonialism relocated them to the Port Madison reservation in 1855. Scandinavian immigrants who relocated from the Midwest built a settlement on the Liberty Bay shoreline in the aftermath. Jørgen Eliason—a man from Norway—officially founded the small township in 1884, but Poulsbo wasn’t incorporated until 1907. There might’ve been actual Vikings in Poulsbo at some point in history, but whitewashing that history is still uncool.

[74] Because of course Michael picked a snake for a familiar. I’ve drastically altered his formative influences and that makes him a different character than he was in canon to a certain extent, but some things never change and he’s still his father’s son.

[75] This is the spell Cordelia used to protect Robichaux in the darkest timeline. Dinah countered it with vodou during one of the flashbacks in “Fire and Reign.” According to the American Horror Story wiki, it’s called an aura shield.

[76] Udug, or Utukku in Akkadian mythology, were a class of demons from ancient Mesopotamian legends who could be good or evil. It’s also the word they used to refer to demons as a whole, rather than a specific kind of demonic entity. According to Mesopotamian exorcism texts called the Udug Hul (tr. “evil udug”), the Udug are poisonous. Here is the only description of the Udug from the Babylonian incantations of the Udug Hul:

\[
\begin{align*}
O my father, the evil udug, its appearance is malignant and its stature towering, 
although it is not a god its clamor is great and its evil radiance immense, 
it is dark, its shadow is pitch-black and there is no light within its body, 
it always hides, taking refuge, it does not stand proudly, 
its claws drip with bile, it leaves poison in its wake, 
its belt is not released, his arms enclose, 
it fills the target of his anger with tears, in all lands, its battle cry cannot be restrained.
\end{align*}
\]

Alû (or Allu) are vengeful spirits of the Utukku from Akkadian and Sumerian mythology that dwell in the underworld and they’re described as having no mouth, lips or ears. When an Alû possesses someone, they fall into a coma.

[77] Originally, familiars as they appeared in European folklore were described as vivid three-dimensional spirits commonly seen in the form of small animals. Their purpose was to serve and protect young witches, in particular the witch to whom they were bound. Some familiars were described as doppelgängers or personal demons, while others were described as fairies or gods. These spirits were given affectionate names or nicknames, hence the aspect of the binding ritual alluded to earlier in this fic that involves naming. Most familiars conveniently appeared to offer witches aid in times of struggle, which demons would totally do.
Chapter Summary

Vee invites the coven to lunch and learns something about her father—and herself. Mallory is drawn to the other two Nephilim, even though she doesn’t like or trust either of them. Yet.

Chapter Notes

Special thanks to IsoldeDax and Chekovs_Power_Loader for commenting and hopefully not being scared off by all my word vomit when I responded. Also, shoutout to Katherine (WildBlueSonderling) for reading my trash fic even though you haven’t watched Apocalypse. (YET?) We’ve been friends since junior high, though, so you must be used to me by now.

Of all my inheritances, my father’s appetite pulls heaviest: the translucent ache licks my joints sweet, a mouth without a mouth, begging not for fullness, but to be rid of absence. A man who praises water’s return to shore transforms my leaving into his life’s end, foretells a child made sinew and weight, made a season of burials. Have you watched light-dappled foam grow molars and break over jagged stones, bruise-colored teeth multiplying what it’s fed to keep eating? We are born into an economy of desire and belly ancestral wants to marrow our bones and furnish bodies with our blood’s thickest loss.

What is permanence if not a fiction of mercy? What is a name to slice from the day’s golden hour if not a lighthouse?
If I could eat my lonely. If I could fluent my lonely.
This slow heavy was both my mouth and its hollow. I mean hunger, hunger of a wave cannibalizing itself to reach shore, hunger that folds inwards, because what else will feed it?

Natalie Wee, “Birthright”

From Darkness to Promote Me

Chapter 9
Whose Mortal Taste Brought Death into the World

2007
Chamas, [78] the Seventh Circle of Hell
Vee shuts her eyes in one realm and wakes up in another, a world that lacks the solidity of earth. Personal hells occupied by the souls of the damned maintain the illusion of corporeality because their suffering is more potent if the sinners go through the motions of processing their sensory input the same way they did when they were alive, but the circles of Hell where demons and fallen ones dwell are more chaotic. Vee can’t feel her own bones and flesh and blood, the absence of her anxious heartbeat somehow making her anxiety worse. There’s no invisible barrier of her atoms smashing against the atoms of everything around her, nothing in between her and the antimatter of the netherworld. Vee can’t see, taste, smell, touch, or hear anything because she left her brain in her body and that means her nervous system can’t translate the metaphysical into one of her more familiar physical senses the way that it always does on earth. Unending hollow darkness boils over her to pour itself down her throat, the emptiness threatening to shatter her mind. It feels like falling into the abyss, the void swallowing everything that makes her human. Until the demon is all she has left.

Abba, she thinks, screaming into the void—Abba, help me! I know you’re here—Abaddon grabs her by the nonexistent hand and instinctually she creates a new body out of antimatter, the antiparticles of her soul aligning into a form her mind understands. Vee wheezes, squeezing the hand in hers so hard she would’ve broken his fingers if her father had been human…but if her father had been human, then she wouldn’t be here. Abaddon is pale and freckled with thick long auburn hair and gray eyes with flecks of green illuminated by the light of his power. Those eyes match hers and even though her hair has less red mixed in with the dark shade of ash brown, his is the same too-curly-for-a-hairbrush-but-unfortunately-not-curly-enough-to-form-actual-curls texture. Abaddon has a long pointed nose so narrow it looks almost delicate, high cheekbones that could cut glass, a pointed chin and a sharply angular jawline, and a soft mouth with a thin upper lip and full lower that Vee sees whenever she looks in a mirror. Maybe he chose his antiphysical form to seem the same age as her dead mother, because he looks too young to have a teenage daughter.

“Veronica,” he says, his voice a refraction and a reverberation all at once.

It makes her flesh want to break out in goosebumps. Which is awkward, because she doesn’t have actual skin at the moment. Abaddon extricates his hand from hers and cups her face in both palms before he kisses her on the forehead and tugs on the metaphysical tether attached to her body. Vee shouts into the void again when the magic thread drags her back to herself and keeps screaming as 13.8 billion years of memories ravage her mind, scorching her from the inside out with icy nausea and making her howl until her panic snuffs her voice out. Irin believe that memories are what make them eternal; and in his mind the knowledge she’s going to glean from the visions making her eyes feel like they’re going to melt out of their sockets is a blessing, the greatest gift a fallen angel can give.

Veronica, he whispers inside her head, my beloved daughter. You still have so much to learn.

2021
Poulsbo, WA

Cordelia is surprised by the interior of the house: it’s sunlit and full of plants. Most of the walls are painted in the kind of muted colors that work best in large spaces: moonlit yellow, sky blue, laurel
green and beige offset by creamy white ceilings split by half a dozen skylights. There’s a more formal looking dining area off to one side of the great room through a small archway with a glittering chandelier in the shape of branches with crystalline buds hanging above the hard surface of a heavy teak table. Antique copper dishware and cookware is polished to shine and displayed on a smaller cherrywood table next to a hutch that contains a collection of tarnished silverware and fine porcelain china. There’s a clock on the wall surrounded by a loop of blackboard, with a cursive note scrawled in chalk that reads *the strongest of all warriors are these two—Time and Patience.*[82] Another hutch in the great room contains more dishware: colorful plates and bowls on the lower shelves and ornate wineglasses on the higher shelves. There’s a smaller table in a corner by a half-wall surrounding a descending staircase that looks well-used, guarded by six matching chairs. Instead of a chandelier, a multifaceted light fixture with its bulbs subsumed by thick mottled glass molded into different shapes drips over the tabletop at a slant from the high ceiling. There’s a painting of a multicolored zebra over the sleek gas fireplace and columns of bookshelves in rows on either side facing a sectional dark green suede couch.

These aren’t things a woman on the cusp of her thirtieth birthday would collect or furniture that a millennial could afford. Cordelia assumes everything belongs to her parents, the people that own this beautiful house. It’s not at all where she expected the spawn of Satan or the daughter of a demon who calls himself the Destroyer to live.

Mallory jolts when her phone buzzes. It’s Coco, shrieking **WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON??** in all caps. Coco flew to Beverly Hills, where her affluent family lives, to celebrate her brother’s twenty-first birthday a few days before Cordelia envisioned the Apocalypse. Trevor is over a decade younger than his older sister—he was a late-in-life baby their parents weren’t expecting—but they’ve always been close despite the age gap. Coco also isn’t a very powerful witch, so Mallory didn’t argue when Cordelia decided not to include her best friend in their mission to kill the Antichrist or die trying (again). It makes her wonder how something that should’ve been another suicide mission became a lunch date with five witches and three of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Part of her is still hoping that Cordelia is wrong, that she isn’t Famine; but Mallory feels an otherworldly magnetic pull to Michael and to Vee, one that makes her think her Supreme can’t be wrong. It feels so right, standing in this house with them both. Like coming home. Mallory *hates* feeling that way so viscerally that her throat constricts, her stomach lurching. It feels like she’s betraying her coven, the only family that matters to her, the people she loves most in the world. What if she doesn’t belong at Robichaux after all? Maybe she belongs here, with the other Nephilim—

“No,” Michael tells her in his mellifluously low voice, “you belong wherever you choose to.”

Vee sighs and gnarls her shoulders anxiously before she shoots Mallory an apologetic look. “Sorry,” she says, “but you’re projecting your thoughts all over us. Someone needs to teach your coven how to craft a psychic shield.”

“Most witches don’t have the power to maintain one,” Zoe informs her.

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers. “Not without talismans,” she says. “Or are your witches too weak to make those, too?”

Talismans are supernatural battery packs that gather magical energy and stockpile it for later use. Basically, the power of Ergokinesis in the form of enchanted objects. Ergokinesis is the power to convert any kind of energy into magical power: kinetic energy that builds up whenever you move, solar energy from the sun and moon, chaotic energy from storms and other natural disasters, seasonal energy from solstices and equinoxes, and even the energy generated by the rotation of the earth. There is magic in every nook and cranny of the world, if you know how to harness it. Witches often
wear an overabundance of jewelry everywhere because their necklaces and rings and bracelets are enchanted to soak up raw magic. Nephilim physiologically absorb magical energy the way a normal human body makes Vitamin D when exposed to the sun, but witches and warlocks need catalysts.

Zoe shakes her head. “No,” she says, “but we only make them during celestial events. Like solstices and equinoxes. Or solar and lunar eclipses.”

“Otherwise,” Queenie says, “they don’t work.”

Vee frowns at that. “What potion have you been using to imbue your talismans? Maybe there’s a combination of ingredients that makes them absorb the energy from the celestial events but doesn’t let them absorb subsequent energy in the aftermath—”

“Okay,” Madison interjects, “as fun as listening to you tell us how much we suck at magic is, we didn’t just come here to chat about witchcraft. I’ve been to Hell, and I’m not going back there anytime soon if I can help it. So why don’t you tell us what you know about the Apocalypse that we don’t?”

Vee snorts derisively. “What I know that your coven doesn’t could fill a library,” she says before she hobbles over to the refrigerator and curls the fingers of the hand she isn’t using to grip her cane around the door handle.

Michael is suddenly behind her, close enough that she inhales the masculine scent of musk and sweat and pure sin. Which smells like melted butterscotch, apparently. It’s not fair of him to smell mouthwateringly good after working in the garden. When he casts a nonverbal spell to wick the excess sweat away, she feels his power whisper over her skin. “Go sit down,” he murmurs, his breath hot on the shell of her left ear. It’s an order, not a request, and that makes her shiver as a frisson of volatile heat sparks up her spine.

Vee transmutes herself into her chair and sits in the corner with her back to the wall, staying in her comfort zone.

“Why don’t we start with your name?” Cordelia asks.

Vee shuts her eyes and conjures lunch onto the table: a bowl of salad, a platter of four kinds of sandwiches, a bowl of chips for people who don’t like salad, a polished slab of wood meant to elongate the table to accommodate two more people, a pair of chairs made of dark hardwood that don’t match the dining set, place settings and napkins for eight people, and empty cups. “Veronica Roscoe,” she informs them all, “but most people call me Vee. These are meatless sandwiches because my mother and I are vegetarians—Mom for health reasons, me because meat allergies—but do any of you have other dietary restrictions?”

“Nope,” Queenie says, “but what kinds of sandwiches are they?”

Vee points at the brioche. “These are foragers,” she says, “king trumpet mushrooms in a marinade of shallots, olive oil, salt, white wine vinegar, and thyme, kale and onion sautéed with olive oil, garlic, red pepper flakes, salt and pepper, homemade mayonnaise with black trumpet mushrooms, shallots, fresh lemon juice, salt and pepper, broiled eggs and provolone cheese, and brioche rolls toasted with butter. Greens and beans,” she points at a sandwich on dark rye bread, “white kidney beans mashed with sesame scallion sauce and fresh lemon juice, cucumbers, and mozzarella cheese scattered with fennel stems and fronds. These,” she points to one with sprouts, “are California veggie: homemade pickles brined with apple cider vinegar, salt, brown sugar, red onions and mild chili peppers, avocados mashed with sea salt and olive oil, cucumbers, sprouts, and mascarpone cheese, and the one I call Green Goddess Crunch,” she flails one hand melodramatically at the tallest sandwiches,
“puréed homemade mayonnaise, chives, tarragon, Greek yogurt, fresh lemon juice and zest, olive oil, salt and pepper, cucumbers and radishes coated with fresh lemon juice, salt and pepper, avocados, sprouts and fontina cheese with a side of pesto veggie salad: homemade pesto with basil, arugula, walnuts, almonds, pine nuts, garlic, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper, salad with olive oil, roasted eggplant, red onion, green beans, zucchini, cherry tomatoes, salt and pepper…” she smiles at them shyly before she says, “…I like to cook. I don’t always use magic to do my prep work, but—”

“—but she’s on immunosuppressant medication,” Michael cuts in, “she took her weekly shot last night. It always makes her tired, but does she stay in bed the day after her injection like she’s supposed to? No.”

Vee grins and shoots at him with two finger guns. Michael rolls his eyes at her before he furls the fingers of one hand in a flourish and fills the empty glasses on the table with filtered water from the pitcher in the fridge. Vee fills her own cup with lemonade and conjures up a biodegradable straw with swirling black and white stripes. It’s enchanted so the paper won’t get soggy. Vee waits for all the witches to crowd around the table and sips her lemonade while she watches them decide whether or not they should risk eating food prepared by one of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse before she opens her mouth to speak. “There are seven apocalyptic seals in the Book of Revelation,” she says, “the first seal is Conquest, the second seal is War, the third seal is Famine, and—” she slants her gaze to Mallory before she continues, “—the fourth seal is Death. I think the breaking of the second seal triggered your vision,” she flicks her gaze to Cordelia and clarifies, “War is unequivocally somewhere in the world, probably still in the womb, because he didn’t exist three weeks ago.”

“Judgment is the fifth seal,” Michael says as Vee stops talking to take a bite of her sandwich. “It’s symbolized as the vindication of Christian martyrs in Revelation 6:11, but the fifth seal is actually the Last Judgment that dooms humanity as a species. When my father tempted Adam and Eve with the fruit of the forbidden tree three hundred thousand years ago, he did it because he believed that mankind was destined to destroy this planet and he wanted to prove a point. Our decaying society is all the proof he needs: climate change, school shootings, corrupt governments, police brutality, hate crimes,” he surreptitiously looks over his shoulder at Vee before he adds, “rape culture, fascism, capitalism in all its atrocious glory. I’d say overpopulation was a problem, but earth has a capacity of ten trillion. Our global economy can’t support eight billion people, but not because of overpopulation. It’s because the resources that we take for granted are being wasted.”

Vee stops chewing and swallows. Michael speechified all of that with such passionate intensity, but he doesn’t actually give a fuck about the suffering of humanity as a whole—he’s just not wired that way. Vee is the one who put all those angry words in his mouth. “Genocide isn’t the answer,” she says. “Michael and I agree on that. Armageddon is the sixth seal. When the world ends and demons walk the earth, angels will sound the seven trumpets and descend to wage another heavenly war.”

“Only my father doesn’t think it’s going to happen that way,” Michael says, “because the heavenly host can’t declare war on beings in other dimensions unless they get permission from God and God is nothing but a catatonic ghost in the machine these days. Seraphim were locked out of Atzilut a hundred thousand years ago.”

“Atzilut is the highest of the four heavenly realms,” Vee explains, “a pure world of divinity where the presence of God dwells. Seraphim are named the burning ones because they would burn themselves by ascending from Beriah—the second highest of the four heavenly realms—to Atzilut. Only the Shekinah doesn’t have any autonomy anymore, because the price of godhood is the will of your worshippers being imposed on you.”[83]

“So many people have believed different things about God since humanity crawled out of the primordial ooze,” Misty drawls matter-of-factly, “it makes total sense that God can’t do anythin’
these days if that’s how things work in this universe.”

Vee hums, a quiet mm-hmm. “Satan orchestrated the creation of the Four Horsemen,” she says. “We’re each born with a role to play in the Apocalypse. Michael is supposed to bring on Armageddon. I’m supposed to help demons manifest on this plane of existence by converting their antimatter into stable ordinary matter. You,” she says and looks across the table at Mallory, “are supposed to use Tempus Infinituum to undo things like the damage to the environment that caused climate change.”

“Oh the fallout of detonating every nuclear weapon on the planet,” Mallory realizes.

Vee nods. “Exactly.”

“Oh reversing time if the Apocalypse fails in some way,” Michael tells her.

Cordelia frowns at that. “Mallory used the power of Tempus Infinituum to prevent the Apocalypse in another timeline,” she points out dubiously.

“Bitch flipped her destiny the bird and yeeted herself back in time,” Queenie interjects.

Vee shrugs, one-shouldered. “We still have free will,” she says. “I don’t have to give Satan a corporeal body if I don’t want to, Michael doesn’t have to bring on Armageddon, and Mallory doesn’t have to cast Tempus Infinituum if she doesn’t want to. It’s our choice.”

What other timeline? Michael asks telepathically.

Vee stops with her sandwich halfway to her mouth before she remembers that communicating with thought projection means she can talk and eat at the same time. There was a darkest timeline where we never met and you destroyed the world because your daddy told you to, she informs him. I saw it when I booped Mallory.

Michael puts one of his elbows on the tabletop and turns to stare at her incredulously. Vee couldn’t tell a lie to save her life, but that’s still pretty hard to believe. Because he can’t imagine living in a reality where he never knew her. There wouldn’t be any light or sweetness in his life. No shy grins or terrible puns or awkward innuendos or incensed rants or that adorable thing she does where she worms her toes under his thigh whenever they watch a movie on the couch to keep them warm or her looking horrified when she catches sight of the price tags on some of his designer clothes even though her collection of rare books and manuscripts is just as decadent in its own way. No sanctuary from the prestigious social calendar that comes with his status as the head of the Cooperative, because he doesn’t have the luxury of avoiding the people who have access to all of the nukes on the planet and could theoretically launch them without his permission if they decide he isn’t fulfilling his destiny fast enough. No one to show him what unconditional love looks like—

Vee jostles him underneath the table with her foot. Quit catastrophizing, she thinks and smiles at him ruefully, that’s what my anxiety is for.

“There’s so much of your father in you,” Cordelia says to break the quiet punctuated by the eating of sandwiches, “you look just like him.”

Vee narrows her eyes at the Supreme. “How do you know?” she asks. Because they do look alike, but Vee has never seen her father outside of Hell and somehow she doubts Cordelia hangs out with demons in her spare time. Hell, she doubts the Supreme has much free time. If any.

“Because he came to Robichaux in the flesh when he was courting your mother,” Cordelia says. “I remember when he would come to visit her—”
Vee puts her second helping of sandwich down. “Abba was corporeal?” she asks as she meticulously wipes her fingers clean with her napkin.

Cordelia frowns at the livid expression curdling on her face, like spoiled milk. “Yes.”

Vee gnashes her teeth. “Motherfucker,” she bites out before she abruptly descends into the pits of Hell.

“Pun intended,” Madison quips. Mallory shakes her head and stifles a smile as the former starlet beams, pleased with herself.

Michael leans his elbow on the tabletop and focuses on Mallory. “I should thank you,” he tells her silkily.

“For what?” Mallory asks, his smooth voice making her pulse beat nervously like the fluttering roar of a hummingbird’s wings. Now that she knows her attempt to murder him once and for all before she drove off into the sunset to rejoin the coven didn’t work out the way she had planned, she worries he’s going to slit her throat when she least expects it. Since the woman she thinks might embody his humanity is busy having an out-of-body experience, this moment would be the perfect time.

Michael looks at her, his shrewd gaze assessing. It’s surreal how angelic his face is, surrounded by the halo of his golden hair. Michael is beautiful, even tainted by her impressions of him from the darkest timeline. Satan once deceived the Canaanites into worshipping him as Shakar, their god of dawn. Michael probably inherited the face of a solar god from his father. “I didn’t know her in the other timeline,” he says. “We never met. I was alone before she found me. There were other people, but I was alone. Your chaotic power changed everything. Vee explained it to me once: chaos in the context of mathematics is the interdisciplinary theory which states that complex deterministic nonlinear dynamical systems have sensitive dependence on their initial conditions. Small changes in those initial conditions yield radically divergent outcomes. It’s called the Butterfly Effect, or Chaos Theory.”

“You love her,” Madison says, her voice dripping with disbelief. “You’re in love with that fat bitch —”

Michael glares at her and in the space between one fraction of a second and the next, Madison shuts up and starts choking on her own air.

“Stop it!” Mallory shouts as the reality of how vulnerable the coven is without their powers strikes her like a lightning storm that rages and thunders with heavy pulses of fear while it threatens to drown her. Vee made them feel comfortable with her in spite of everything, until they felt like she could be their sister. Michael doesn’t seem interested in making them feel safe in his presence, especially when Vee isn’t here in spirit.

Michael smiles and the cruel twist of his mouth is ethereal as Madison claws at her throat and chest in a doomed attempt to stop choking. “Don’t talk about her that way,” he says. “It’s rude.”

Vee chooses that moment to open her eyes and blinks at the blonde choking to death at her table. “Michael,” she murmurs. “Stop.”

Michael scowls and is about to explain why he was asphyxiating Madison when someone manifests himself in front of the fireplace.

It begins as scattered particles of shimmering light, luminous sparks like a cluster of eye-searing
fireflies that coalesce from antimatter into matter. There’s an eerie bulk to the gleaming form, like a weight in the mind rather than something rooted in the body. It makes no sound as the aura surrounding the glowing fallen one constricts and expands in a wild, capricious parody of breathing: dipping and rising, spiking and plummeting, ebbing and flowing. Chaotic. Its emanation makes him feel viscerally sacred and profane, as though no power on earth could touch him.

Abaddon stops radiating otherworldly light and for one brief shining moment he seems almost human. Vee screams at her father not with her mouth but with her mind, psychic shockwaves hurling across the room like a scythe through stalks of wheat and throwing him back against the fireplace so hard the mantle disintegrates from the blow and sharp fissures bloom in a latticework of cracks that shatter the muted white paint on the walls. Abaddon isn’t so untouchable after all, not if you’re his daughter.

“How is she going head to head with that?” Queenie whispers.

Michael smiles again, his eyes burning with affection that makes him look even more devastatingly handsome. Vee is magnificent, her anger crawling under his skin and making him shiver at the sweet dark taste of her magic coating his tongue, incandescent and ecstatic. “When she ate the fruit of the forbidden tree,” he says, “it tripled her power.”

“Was that before or after she closed a hellmouth?” Misty wonders.

Michael smiles wider. “After,” he says.

Why didn’t you come for me? Vee screams at her father in a heartrending voice only he can hear, pouring every drop of rage and loneliness and pain she locked in a gilded cage because she was too afraid of herself and her own power to survive any other way. Why did you shove all of your memories into my head and throw me out of Hell instead of having a fucking conversation with me? Why didn’t you love me enough to stay—

Abaddon reforms the fireplace she destroyed and fills in the cracks she made in the walls with a thought. God told me about you billions of years before you existed, he says, and they said that you were meant to be raised by humans. Those were their last words to me. I believe that I was born to be your father, Veronica. Please don’t ever say that I don’t love you.

Vee made him promise not to lie to her, and a promise from an angel—even a fallen one—is binding. If they don’t keep their word, they cease to exist. Satan has spent an eternity bending that infernal rule, but even the Devil can’t escape that aspect of his angelic nature.

Abaddon leans back against the mantle and when he looks at each of the witches, his gray eyes look metallic in the daylight. “You have nothing to fear,” he says out loud. “Samael—the one you think you know as Lucifer or Satan—fell because he hates mankind. I fell for a human, for love of one that is now lost.”

“What do you mean, lost?” Misty asks him.

“Hellfire can burn a person body and soul,” Vee explains. “Xii, my half-brother,[85] destroyed his mother and half the other Nephilim of his generation before…”

“…before I killed him,” Abaddon says without inflection. “If I hadn’t, there wouldn’t be any witches in this world or any other.”

“So you’re the reason we exist?” Zoe deduces, the space between her eyebrows furrowing in suspicion.
Abaddon smiles ruefully and it makes him look uncannily like his daughter. “Samael is still holding a hell of a grudge against me for that,” he deadpans, “but I’m firstborn. Mikhail is the strongest among us and Samael was God’s favorite, but they called me Penemuel—the face of God—because I was created first and my daughter inherited the infinite potential for power from me that other angels do not possess. Only my twin Azriel—you know her as Shacath—my children and I possess that divine trait.”

Vee gnaws on the inside of her cheek as the horrific implications of that revelation sink in. If she wasn’t scared of her destructive potential before, she sure as hell is now. For most people with the ability to use it, magic is a finite resource. Supremes rise and fall because their bodies eventually start to expire and burn out from trying to contain so much power, like magical senescence; the next Supremes begin to leech away the excess power from their predecessors in a futile attempt to save them from oblivion. All witches aren’t created equal, not in terms of power. Neither were the Sons of God. Vee, the daughter of the firstborn of the Benei Elohim, is capable of anything but fading away.

Abaddon flickers out of the mortal coil in a blare of radiance that leaves them all reeling. Vee hunches over in her chair and digs her fingers into her temples as a migraine dangles over her brain like the cerebral sword of Damocles. Michael doesn’t have the ability to heal anyone but himself, so instead he conjures her a refill of her lemonade and an acetaminophen. Cordelia fervently checks on all of her sister witches, reading their frazzled auras in the strobing cacophonies that surround them. Misty dips her head down onto her shoulder and takes her hand in both of her warm palms to intertwine their fingers like a fulcrum. Zoe exhales a sharp gust of air before she deflates like a popped balloon, mentally and metaphysically exhausted by her peripheral encounter with the divine. Madison, who snatched up one of her hands in a frenzy, lets Mallory go and they silently make a pact to pretend it never happened while Queenie looks down at her half-eaten sandwich and tries not to throw up all over the table when her stomach churns with primeval fear.

“Sorry,” Vee mumbles to break the oppressive silence that seems to hold the weight of the world. “I didn’t mean to bring my daddy issues to the table. So,” she slumps in her chair and side-eyes Cordelia, “do you still want to kill Michael for something he may never do? Because I am not okay with that.”

Cordelia shakes her head and swallows as she tries to restore her equilibrium, unearthly phosphenes flashing like phantasms in front of her eyes. “We can’t kill someone for something they haven’t done yet,” she says with slow finality. “I won’t condone that course of action. There’s humanity in you,” she looks at Michael and offers him a tentative sliver of a smile before she says, “I see it. I think you should both consider relocating to New Orleans. If we want to find the fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse, we’re going to need your help.”

Michael arches his eyebrows at that. Keeping your friends close, he thinks, and your enemies closer. Classic strategy, and therefore predictable. It sets his teeth on edge because even though he’s cunning enough to see through the Supreme, his unruly librarian is another story. Vee wants a supernatural support system. It’s something that she’s coveted since before he was born, something that she desperately craves, something these witches have the power to give her whether their motivations are pure or not. “There is no we,” he retorts, his voice coiling like a serpent about to strike with venom and fang.

Cordelia stares at him with a harsh look in the depths of her ordinarily warm brown eyes. “If your theories are correct,” she says, “the Apocalypse is a bell that cannot be unrung. This world belongs to all of us. If you don’t want it to end, then we need to work together and hope that it’s not too late to save the human race from extinction.”

“Unless you want to watch the world burn,” Zoe says, because that seems like it’s precisely what the
Antichrist should want.

Mallory flicks her gaze to Vee before she focuses on Michael. “Robichaux is where I belong,” she says. “There’s a place for you too. Vee is a good influence on you. We don’t want to separate you from her.”

“As if you could,” Michael says caustically.

[78] Chamas (שָמָח) means “violence” in Hebrew. It has a different connotation than the Aramaic word hamas (סאמח), which describes the primordial violence of the world before the biblical deluge (i.e. the flood).

[79] So, going off my earlier theory about baryogenesis, heaven and hell dimensions are made of unobservable antimatter. Basically: every particle theoretically has a corresponding antiparticle with equal mass but an opposite electric charge, and that means the amount of antimatter in the universe should be equal to the amount of ordinary matter. However, the amount of observable antimatter in the universe pales in comparison to the amount of observable matter. Also, antimatter totally annihilates ordinary matter and itself upon contact and that means Vee couldn’t actually take her body (or her brain) into any facet of Hell without destroying her physical self. So, how does perception exist without eyes, without hands, without ears, without a nose, without a nervous system? This was my attempt to quantify that. Misty disintegrating when she failed at Descensum in “The Seven Wonders” textually supports my theory as something that could be canon.

[80] Abba in Aramaic or Ab in Hebrew (אבא) means “father,” and it’s the word traditionally used in Jewish liturgical prayers and meditations and in texts like the Kaddish, Talmud, and Mishnah to refer to God. Scholars believe that in the context of biblical passages in which the word is used, it denotes the privileged status of the adult son (and heir) rather than a child or a daughter. Vee is Abaddon’s heir regardless of her gender, so the word actually works in that context and it also works because Abaddon/Penemuel/Phanuel is conflated with God.

[81] Type 2A or 2B wavy thick hair, is what I’m saying. I love and hate it because it’s pretty but it also has a mind of its own and I can’t do anything with it.

[82] Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace (1869) Book X, Chapter 16.

[83] There are four heavenly realms in the Kabbalah:

Atzilut or Olam Atziluth (עולם אצiliation), meaning World of Emanations, is the highest of the four. Shekinah, the presence of God, dwells there. No being can exist in this realm without being overwhelmed by the presence of God and becoming unaware of their own existence. It’s a world of pure divinity. Its corresponding element is Fire. It’s also associated with the Suit of Wands in Tarot.

Beriah or Olam Briyah (עולם ברייה), meaning World of Creation, is the second highest. It contains Araboth, the throne of God, and is inhabited by the archangels, Seraphim, Cherubim, and Ophanim. Its corresponding element is Water. It’s also associated with the Suit of Cups in Tarot.

Yetzirah or Olam Yetzirah (עולם יצרה), meaning World of Formations, is the third highest. It’s considered half-good and half-evil and is inhabited by all of the angels who don’t live in Beriah. It’s also the place where souls are formed and where matter is shaped into the basic elements. Its corresponding element is Air. It’s also associated with the Suit of Swords in Tarot.

Assiah or Olam Assiyah (עולם עסייה), meaning World of Making, is the lowest of the four heavenly realms. It overlaps with and encompasses the material world of earth, contains the lower heavens where human souls go, and is ruled by the Ophanim and by the archangel Sandalphon, who rules over the third angelic order. Its corresponding element is Earth. It’s also associated with the Suit of Pentacles in Tarot.

There’s another realm in the Kabbalah called Adam Kadmon (אדם קדמון), meaning Primordial Man. It contains the
future emergence of creation, divine light with no vessels, and manifestations of the grand design. It’s supreme above the other realms because the divine light of creation that fills all worlds immanently originates from there. Its corresponding element is Spirit. It’s also associated with the Major Arcana in Tarot.

Hell is unique because the divine light of creation does not fill the netherworld. So it’s not considered part of the four worlds.

[84] Shakar and Shalim were twin gods of dawn and dusk in the pantheon of Ugarit. I’m conflating Satan with Shakar and Abaddon with Shalim. Also: Beelzebub is Attar and Amaymon, wife of Asmodeus and mother of Lilith, is Inanna/Astarte/Ishtar.

[85] Xii is one of the Enochian angels described as “sub-angelic” in the sixteenth century writings of John Dee (b. 1527 – d. 1608) and Edward Kelley (b. 1555 – d. 1597). I’m saying that “sub-angelic” means Nephilim.

[86] Azriel or Azrael, meaning “helper of God,” is the angel of death and renewal who is also named Raguel, Raguel, Rasuul, Rufael, Raquel, Rakul, Reuel, and Raksiel (all transliterations of a Hebrew name meaning “friend of God”). Shacath is not actually an angelic name, so this is her epithet. Azriel is conflated with Abaddon in the Coptic text “Discourse of the Abbaton,” where Abaddon is named Muriel until he falls. There’s an Azriel in the Hebrew Bible (i.e. Old Testament) and in Jewish mysticism texts (i.e. the Zohar, the Kabbalah). Azriel is also one of the archangels of the Islamic faith and is described in the Quran as being subordinate to the will of God “with the most profound reverence.” Which, I think, suits the angel who cast Satan out of Sister Mary Eunice and back into Hell in Asylum.
Deign to Descend

Chapter Summary

Vee and Michael arrive at Miss Robichaux’s Academy.

Even shadows fall in embrace, but here it is the night that grants the light agency.

The body can get lost under something so dark. Or a body can only get lost.

But to choke, you need at least two hands, and by no means necessary, do they need to be from the same person.

This is God as the gutter-mouth blush spread into the shape of a moon. This body, another name for home or sin. A slender throat gives at the slightest urging.

Like building a house, without ever seeing a house. Trauma: a nervous trembling, the body’s architect and its own demolition.

Fisayo Adeyeye, “Hoofbeats”

From Darkness to Promote Me

Chapter 10

Deign to Descend

2019

Point Imperial, AZ

Vee regrets teaching Michael how to travel by ley line the instant he takes her hand and drags her into the metaphysical currents of light that shine through the cracks between earth and subspace, beams that blare and stab the darkness behind her eyes like tiny strobes. It’s more ethereal than electric because the light emanates from the lower heavens above, creating magic fault lines on earth that coalesce around the world into a network of inter and intradimensional pathways. Vee yelps as the firmament cracks open and snaps itself shut again, spitting them out onto the highest point of the Grand Canyon.
Point Imperial, the highest rim overlook at Grand Canyon National Park, is located on the North Rim at the terrifying elevation of 8,803 feet. Vee stares at the spectacular panorama of ridges and spires lit up with earthbound rainbow stripes by seemingly endless sky as her stomach twists and lurches from the knowledge of how fucking high up they are. Patches of forests claw at that sky, the dark evergreen needles of the pine trees branching out like spindly fingertips. Vee is surprised that Michael chose this point instead of Bright Angel, because they’re Nephilim and he has a flair for irony. “What the fuck,” she wheezes and snatches her hand away from him indignantly.

Michael smiles at her before he steps back to lean against the wrong side of the fence that is supposed to stop people from getting too close to the edge of the ridge, smooths his hands over her shoulders until his thumbs dig into the sensitive flesh around the feathered sockets of her wings, and pushes her off the cliff with enough strength to make her fall instead of splatting on the rock formations below.

Vee blinks sharply as a second pair of eyelids she didn’t know she possessed stops the rush of air roaring around her from ripping all of the moisture out of her eyes, opaque nictitating membranes like the kind owls have. It’s a miracle that her glasses didn’t fall off in midair. Vee stares at the halo surrounding the disc of the sun and lets herself fall, her heart hammering in her ears as her breath slowly grinds to a halt in her chest.

Anxiety. Fury. Pain. Fear. Panic. When she unfurls her wings, all of that dissolves into glimmering slivers of light that she pushes herself beyond with the first great smack of her wings against the falling sky.

Vee wobbles before she begins to rise, the ravenous sound of her wingbeats drowning her thunderous heartbeat out as she ascends to somewhere higher than Point Imperial until she’s above the scant clouds. Although she doesn’t try to fly through any of the clouds, because she doesn’t want to get drenched by the vapor of a passing nimbus. Vee hovers for a moment, her legs dangling unfettered with no solid ground beneath her feet, the dark tendrils of her hair slithering over her shoulders because her hair tie snapped in the space between freefalling and glorious flight. Transcendent. It makes her wonder if this is what God used to see: the world stretched out beneath her filled with people and their infinite possibilities. Their capacity for beauty and terrible cruelty, destruction and renewal.

Michael looks up at her from thousands of feet below and smiles wider. She’s magnificent, he thinks and touches every mind in the park in order to cast the wonder of Concilium on them all, it’s almost a shame that no one but me will ever see her like this.

Vee descends so abruptly that he wonders idly where all of her velocity went the moment she lands in front of him, until it occurs to him that she absorbed the excess kinetic energy. Michael beams at her, enchanted by the way her wings spread to seemingly block out half the sky before she folds them up again without tangling her feathers and hair. “You asshole,” Vee says with slow vehemence before she grins back at him in spite of herself. “I can’t believe you pushed me off a fucking cliff.”

Michael cocks his head and looks at her with a hint of incredulity because she knows him better than anyone, so his methods of helping her conquer her fear shouldn’t have surprised her. Being pushed off a cliff is still an experience that would have surprised anyone, even a woman with wings. Michael savors the sight of her with her cheeks flushed with adrenaline, her long dark hair curling soft and loose down her back; it was only a few inches past her shoulders when she met him, but it’s grown out almost to her waist now and she always keeps it confined in a thick messy braid. What a shame. “Someone needed to get you out of your comfort zone,” he points out, “we both know that you weren’t going to do it yourself. I also knew the fall wouldn’t kill you, so all you had to lose were some of your silly inhibitions.”
Vee rolls her eyes at him even though she knows he’s not wrong. “You suck,” she mumbles, “and you owe me a new hair tie.”

“Just be glad I spelled your glasses so they wouldn’t fall off before I pushed you,” Michael says.

Vee exhales a vociferous whoosh of air. It was electrifying to fly, but falling was equally thrilling. Vee overthinks too much to take a leap of faith without being pushed. Michael knows that, and he knows how to drag her ass out of her comfort zone by making her feel uncomfortable in the best possible way. How in the world is a girl supposed to resist that?

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**2021**

**New Orleans, LA**

Miss Robichaux’s Academy for Exceptional Young Ladies was purchased and repurposed as a haven for young witches in 1868 by Vee’s great-great-great-great-grandmother, former Supreme Marianne Wharton. It’s a four-story Greek revival manor with a Palladian façade, the pristine white colonnades punctuated by ornate iron metalwork painted black to match the electric lanterns dangling from the porch ceiling. Robichaux’s sleek monochromatic color scheme continues with the matte black front door, white trim around the windows and doorway, black exterior shutters, and white curtains peeking out through the rectangular panes of the windows.

Vee hasn’t seen inside the house her ancestor built, except for a few interior shots posted on the school’s website. Until she emerges from the grid of ley lines and sets foot on top of the imperial staircase with Michael to her left, holding her hand up with her fingers and palm curved over his in a way that subtly indicates their status as a prince and princess of the underworld. Vee doesn’t typically acknowledge their title because the idea of being royalty makes her uncomfortable even in the context of the infernal court, but Michael is holding her hand like that to remind her of her legacy in *this* world: she’s a descendant of the Supreme who founded this academy, her bloodlines flow back much further than Salem, and that means she deserves to stand here where her human ancestor had once stood. No matter what these witches think of her.

Michael doesn’t seem to doubt himself like she does, even though she knows he gets nervous like anyone else sometimes. Probably because his brain isn’t always dicking around with his serotonin. Michael treating her like a princess is nice, but it does nothing to assuage her anxiety when she realizes that a hundred fledgling witches and warlocks are gathered at the bottom of the staircase to gawk at them.

*I’m glad I wore the cloak to hide my wings, she thinks, even though Louisiana is hotter than any circle of Hell. Michael is wearing a suit, though, and he’s gonna regret it.*

It’s gorgeously tailored suit and he chose to wear all-natural silk instead of velvet or wool in anticipation of the climate, but he wore black and dark fabrics soak up heat something fierce. Vee delayed their departure for Nawlins until late September partly because she wanted to purchase and refurnish a house so they could have their own place on campus and partly because she didn’t want to spend her summer in a godforsaken swampland, but it’s still 82 degrees out with 74% humidity. Which is too hot for someone from Seattle, where the average temperature in September is 65 degrees. Nephilim physiology also means they possess a higher euthermic body temperature, so Michael runs hotter than any human. Vee wears dresses whose skirts terminate above her knees even in winter, although she always switches from sheer thigh-high stockings to warmer leggings under thick socks and wears long sleeves to protect her joints from the cold. Michael cares more about fashion than she does, but he wears expensive clothes that make him look good rather than blindly
following trends. Vee wears clothes that make her feel comfortable and somewhat confident in
herself, in that order. Most of her outfits cost less than a hundred bucks, though.

“Breathe,” Michael whispers to her with a hint of fond exasperation in his voice. Vee inhales deeply
through her nose and gnaws anxiously on the inside of her cheek.

Cordelia smiles at her as the crowd of witches and warlocks parts for their Supreme. “Please
welcome Veronica Roscoe and Michael Langdon,” she says, “the newest members of the coven of
Salem descendants. Vee is descended from our former Supreme Marianne Wharton of the Warren
bloodline that goes back to Salem.[89] Hoozuki Sei, her grandmother, was of the Kamo and Abeno
bloodlines that go back to the Heian era in ancient Japan. Vincent Malone, her grandfather, was of
the charmworcker bloodline that originated in Ireland in the eighth century[90] and of the janara
bloodline that originated in Benevento in the sixth century.”[91]

“Hi,” Vee mumbles and flushes bright red at the listing of her magical lineage because she doesn’t
want the youth to think of her as a stuck-up thoroughbred.

Cordelia shoots her an unapologetic but sympathetic look before she continues her introduction. It’s
necessary to shine a light on the human side of her family tree so the coven doesn’t think she’s here
to destroy them all. Although most of the witches and warlocks outside the Council don’t know
they’re half-demon, they agreed that it’s only a matter of time before it becomes common knowledge
because they already know witches are descended from the Irin and that Cordelia had a vision of the
apocalypse. It’s pretty much impossible to keep secrets with telepaths in your house. “Michael is the
great-great-grandson of our former Supreme Mimi DeLongpre of the Holt bloodline that goes back
to Salem,” she says, “so he’s also descended from our former Supreme Prudence Mather.[92] Since
they aren’t here to learn how to use their powers, they won’t be participating in lessons or lectures as
students of the Academy. Vee is joining the staff as our Head Librarian and Michael has been
offered a seat on the Council, pending his evaluation by the warlocks.”

“Yes,” Ariel interjects, “an evaluation that will take place this afternoon.”

Michael can almost taste a glut of ambition curling off this man in fumes tinged with decades of
bitterness. It’s ugly, but intoxicating. Your grandfather was Grand Chancellor, wasn’t he? he thinks.

Vee hums, a soft mm-hmm. Ariel killed him when I was still in the womb, she thinks. We can’t trust
any of the warlocks. Most of them resent witches for having superior magical abilities. So they’ll
either hate you to your face because you’re more powerful than any male caster has ever been, or
they’ll hate you behind your back while they attempt to use you for their own ends.

Michael gently squeezes her hand before they descend. Vee squeezes back as the crowd of young
witches and warlocks at the foot of the staircase begins to disperse. It’s almost noon, and no power in
the universe is capable of coming between hungry teenagers and lunch.

Ariel is among the lingering adults, but he’s not alone. Other warlocks, all between the eligible ages
of late twenties and early forties, are watching Vee in a way that Michael doesn’t like. Those legends
about the magic skipping generations are true, unless both parents are magical. So, warlocks who
want children with magic seek out witches that also want children. Hoozuki Sei went looking for a
warlock from outside of her coven because she wanted new blood, and found Vincent Malone.[93] It
was an old-fashioned practice that Fiona abolished in 1973, after she chose someone named
Vandenheuvel as her first husband and father of her child.[94] Vee is thirty, but her Nephilim
physiology makes her look younger. Michael has gone to see R-rated movies with her and laughed
when she got carded because he’s the one who technically isn’t old enough to watch anything rated
Ariel is screaming *fuck tradition!* with every cell in his body. It doesn’t seem to matter to him that he’s the same age as her adoptive father. Michael doubts Vee would consider him a viable romantic option, because there’s older men and there’s men the same age as her dad. Although he doubts Ariel is thinking of romance or even sex when he looks at Vee. What he wants is power.

“Miss Roscoe,” the warlock says and offers his hand to her for the shaking, “Mr. Langdon. It’s a pleasure to meet you both. May I call you Veronica?”

Vee stifles a derisive snort. Abaddon is the only person who calls her that, because he thought of her as Veronica for billions of years before she existed and decided she prefers to go by the diminutive Vee. “No,” she retorts, not unkindly, “Vee is fine.”

Michael reluctantly stops holding her hand and intercepts the smarmy handshake. “Sorry,” he says in his smoothest voice, “my *girlfriend* doesn’t like it when strangers try to touch her.”

Vee narrows her eyes at him. *What the hell?* she thinks.

You’re the one who said men take no for an answer more gracefully if the rejection comes from another man staking his claim instead of a woman asserting her autonomy, Michael points out.

Vee exhales with enough force to flare her nostrils in annoyance as Ariel whirls and walks away. *I also said that was misogynistic bullshit,* she reminds him. *Now we’re going to have to pretend we’re dating whenever there are warlocks around.*

Michael bites his lip and tries not to grin triumphant and unrepentant because she isn’t objecting like he thought she would. Vee knows how to set boundaries and she’s not afraid to shut him down whenever he oversteps them. If she really didn’t want to pretend they’re dating, she would’ve told him no like she did the first time he kissed her. Vee isn’t saying no today. Michael hopes that she never, ever feels the need to tell him no again. *Or maybe we don’t have to pretend,* he thinks without projecting his thoughts, because he doesn’t want her to overhear. Michael folds his hands behind his back to stop himself from taking her hand in his again and shifts his focus to the Supreme. “We have business to discuss,” he says, “preferably without the sycophants lurking.”

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers and tries not to freak the fuck out. *Michael called me his girlfriend,* she thinks as she tries not to scream internally and fails epically, *Michael called me his girlfriend and it actually kind of felt...right. What the fuck is wrong with me?* “I have to pee,” she blurs out awkwardly.

“There’s a bathroom down the hall,” Cordelia tells her. “We’ll be in my office when you’re done.”

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Vee sits on the toilet for what feels like an eternity while her thoughts spiral and twist into a labyrinthine snarl of anxiety.

When she was fifteen, she fell in love with a boy for the first time. Norman, her first boyfriend, told her that he loved her. Then he broke up with her three weeks later by ghosting her before ghosting was even a thing.

When she was sixteen, she dated a boy that she didn’t love. Daniel told her that he loved her every day even though she never said it back, and he told her that he loved her before he forced himself inside of her even though she told him no. Then she kept quiet for almost two years because she blamed herself for what he did to her.
When she was seventeen, she fell in love again. Adrian, her third boyfriend, told her that he loved her for the first time on their anniversary. Then he broke up with her because he decided that he was no good for her. Phoebe, her best friend, broke her heart even worse the weekend after the breakup when she decided to end their friendship. Compulsory heterosexuality kept her bi ass from acknowledging that she was in love with her emotionally abusive former best friend for almost ten years before she unpacked her feelings in therapy.

Vee didn’t let herself fall in love after that. Instead she made herself untouchable and used her Otherness as the perfect excuse to avoid getting attached to anyone. No one could understand her because she was one of a kind, so she didn’t even try to connect.

Until she met the Antichrist.

Vee loves Michael. What he is to her defies all definition. No word in any language she knows can accurately describe the space he occupies in her life, in her heart, in her soul. Those feelings are past the point of no return. It’s fucking terrifying. Also, the Apocalypse is nigh. Now is so not the time for her to be thinking about her boy problems or the stupid human insecurities left over from her shitty teenage heartbreaks.

*Don’t be afraid to love because of the people who hurt you or all of the things you can’t control,* her therapist had told her, *let yourself experience the happiness and warmth and emotional connections that you have always deserved.*

Vee isn’t human, so she always felt like that sentiment didn’t really apply to her. When she went to therapy, she couldn’t be totally honest about who she was and she eventually stopped going to her therapy sessions because of that. Vee misses therapy on days like this, when she almost wants to shake out of her skin.

*I need to destroy something,* she thinks, *I wonder if Robichaux has recyclables that I can shoot.*

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Michael is sitting in one of two chairs in front of the antique wooden desk facing the shuttered windows behind it, slants of light spilling over his face to cast shadows that sharpen his chiseled angular features. Vee folds herself into the empty seat and looks across the desk at Cordelia. “I created four Shikigami,[95] last month,” she says, “another hellhound and three Erinyes.[96] I made kakuremino masks for them so they can walk unseen by humans and investigate the other hellmouths. Akatsuki is researching the hellmouth in Cleveland,[97] Yowa, Mahiru and Higure[98] are researching the hellmouths in Providence,[99] London,[100] and Rapa Nui.[101] All four of them are married to Kolya, my familiar, and to each other.”

“Polyamory is common among the lesser demonic races,” Michael explains, “because marriage in Hell is a ritual that allows demonic entities to merge their souls and thus combine their powers.”

Cordelia stifles a shudder at the thought of the demonic entities in her office performing that ritual. “What exactly is the difference between a Shikigami and a familiar?” she wants to know.

“It’s the ceremony,” Vee informs her, “creating an Agathion bond requires the corpse of a human or animal as the catalyst. If you want to create a Shikigami, you need a paper doll packed with bone dust and a blood sacrifice combined with kotodama to bind the demon to the doll. I’m only a kotodama-tsukai—the lowest of the three onmyouji ranks of kotodama users—because I don’t have any formal training in onmyoudou,[102] but I have more than enough power to perform the Kijin ceremony.”
Michael leans back in his chair with his elbows on both armrests, his long fingers curled over the edges of the smooth wood. “There’s another hellmouth in Shibuya,” he says,[103] “but unfortunately the Kamo coven refuses to cooperate with Vee. We were hoping that you would contact them instead and negotiate with their Supreme. Kolya is having trouble obtaining the records from the Hotel Cortez because they’re currently undergoing renovations and their network is down, but he should be able to hack in once they’re back online.”

“There are more hellmouths in this country than anywhere else in the world,” Cordelia muses. “Why is that?”

Vee gnaws on the inside of her cheek before she answers. “Colonialism,” she says. “Specifically the genocide of the indigenous peoples of the Americas.”

“It destroyed the metaphysical component of the land itself that protects most physical locations from infernal emanations,” Michael clarifies. “Which made America the best place for my father to start clawing his way out of Hell. It’s only a matter of time before we find his other progeny, but process of elimination could take years.”

Cordelia frowns at that. “You think the fourth Horseman could be another Antichrist?” she asks.

“It’s one theory,” Vee says, “but Lucifer isn’t the only archdemon capable of manifesting on a hellmouth and procreating with humans as conduits. Mallory was conceived on the hellmouth at the Hotel Cortez, but she’s not an Antichrist. It was a prince or princess of Hell who created War, but that’s all we know for sure.”

Michael is convinced that War is his half-brother. It’s all just conjecture at this point, but creating another Antichrist out of spite because his prodigal son hasn’t destroyed the world yet seems like something his father would do. “We’ll be able to narrow down the location of conception after her Shikigami finish their investigations,” he says, “all lesser demonic entities can sense the presence of a demon lord. It should help streamline the search process somewhat.”

Vee opens her mouth to add her two cents and shuts it abruptly to chew on her bottom lip as her stomach growls. *Welp,* she thinks as her cheeks flush bright pink, *now I’m twitterpated and mortified. Seriously, fuck my life.*

Michael smiles more to himself than at her before he rises from his seat. “There’s nothing left to report,” he says. “Now, if you don’t have any more information for us, I’m going to take my girlfriend to lunch.”

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[87] Alfred Watkins (b. 1855 – d. 1935) coined the term “ley” in 1921 and identified the alignments of places with geographical and historical significance to support his theory that these alignments existed on a network of ancient pathways used for overland trade and ceremonial purposes. It’s a pseudoscientific hypothesis that has been misinterpreted by others as something preternatural, but I prefer the supernatural interpretation of ley lines so I’m writing them into this fic.

[88] Most birds have three sets of eyelids: a pair of upper and lower eyelids used for closing their eyes or sleeping, and a third pair of eyelids for blinking and protecting them from wind shear when flying. Vee would need a pair of opaque nictitating membranes to see while she flies. Otherwise her eyes would be watering the whole time. Not being able to see would ruin the experience.

[89] Warren is a reference to Mary Ann Warren (b. 1674 – d. 1693), the oldest of the girls who incited the Salem witch trials started accusing people of practicing witchcraft and having congress with the Devil. Mary was arrested on charges of witchcraft herself in 1692 after the younger girls turned on her because she told the high court that all of
their accusations were false, but during her questioning she began accusing people again. Although she wasn’t executed for witchcraft, she died a year after the trials were conducted.

[90] Cailleach phiseogach means “charm-worker” or “witch” in Irish Gaelic. It’s derived from the name Cailleach, the divine hag or ancestral deity of Ireland and Scotland.

[91] This is a reference to a folktale about witches in Benevento, a Samnite city in ancient Italy. Romauld I (b. 662 CE – d. 687 CE), duke of Benevento and prince of the Lombards, worshipped a golden viper connected by scholars to the Egyptian moon goddess Isis worshipped as a Trimurti or triple goddess along with the Greek moon goddess Hecate and Roman moon goddess Diana. Janara, the word for strega or “witch” used in Benevento, is potentially derived from the name Diana. Their cult also made sacrifices to Wotan (i.e. Odin) and practiced diasparagmos and omophagia, a rite where you rend a god in effigy and then ritualistically feast symbolically on divine flesh. Specifically, they would hang a goat carcass from a sacred tree and rend it before consuming the shreds of raw meat. After five hundred years, reports of witches gathering began to circulate in Benevento again in 1273 CE. These witches anointed themselves in flying ointment supposedly made using the blood or fat of newborn children and rode on brooms of sorghum. Which is a euphemism for masturbation or self-medication by absorbing herbal concoctions through your vaginal walls as opposed to taking a potion orally. Basically, a significant chunk of the women that ended up dying in the witch trials and inquisitions that inflamed Europe between the fourteenth and seventeenth century were killed because men were furious at them for masturbating and/or self-medicating.

[92] Prudence Mather was likely named in homage to Cotton Mather (b. 1663 CE – d. 1728 CE). Katherine Holt (d. 1655 CE) was Cotton Mather’s grandmother, the first wife of Richard Mather (b. 1596 CE – d. 1669 CE) and mother of his sons. Increase Mather (b. 1639 CE – d. 1723 CE) was Cotton Mather’s father, a Puritan minister and President of Harvard from 1681 to 1701. I didn’t want to make the Mather bloodline a witch family, because Increase Mather and his son were arguably responsible for sparking the mass hysteria that caused the Salem witch trials with their writings on witchcraft. Cotton Mather thought the trials were justified because they promoted the glorification of God. Also, his notes on the women accused were lowkey misogynistic. Yikes.

[93] This makes perfect sense if you remember how rare witches are canonically. Hank Foxx boasted about hunting and killing nine witches during the years he was married to Cordelia in “The Axeman Cometh,” even though nine people in six years is not a lot. America has a population of approximately 310 million and we see maybe a hundred total witches and warlocks during the entire show, meaning statistically a witch is one in 3,100,000 or less. Since magical powers seem to run in families (e.g. Fiona and Cordelia, Zoe supposedly inheriting her killer vag from her great-grandmother who had the same “genetic affliction,” Mallory being able to trace her bloodlines all the way back to Salem) it’s not a stretch to include a cultural element of selective breeding to preserve or strengthen those bloodlines.

[94] According to the script for “Bitchcraft,” her name was Fiona Borgia Vandenheuvel Goode. Vandenheuvel is a Dutch toponymic meaning “from the hill.” Borgia is obviously a reference to the Italo-Spanish noble family who became notorious during the Italian Renaissance. It’s also a toponymic from the town of Borja in Spain.

[95] Shikigami 「式神」 (tr. “divine ceremony”) are companions or servants of onmyouji, practitioners of onmyoudou. These spirits can appear in human or animal form and they are made corporeal by inhabiting a paper doll infused with power. Shikigami can also be called kami 「紙」, meaning “paper.” Which is phonetically identical to kami 「神」, meaning “god.” Kijin 「鬼神」 (tr. “demon gods”) are a type of Shikigami most similar to demonic familiars: a paper doll inhabited by a demon summoned by the onmyouji they serve. Shikigami can also be written as 「識神」 (tr. “divine consciousness”) or 「職神」 (tr. “divine skill”). Which is why I make the distinction between the Agathion bond Vee used to create Kolya and the rite she used to create her Shikigami: the ceremony or ritual component is what makes the Shikigami a specific kind of spiritual entity. Kakuremino 「隠れ実」 (tr. “unseen reality”) are enchanted masks used by corporeal spirits to walk unseen among humans. Although those spirits can be seen by people with magic.

[96] Furies or Erinyes are chthonic deities or infernal goddesses more ancient than the gods of Olympus who dwell in
Erebus, the primordial darkness between earth and Hades (i.e. hell). Erebus as depicted in Hesiod’s *Theogony* is one of the five primordial deities born of Chaos. Which, in Greek cosmogony as philosophized by men like Hesiod and Heraclitus, is the true foundation of reality. Chaos is sometimes depicted as the child of Chronos (Time) and Ananke (Fate, Necessity or Force). Satan is logically the personification of Tartarus, one of the other primordial Greek deities born of Chaos. Abaddon is the personification of Erebus. Furies are textually depicted as crones who sometimes have dog heads, snake hair, bat wings, and bloodshot eyes. Their counterparts in Roman mythology are called Eumenides in hell, Furiae on earth, and Dirae in heaven. Hesiod wrote that Furies were created when Cronus (one of the Titans) castrated his father, Uranus, and blood from his severed penis fell on the earth. According to other sources (e.g. Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Aeschylus’s *Eumenides* and *Lycophron*), the Erinyes were children of Nyx (Night), another primordial deity born of Chaos, and Acheron, son of the sun god Helios and either Gaia or Demeter. There are three Furies in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and Dante’s *Inferno*: Alecto (“the endless one”), Megaera (“the jealous one”), and Tisiphone (“the vengeful one”). However, the popularized triptych of Erinyes aren’t the only Furies. Their number was originally indeterminate. Tisiphone or Telphousia was also an epithet of Demeter in her wrathful aspect. After she was raped by Poseidon, she was called Demeter Erinys (the singular of Erinyes) because she was understandably full of rage and Demeter Melaine because she wore all black everything.


[98] Akatsuki 「暁」 means “dawn.” Higure 「日暮」 means “dusk.” Yowa 「夜半」 means “midnight.” Mahiru 「真昼」 means “midday.” Akatsuki is a hellhound, like Kolya. Yowa, Higure and Mahiru are Erinyes or Furies.

[99] Christopher Golden, *Dark Congress* (2007). This is a book set in the Buffyverse that is considered noncanonical because the story isn’t compliant with the comics. It’s set primarily in Providence, Rhode Island. Which has its own hellmouth, apparently.

[100] Coal Hill School from *Doctor Who* and its spinoff *Class* (2016) was built on a weak point in time and space that functions like a hellmouth. It’s compared to the hellmouth from *Buffy* and Mystic Falls, Virginia from *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017).

[101] *Spike: A Dark Place* (2012-2013). Easter Island, Chile has its own hellmouth in this limited series of comics. Rapa Nui are the Polynesian aboriginal people who inhabit the island, which is named Rapa Nui in their language.

[102] There are three levels of kotodama casters: kotodama-tsukai 「言魂使」 (tr. kotodama user), kotodama-shi 「言魂主」 (tr. kotodama master) and kotodama-sama 「言魂様」 (tr. literally kotodama lord/lady, contextually a grand master). Vee is technically the lowest of the three levels because she doesn’t have any formal training in onmyoudou, but she has enough power to mitigate her lack of training and perform complex rituals.

Prime in Order and in Might

Chapter Summary

Vee is befriended by Mallory, who still doesn’t trust her. Michael is tested by the Council of Warlocks.

This alone is what I wish for you: knowledge.
To understand each desire has an edge.
To know we are responsible for the lives we change. No faith comes without cost.
No one believes without dying.

Now for the first time
I see clearly the trail you planted,
what ground opened to waste,
though you dreamed a wealth of flowers.

There are no curses, only mirrors
held up to the souls of gods and mortals;
and so I give up this fate, too.
Believe in yourself,
go ahead—see where it gets you.

Rita Dove, “Demeter’s Prayer to Hades”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 11
Prime in Order and in Might

2019
Mill Creek, WA

Vee isn’t a social butterfly by any stretch of the imagination. Most situations that involve socializing are situations that she prefers to avoid, so her mother guilt-tripping her into attending a wedding shower for Sarah—her cousin Geoff’s fiancée—is worse than being invited to the ninth circle of Hell. Sarah is a total sweetheart, but that’s not enough to make Vee feel comfortable in a fancy ass house nestled in a suburban gated community with skinny rich girls in cocktail dresses and designer rompers drinking mimosas and talking up a storm. Vee squeezes her eyelids shut in a futile attempt to mitigate the sensory overload of being trapped in a tiny room with two dozen voices piled on top of each other and blurring into a wad of noise that makes her grit her teeth.

Rachael—her father’s cousin—lets her borrow a lightning cable. Vee sits on a loveseat in one corner
of the house and puts her earbuds in while she charges her phone. After she finishes the questionnaire that matches iconic love songs to famous romcoms, she opens the *Horimiya* series and loses herself in the magical world of shoujo manga on her Nook app.

There’s a bridal variant on the icebreaker game she played at a baby shower once going on in her periphery: the rule is that you can’t say “wedding” or “bride.” If you do, you have to give the person who heard you say the forbidden word your faux diamond ring. Vee has accumulated four of them.

When the Antichrist sits on the loveseat next to her, she tries and fails to ignore him because no one else can see him. Michael smirks at the plastic bling on her ring finger. “You’re winning,” he murmurs, his voice smooth as silk and hot as hell on the shell of her ear.

Vee shoves a deviled egg from the plate in front of her into her mouth to stop herself from talking to him out loud. *Michael*, she thinks, *don’t you have anything better to do than astral project yourself to my cousin’s fiancée’s wedding shower?*

“No,” Michael says and skims his invisible fingertips down her back, caressing her soul instead of feathers or skin. When he touches her, the cacophony around her fades away until she feels like they’re the only two people in the room and she can pretend they’re the only two people in the world. It’s bliss.

Vee sucks in a sharp breath as the sparks of arousal coil in her belly, her thighs clenching together and trembling under her skirt and stockings. *If I win,* she thinks and sips guava orange juice from a long-stemmed champagne flute, *it means I’ll be the one who gets married next. Also I’ll win a door prize.*

“You will,” Michael says. “You’ve never lost a game. Not even to me.”

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2021
New Orleans, LA

Mallory is waiting for them in the hall outside the office when the other two Nephilim emerge. Three months ago, she added Vee to the coven groupchat, the exclusive one that consists of Mallory, Zoe, Queenie, Misty, Coco, and Madison. Mallory has been texting her, too. After she gradually began to accept the idea of being one of the Nephilim, she naturally had a lot of questions about her origins. Mallory still hasn’t gotten up the nerve to ask who her demonic father is, though; she’s not sure if she wants to know. Vee respects that, even though she doesn’t get it. Knowledge is power to her, and forewarned is always forearmed.

Vee is easy to talk to, too. Maybe because she’s a librarian, or because she’s charismatic in a subtle way. Not charming or almost overwhelming like Michael—who is enticing like an open flame that will burn anything it touches to ashes—but quiet and warm and sweet. Like cookies fresh out of the oven. Vee stayed on the phone with her and talked her through it while Mallory consciously fed on human emotion for the first time, reassuring her that hayyoth like her uncle the archangel Raphael feed the same way and Nephilim don’t have to hurt anyone if they don’t want to. No wonder the Antichrist from her nightmares has changed so much, if he’s been living with someone like her for the last six years. Mallory lets herself forget how potentially dangerous Vee is every time they talk, which actually makes her more of a threat than the spawn of Satan himself.

Michael in the darkest timeline oozed a kind of arrogance that was a natural progression for a man who understood his own godlike power and concluded that he was above petty human emotions. This version of Michael exudes the same arrogance, but the man that Mallory remembers from those
hellish weeks in Outpost 3 had seemed incapable of love or compassion. Michael as he is now looks
at her new friend with raw need smoldering beneath the pretentious veneer of his impeccably tailored
suit and sinfully expensive shoes, with devotion burning in his eyes.

Vee is wearing a pair of oversized black shorts with eyelet laces crisscrossing the outer hems, a
matching corset belt on top of a sleeveless black and green checkered blouse with faux gold buttons
and tiny lace trim around the neckline and shoulders, sheer silk stockings and green ankle books with
panels of floral black lace overlay on the sides. There’s a black hooded cloak shrouded over her
shoulders and pinned at her throat with a silver brooch shaped like a pair of outspread wings, a spoon
ring on the index finger of her pale left hand, and a man’s watch around her left wrist; its metallic
band is loose, the face pearl-scented with a thin scuff at the edge of the glass rim. Vee looks flushed,
but that doesn’t necessarily mean anything because she has the kind of pale skin that burns in the sun
and blushes as easy as breathing.

“Hey.” Mallory smiles and flicks her gaze to Michael, who’s holding the door open like the
gentleman they all know he’s not. It’s a human gesture that she never would’ve expected from him.


“What apples?” Cordelia asks as Michael turns and looks at the librarian over his shoulder.

Vee shrugs, tilting her earlobe to meet her shoulder. “I have my own tree of knowledge,” she
explains, “and my own apples of immortality. Mallory wants enough power to combat climate
change with or without nuclear fallout, so…”

“…so Vee offered her what my father offered to Eve,” Michael says. “Only without the blasphemy
and banishment from Paradise.”

Cordelia watches Vee conjure the forbidden fruit into her cupped palm and swallows hard. Fiona
would’ve tried to snatch it out of her tiny pale hand. “This is the fruit the Irin fed to their human
wives,” she murmurs, “the fruit that created the first witches. Where did you get it?”

“It’s a long story,” Vee says and fidgets anxiously with the band of her watch before she elaborates,
“the short version is that I challenged the Devil to a word search with my soul hanging in the balance
and I won. Which is also why Satan can’t harm me directly or indirectly, much to his everlasting
chagrin.”

Mallory side-eyes Michael as she takes the fruit and holds its power in her hands, the gilded skin
crisp and cool to the touch. “I guess your father hates your girlfriend,” she says before she takes her
first bite and sinks her teeth into the honey sweet flesh with a satisfying crunch.

“I don’t need his approval,” Michael says curtly, and he actually sounds like he means it.

After the Hawthorne school was Molotov cocktailed, several celebrities—like Stevie Nicks—and
high-profile people who have witch ancestry or are witches themselves came out of the broom closet
to give credibility to Cordelia and solidify her claim that witches and magic existed. Unfortunately,
that revelation made the religious zealots crawl out of the woodwork. There’s a group of protesters
outside iron fence that surrounds the academy: maybe a dozen people gathered at the edge of the
property line brandishing signs that scream hateful things like BURN THE BITCHES and THOU
SHALT NOT SUFFER A WITCH TO LIVE. Most of them are white as mayonnaise and ostensibly
wealthy enough to hang out on the sidewalk picketing the American version of Hogwarts instead of
doing something meaningful with their short lives, like picketing Amazon or doing what their lord
and savior Jesus Christ would do and helping the needy. [105]
Vee doesn’t believe that witches can be considered an oppressed group. Nephilim can’t, either. There are so many books in which the authors use magical creatures or people with supernatural powers as fantasy world allegories for real world oppression, but that metaphor doesn’t actually work because vampires eat people and therianthropes are preternatural apex predators with hypersenses and superstrength even in their human forms and witches can do all kinds of dangerous things with their powers. No human minority poses an inherent threat to the rest of the world, but all the things that go bump in the night do.

This still breaks one of the commandments given by Jesus in the Book of Matthew: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. It wasn’t one of the original ten commandments from the Book of Exodus or Deuteronomy. Those commandments were: honor your parents, don’t worship false gods or idols, don’t take the name of the Lord in vain, don’t work on the Sabbath day, don’t commit adultery or murder, don’t steal or lie, and don’t covet anything or anyone that belongs to other people. Although the commandments were written when women were considered the property of their husbands and slavery was normalized in almost every culture, so the connotations are kyriarchal and sexist as fuck.

“I wonder what those people would do,” Michael whispers to her, “if they knew what we are. Since we’re living proof that their God exists.”

Vee gnaws on the inside of her cheek as the humidity hits her like a brick wall and sweat beads under the sweep of her bangs, at the small of her back, and in between her breasts. Gross. Vee extracts her phone from her purse and unwinds the cord attached to her earbuds before she unlocks the screen and clicks on her music app to achieve her dream of avoiding sensory overload by listening to Halsey. “I don’t think the truth about their God will help them get over their fear and stop throwing hate around like confetti,” she whispers back as she feeds on all the bad juju in the heated air. “It would probably make them feel worse. Besides,” she says and puts one of her earbuds in with an owlish tilt of her head, “they should be scared of monsters like us.”

Michael grins at the trio of girls in their late teens standing on the other side of the fence and says “Boo.”

Vee snorts and rolls her eyes at him before she hobbles over to the gate and touches the wrought iron metalwork. Michael stops grinning at the girls and vanishes, only to reappear in time to catch her when she passes out from the influx of psychic information. Vee weighs approximately two hundred pounds, but he has preternatural strength and that means he can lift her as though she weighs nothing at all. It would be sexy as hell, if she wasn’t unconscious.

Michael picks her up and holds her with her knees bending over his forearm while his other hand splays over the soft thick span her waist; her wings are folded underneath her cloak and caged by the bend of his other arm, her head is nestled on his shoulder, and he can breathe in the intoxicating scent of her apple shampoo mixed with the dark sweetness of her magic to his heart’s content. It’s the smell he associates with salvation, with safety, with sanctuary. Michael skims his hand up from her waist to her shoulder and stokes her soft hair with reverent fingertips.

Mallory steadfastly ignores the protesters and meets the deliveryman at the gates. “I ordered cheese pizza,” she says, “I hope that’s okay—” she blinks and narrows her eyes at the sight of him holding Vee in his arms before she asks, “—what’s wrong with her?”

Vee nuzzles her face against his shoulder, skewing her glasses. Michael clenches his jaw and stifles the devastating smile threatening to twist his mouth into something full of tenderness. “Nothing’s wrong,” he says, “she just psychometrically absorbed the entire history of your academy. Ordinarily her control is good enough that she won’t collect sense memories from anything or anyone without
some effort on her part, but when something has the kind of sordid history this place has it’s better for her to just get it over with.”

“You really do love her,” Mallory says, her tone incredulous.

Michael frowns because if his feelings are so obvious to everyone around them, even someone as oblivious as Vee should’ve noticed by now. It’s not like he’s been particularly subtle about his intentions, but he hasn’t made his intentions clear to her, either. Maybe he needs to take a more direct approach, since he knows that any form of emotional manipulation he’s contrived won’t affect her the way complete and total honesty would. “Vee saved my life,” he murmurs. “She took me into her home and made me part of her family. She showed me that I didn’t have to be a monster if I didn’t want to be. She believes in me, Mallory. How could I not love someone who gave me all of that without asking for anything in return, except that I experience what the world has to offer before I decide whether or not it should be destroyed?”

“I doubt Vee wants you to fulfill your destiny,” Mallory points out.

Michael cocks his head in concession. “Vee is the only reason that any of you are still breathing,” he informs her matter-of-factly, “some heretical sects of the Church of Satan—the denominations who actually worship my father as a deity instead of misinterpreting him as a symbol—believe the witches and warlocks are the only thing standing between humanity and the end times. I don’t care about your coven one way or the other, but she does. If she didn’t, I might have slaughtered all of you.”

Vee apparently hasn’t told him that he did, in fact, massacre the coven in the darkest timeline. Mallory can taste her fear congealing under her tongue and in the depths of her throat when she thinks about that day, when she remembers how powerless he made her feel as she fled Robichaux and left the soulless husks of her sisters behind. Vee is a good influence on him, but he’s still the Antichrist.

Mallory can’t ever let herself forget that.

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Vee regains consciousness on their way to the house she bought. It’s on Prytania Street, only a block up the street from Robichaux. Vee chose it because it made her think of the ancient Greek concept of a Prytaneum: a sacred fire or hearth that represented the vitality or health of a kingdom. Prytania is also a feminization of Prytanis, the ancient Greek word for chief or ruler of a city-state. Not unlike Cordelia in her corner of the Garden District.

After she broadcasted the existence of magic to the world, her neighbors packed up and moved away. Others came to picket in front of the school. According to the laws regarding the right to assembly in the state of Louisiana, anyone can protest in a public area if they filed a permit and paid a small fee beforehand. Some of the protesters were arrested because they didn’t have a permit or because of disorderly conduct, but most of them are peaceful. If you define peaceful as holding signs quoting Exodus 22:18 and being all holier-than-thou. Although the locals who owned businesses nearby or whose families had lived in New Orleans for generations just rolled with it. Robichaux being advertised as a school for young witches didn’t seem too strange to people who grew up with voodoo emporiums and Mardi Gras.

Vee bought a house on the corner of Prytania and Phillip: a Queen Anne style asymmetrical Victorian with a tower off to one side, canted bay windows, a wraparound porch, decorative trim and ornate cresting that matches the elaborate panels of metalwork on top of the pale green wooden exterior. It’s guarded by a wrought iron fence twined with thorny blackberry bushes and obvoluted by pecan, pear, peach and nectarine trees. September is the last month of peach and nectarine season,
but fruit is always ripe and perfect when you’re magic. Vee smiles when a nectarine falls into her cupped hands like an offering from the tree itself. There’s a greenhouse and space to plant a garden in the backyard. Vee never saw herself living in a place like New Orleans, but this house is her dream home. It even has a big clawfoot tub.

Michael opens the door for her and holds it for Mallory, who’s carrying two boxes of pizza. Vee unpins her cloak and hangs it up on a hook attached to the wall in the entryway as her shoelaces untie themselves. Michael shuts the door as she hobbles into the open kitchen in her stocking feet and unfurls her wings to extend them behind her back, the feathered equivalent of stretching her arms by raising them above her head.

Vee yawns and hunches both pairs of her shoulders, unintentionally folding her wings in front of her face and torso. Mallory puts the pizza on the granite island counter in the center of the kitchen and watches her in fascination. “What if I grow wings?” she wonders. “I know you said yours grew after you ate the fruit of the forbidden tree…”

Michael shakes his head. “Vee isn’t like us,” he says. “We were both made by our fathers to fulfill a specific purpose. Vee was born out of love, so even though she is one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, her body wasn’t created by design. It makes her physiology unpredictable.”[111]

“Which is why I’m chronically ill,” Vee says, “while you jerks can’t even catch a cold. Thanks!” she folds her wings behind her back and mutters, “I hate it.”

Comfortable silence ensues as pizza is nommed on and beverages are conjured out of the fridge: chocolate phosphate for Michael,[112] Dr. Pepper for Vee, and water for Mallory. Vee conjures her kitchenware into the empty cabinets and drawers. Mallory looks up and watches pots and pans appear on the ornate metal rack dangling from the ceiling. When she glances at the spice rack on the wall above the countertop that emerges from the wall, it’s full of jars organized in alphabetical order.

It’s odd to see Vee work nonverbal wonders even though she knows the magic is theoretically rooted in the intention of the witch, not in the words they use to cast a spell. Vee is transporting hundreds of things through subspace instead of using telekinesis or lighting candles with her mind. It boggles her mind because even after her revelation, Mallory still thinks like a human girl.

Vee stopped being a human girl the moment her unholy father shoved his knowledge into her head.

“After the Hawthorne school was attacked,” Mallory says and breaks the silence, “Cordelia bought more houses and condos and converted Robichaux into a co-ed campus. We have so many one-of-a-kind magical texts and manuscripts that haven’t been catalogued even though their library was added to ours years ago. Some of them date back to the Hellenistic period. We have a first edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum* in Latin.”[113]

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers. “Only thirty of those were ever printed,” she says, “eight of them were first editions.”

“What exactly is the *Corpus Hermeticum*?” Michael wants to know.

“It’s a collection of ancient Egyptian-Greek dialogues,” Vee informs him. “Some of them contain alchemical lessons. Hermeticism, hermeneutics and alchemy are based on the methodology used by Hermes Trismegistus in the tractates to his disciple. I have three copies of the complete *Hermetica* in English—the John Everard 1650 translations, the G. R. S. Mead 1906 translations, and the Brian Copenhaver 1992 translations—but I would love to read the Marsilio Ficino translations.”

“You read Latin?” Mallory asks.
Vee shrugs, one-shouldered. “I have the gift of gab,” she clarifies, “witches call it the power of Omnilingualism. So does Michael. You should have that power, too. It’s an ability that all angels have, fallen or otherwise.”

Mallory has read texts in languages she never learned and listened to conversations between people speaking other languages she shouldn’t have been able to understand, but it was a power she doesn’t talk about because other witches don’t have it. Tempus Infinituum is another power she didn’t talk about, until Cordelia saw the end of the world all over again. “Cordelia won’t fade because my powers are growing, will she?” Mallory asks.

Vee shrugs again. “I’ve always thought the Supremacy was flawed,” she admits, “electing your leader on the basis of that person manifesting seven arbitrary magic powers isn’t the best system of government. Myrtle Snow wanted Cordelia to become the ‘one true Supreme,’” she crooks her fingers like quotation marks around the words and rolls her eyes before she says, “because she thought Cordelia being the daughter of the reigning Supreme made her more qualified to ascend than Misty, or Queenie, or Zoe, or Madison. I’m not saying that Cordelia isn’t a good leader—because she is—but it’s because she ran the coven for decades while her mother was questing for immortality and neglecting the next generation of witches, not because she has the ability to work the Seven Wonders. I manifested all Seven Wonders before I turned seventeen, but I’m not qualified to take over this coven and rule. Neither is Michael.”

“Speaking of people who believe that might makes right,” Michael interjects, “my test starts in thirty minutes.”

Vee watches him conjure his plate into the dishwasher and points at him imperiously with one finger. “Mallory bought us pizza,” she says, “but that doesn’t mean you’re off the hook. It just means you’re cooking dinner tomorrow night instead of tonight.”

Michael has the gall to pout. “You never let me off the hook,” he says mournfully, mellifluously, melodramatically.

Vee rolls her eyes at him again. “Our household rules haven’t changed just because we moved,” she retorts before she says, “go knock the socks off those warlocks. You’re going to crush it.”

Mallory looks at Vee as Michael rises to his feet and lingers before he turns and walks out of the kitchen, like he wants Vee to leave Mallory in the lurch and go with him. Vee doesn’t seem to notice. “Michael cooks?” Mallory asks her, skepticism dripping from the word.

Vee shrugs again. “When I was growing up,” she says, “my father did most of the housework because my mom commutes to the city for work and she got home an hour later than he did. So he’d do the laundry and tidy up and make dinner. When I was seven, I didn’t want to eat what my dad made for dinner and my mom took me into the kitchen right then and there and taught me how to make a grilled cheese. I’ve been cooking ever since, and I love doing it. There’s an alchemy in that. Maybe it’s mundane compared to the magical kind of alchemy, but it’s still beautiful. I started doing my own laundry in kindergarten and I wrote up budgets for them to explain why they should increase my allowance after I started doing more chores in junior high. When I was eighteen, I got my first job working as a waitress and sometimes as a dishwasher in the kitchen at a retirement home. I did that for over a year, until my arthritis got so bad I couldn’t waitrness anymore. When I took Michael home, I told him that I wasn’t going to wait on him hand and foot and my parents weren’t either. I also explained that I expected him, as a member of the family and an able-bodied young man with magical powers, to help out around the house and clean up any messes he made in communal spaces. Michael cooks one night a week and I clean the kitchen and do the dishes instead of the other way around, but usually he does the dishes and sets the table and helps me with prep work because
sometimes I don’t have the spoons to do it myself.”

“I can’t believe you make the Antichrist do housework,” Mallory says, her tone still full of incredulity.

Vee cocks her head slantwise, like a bird of prey. “I don’t make him do anything,” she retorts.

“Okay,” Mallory says, “but you know he’d do anything for you. Which actually makes you more of a threat to the coven—and the world—than Michael is.”

Vee smiles, vicious and sweet. “I know.”

Michael had Kolya gather information about the Council of Warlocks before the hellhound went to investigate the hellmouths with his polycule,[115] because to know thy enemy is always an advantageous strategy.[116]

Ariel Augustus was born in the Philippines in 1965, he immigrated from Manila to Calabasas in 1989 after he got a degree in industrial engineering from the Mapúa Institute of Technology,[117] and he became an American citizen in 1990. Vincent Malone took him under his wing and he had hoped to marry Lyn Hoozuki before she became pregnant and died in childbirth in 1991. Ariel poisoned Vincent after the former Grand Chancellor refused to rescue his daughter from the voodoo queen, and he ascended on the night of the Blood Moon.

Baldwin Pennypacker is a second-generation Chinese-American born in San Francisco in 1960. Leong is the surname that he was born with. Pennypacker is part of the stage name that he chose when he went to work on Broadway at age eighteen and debuted in a production of Madame Butterfly.[118] Baldwin is designated as Professor of Alchemy.

John Henry Moore was born in Spokane in 1975 and he’s a quarter Native American, but he’s white-passing; he’s also the first warlock since Merlin to have the ability to manipulate all four elements, properties, and states of matter separately and simultaneously. Which is why he’s designated as Professor of Stoicheomancy.[119]

Behold Chablis was born in Pittsburgh in 1969, he met Baldwin on Broadway when he was cast as the Teen Angel in a revival of Grease! in 1994, and he’s mastered four of the Seven Wonders. Which is almost unheard of for a male caster. Behold is designated as Professor of Synergy and he’s married to John Henry. Their five-year-old son Knox was originally an embryo created using a potion concocted by Baldwin that allowed them to reproduce without a genetic contribution from a woman, although they still used a female surrogate.[120]

Hawthorne is now located across the street from Robichaux in a two-story Greek revival manor with a wooden exterior painted the approximate shade of buttercream frosting with pristine white trim. Michael walks in like he owns the place: head held high, shoulders back, and hands clasped behind him.

Baldwin is seated in the library where they chose to conduct the test at one corner of a narrow table with his back to the wall and Behold to his left. John Henry is seated at the other end, with Ariel between him and his husband. These warlocks have all mastered two or three of the Seven Wonders, and they’re considered the strongest casters of the male persuasion. It’d be funny, if they weren’t so pathetic. There’s nothing they can teach him that he hasn’t learned from Vee. Michael hesitates to even call them his enemies, because they’re not powerful enough to oppose him or the woman he loves.
“Welcome, Michael.” Ariel gestures at the chair facing the narrow table with a flourish of his hand. “Normally, each warlock at our school is assigned a level—one through four—according to their talents and the breadth of their powers. We typically wait to evaluate them until they’ve immersed themselves in the study of magic for at least a year, but Cordelia told us that you’ve been studying with the witch she hopes to name as her successor. I knew her mother personally, and I can only assume that Veronica is as powerful as Lyn in her prime.”

Michael doesn’t miss the way he calls her Veronica, even though she asked him not to. When he sits across from the warlocks and smiles at them, the slant of his mouth is thin and wicked. “So you’re all level four?” he asks, even though he already knows the answer is no.

“Sadly,” Baldwin says and smiles back in a conspiratorial way that’s supposed to be congenial but betrays bitterness instead, “you’re looking at a bunch of threes.”

Behold giggles. “Sixes after a few cocktails,” he quips.

“Michael,” Ariel says, “a level four would be a warlock that is categorically as powerful as the female Supreme. He would be the one we call the Alpha.”

Their messiah, Vee explained, the Alpha was prophesized by Marianne Wharton, my ancestor, whose premonitions always came true. Only she prophesized the rise of a male caster with the power to perform the Seven Wonders, not a man that would deliver the warlocks from mediocrity and supplant the Supreme. Their interpretation was more self-indulgent than anything she actually foresaw. Michael bites his bottom lip to smother a smirk because he’s the messiah they never saw coming—one that was created to abolish the system of anthropocentrism that currently plagues the earth. [121]

“We shouldn’t burden him with theory,” John Henry mutters. “In the history of the coven, there’s never been a level four warlock. Let’s see if he can pass level one.”

Baldwin vanishes from his seat and reappears beside a gilded antique mirror. “Scrying is the ability to see things in a reflective surface,” he says. “Messages. Visions. Prophecies,” he smiles that saccharine grin again before he adds, “but all you need to do is tell us where we hid a particular book.”

Michael turns and looks at the shorter man over his shoulder as the answer floats across the shallow currents of his petty little human mind. It’s a short work by the Dark Romantic author that Vee called “a misogynistic asshat” when she went on a rant about him during her senior year of undergrad. [122] Nathaniel Hawthorne, a descendant of the only judge who didn’t repent of his actions in the aftermath of the Salem witch trials. “The New Adam and Eve,” he deduces, “by Hawthorne. First edition.”


“You could say that.” Michael turns back to the mirror and his jaw clenches before he casts a nonverbal incantation and creates an intradimensional portal. When he reaches into the metaphysical void, his magic pulses and makes ripples on the reflective surface of the mirror that subside after he pulls the book out.

Baldwin gapes as Michael closes the portal and conjures the book up onto the shelf in the library where it belongs. “Well,” he murmurs, “that’ll get some extra credit.”

“Tremendous,” Ariel intones.
Behold slips into the unoccupied seat beside his husband and scowls at the sour expression on his face. “Michael was only tasked with telling us where the book was hidden,” he points out, “even you have to admit that was impressive.”


Michael valiantly resists the urge to roll his eyes at that. Divination, one of the Seven Wonders, comes in many forms. Scrying is the easiest. It’s also the most versatile, because modern technology has changed the scope of that power with mirrors and screens in addition to vessels of water used for more traditional Hydromancy. Pyromancy can’t be done without a flame, Geomancy can’t be done without something that came from the earth, Aeromancy is unreliable, Osteomancy requires talismanic oracle bones, and Chiromancy or palmistry can only be done through physical contact. Not unlike Psychometry, although what Vee does is more comprehensive than other methods of Divination because she absorbs every drop of psychic information every time she uses her Sight. It’s invasive and involuntary—a consequence of her father essentially forcing her to process too much information all at once. Vee is able to control her ability to soak up sense memories to a certain extent, but once she starts she can’t stop until she absorbs everything or she passes out from too much psychic input. Michael has never had that problem with his powers, but he was totally out of control until she taught him how to use his magic instead of letting it use him.

“Salire per spatium,” Baldwin says, “the ability to transport yourself instantly throughout physical space. Pick a spot in the room, envision yourself there, and make it happen.”

Michael folds his hands behind his back and narrows his eyes at the athame floating ominously in thin air. Transmutation or Teleportation is another of the Seven Wonders, but it seems the warlocks have a more pretentious name for that power. “What's that for?” he asks.

Baldwin levitates a brick. “Motivation,” he says before he points and telekinetically throws the brick at his face.

Michael translocates himself out of the line of fire and teleports somewhere that humans would never think to look: onto the ceiling. “Anything else?” he asks the warlocks and smiles when the sound of his voice echoing from up above startles them. “You need to dust up here.”

Stiricidium, the final test, isn’t one of the Seven Wonders. It’s the ability to force a phase change onto liquid and turn water molecules into snowflakes, a specialized form of alchemy. Michael conjures a snowstorm and breathes in the dark biting cold as the warlocks all struggle to breathe, the very air chilling into crystalline shards of ice as frost creeps over their skin.

Michael stops when Ariel shouts at him over the roar of the frozen wind and melts the snow on the floor with a furl of his fingers. Behold and Baldwin are both staring at him in awe, and John Henry is clearly terrified. Michael smiles balefully at him and lets him see his demonic face—the face of a conqueror.

“Thank you for your spirited participation, Michael.” Ariel shudders and his teeth chatter as the hoarfrost in his hair melts away. “You’ve given us a lot to consider.”

[104] Mallory’s father is Belphegor: the sixth prince of Hell and ruler of the third circle, Gluttony. According to the demonic classification of German witch hunter and theologian Peter Binsfeld (b. 1540 – d. 1603), he personifies the deadly sin of Sloth instead. Belphegor helps people make discoveries and seduces them by giving them genius ideas for inventions or simply by offering them great wealth. When he appears in the Book of Numbers he’s characterized as the Moabite god Baal-Peor, whose ceremonies and rites of worship involved orgies and other debaucheries because he was a phallic deity. Machiavelli also wrote a biblical fanfic titled Belfagor arcidiavolo in which Belphegor comes to
earth and researches the existence of marital love because Satan was sick of listening to the souls of the damned bitching about their wives, only to denounce the institution of marriage upon his return to Hell because the woman he married was vain and spent all of his money. Which, as a scientist, is not conclusive data by any stretch of the imagination. Your experiences aren’t universal, Belphegor.

Belphegor (רֹועְּפ -לַﬠַּב) means “lord of the gap” in Hebrew. This “gap” in the context of theology is either a metaphor for using the existence of God to explain the unexplained things in the universe, or Gap Theory. Gap Theory, also called ruin and reconstruction theory, is meant to explain the gap between the universe as described in Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 (i.e. the world devoid of sin that becomes the world in a perpetual state of chaos). Mallory being able to work miracles that fit into the idea of the gap as the void state that exists outside of time and space and drawing on her power over space and time to undo the harm caused by the chaos inherent in the universe is symbolic af. I’m conflating Belphegor with the fallen angel Tamiel, one of the five who tempted the other Irin to fall. According to the first Book of Enoch, he taught mankind astronomy and abortion.

[105] This is something that would probably happen if the existence of witches and magic was public knowledge, because people suck. It’s been seven years since Cordelia broadcasted the existence of magic, so the protesters have dwindled from the angry mob that would’ve formed after the first public announcement into a much smaller congregation.

[106] Matthew 19:17-19: “if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honor thy father and thy mother: and, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” So: don’t kill, don’t fuck someone else’s spouse, don’t steal, don’t lie, honor your parents, and treat others the way you treat yourself.

[107] Deuteronomy 5:4-21 parallels Exodus 20:1-17. These are both passages from the Old Testament, while the Book of Matthew is part of the New Testament.

[108] Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza coined the term “kyriarchy” in 1992 to describe the intersectionality of the patriarchy and other permutations of systemic oppression (e.g. racism, ableism, sexism, classism, homophobia, capitalism, ethnocentrism, colonialism, anthropocentrism, etc.) and encompass those complex power strata. It’s meant to describe any system built around oppression, domination (i.e. dominance hierarchies) and submission (i.e. deference, not the fun kind of submission).

[109] Miriam Mead was canonically the one who came up with the plan for Michael to infiltrate the coven and destroy them all from within and she was the one who said he should bring on Armageddon with magic before Jeff and Mutt rebooted her as Ms. Mead 2.0, so this could be canon.

[110] Prytaneions were built in the centers of cities as part of the agora, public meeting places for government officials and their people. Prytaneums were buildings where the sacred fire or hearth dedicated to the goddess Hestia was kept. Prytania, etymologically, is a feminization of the word Prytanis or Prytaneis: a title bestowed on male executives who became the chiefs of city-states in ancient Greece after the monarchy was abolished. This is also the actual name of a street in the Garden District of New Orleans, where the real-world equivalent of Robichaux is located.

[111] Satan used Vivien and Tate as conduits to create Michael and used Emily and Timothy as conduits to create Devan. I assume he manipulated and magically altered their DNA to make an Antichrist. Belphegor, likewise, used Mallory’s parents as conduits to create her. Vee, contrariwise, was made the old-fashioned way: by Abaddon impregnating Lyn himself, without conduits. Which is why she has a human autoimmune disease, and a disability.

[112] This is a soda drink made with acid phosphates or phosphoric acid, chocolate syrup or cocoa powder, and soda water or seltzer. It’s bittersweet and old-fashioned, but delicious—especially if you make the chocolate syrup from scratch. I think Michael would like egg creams, too.

[113] Corpus Hermeticum is a series of fourteen tracts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (c. 2nd century CE) and translated into Latin by Italian scholar and Catholic priest Marsilio Fincino in 1471 CE. It’s the foundational text of
the Hermetic tradition as well as the basis for hermeneutics: the critical theory and methodology of interpreting texts, especially religious, philosophical, and historical texts.

[114] I have thoughts about the coven as a despotic kratocracy (i.e. a system of government where the throne is taken by force and leadership is maintained by strength), because they’re led by a “singular authority” (i.e. an autocrat) and that always ends badly. Fiona exemplifies this, but Cordelia ascending in “The Seven Wonders” is treated as something revolutionary by the narrative when it’s really not because it upholds the idea of monarchic dynasties (i.e. power of the absolute monarch being passed from parent to child) and primogeniture (i.e. the firstborn child inherits because they were born first). Queenie becoming the Supreme would’ve been revolutionary, not to mention a reparation for what happened to Tituba. Cordelia is arguably the most qualified because (1) all but one of the other candidates were teenagers and (2) she did Fiona’s job while her mother was off doing her own thing, not because she performed the Seven Wonders. Fight me.

[115] This is a portmanteau of “polyamory” and “molecule” used to describe any configuration of people in a poly relationship.

[116] Sun Tzu, The Art of War (c. 6th century BCE) Chapter III: Strategic Attack. 「知彼知己,百戰不殆;不知彼而知己,一勝一負;不知彼,不知己,每戰必殆」 (tr. “if you know your enemy and know yourself, you’ll win every battle; if you do not know your enemy but know yourself, you’ll win only as much as you lose; if you don’t know your enemy or yourself, you’ll lose every battle”).

[117] Mapúa University was called the Mapúa Institute of Technology until 2017. It’s located in the Philippines in Intramuros, Manila.

[118] I’m using information about the actors to flesh out these characters so they aren’t just Straw Misogynists. It doesn’t make them less awful, but they are more human.

[119] Stoicheiology is the study of elements. Stoicheiomancy is the magical equivalent.

[120] Knox is named in homage to the Lady Chablis (b. 1957 – d. 2016), a trans actress who used the name Brenda Dale Knox when she competed in drag pageants in the 1970s and 80s. Behold was probably named in homage to her, too.

[121] Jewish eschatological tradition portrays Jesus Christ as a false messiah, because he didn’t usher in the Messianic age of peace or the World to Come. God interpreted as the holy trinity or the dualism of the father and the son is seen as heretical by Jewish scholars and theologians, and that caused a schism between Judaism and Christianity. Judaism also doesn’t share the concept of salvation that Christianity has, and rejects the doctrine of the original sin and the virgin birth. Their idea of a messiah is the person who, in the future, will return the Jewish peoples to their homeland in Israel and rebuild the Temple.

What’s interesting about the idea of the Antichrist as portrayed in pop culture is that he’s a messiah, but not for human beings. I don’t believe in anthropocentrism (i.e. the notion that humanity is the most important species in the entire universe). This human-centric worldview is supported in Genesis 1:26 by the verse: “God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the beasts of the fields, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” Satan as written in this fic is not here for it.

[122] Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote a letter to his publisher and friend William D. Ticknor in 1855 to complain that “America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash—and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed” and that “[Susan Warner, author of The Wide, Wide World (1849)] writes as if the devil was in her, and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading. Generally, women write like emasculated men, and are only to be distinguished from male authors by greater feebleness and folly.” Cry about it from beyond the grave, Hawthorne. Fill a mug with your male tears. Meanwhile, the angry mob of damned scribbling women are gonna
keep doing our thing.

[123] Hydromancy: divination by means of water. Pyromancy: divination by means of fire. Geomancy: divination by means of anything that comes from the earth (e.g. Myrtle using pebbles during the test of the Seven Wonders). Aeromancy: divination by means of air. Subtypes include Austromancy (divination by means of wind), Ceraunoscopy (divination by means of thunder and lightning), Chaomancy (divination by means of aerials), Meteormancy (divination by means of meteors and other celestial events), and Nephomancy (divination by means of clouds). Osteomancy: divination by means of bones. Also called Scapulimancy, Omoplatoscopy, Spatulamancy, and Plastromancy. Chiromancy: divination by means of palmistry. Also called palm reading or Chirology.

[124] Stiricidium is a combination of the Latin “stiria,” meaning “drop” or “distill,” and “cidium,” meaning “to kill” or “to slaughter.” It’s the magical equivalent of freeze distillation: a method of purification in chemistry that can be used to crystallize liquid. This process is also a form of fractionation (i.e. dividing a mixture into smaller quantities during a phase transition) used to produce ultra-pure solids.
Michael attempts to have an adult conversation about his feelings. It goes better than you might expect.

**Warning:** This chapter attempts to have a plot for approximately 4,000 words before it devolves into unadulterated filth. I regret nothing.

Uninvited, the thought of you stayed too late in my head, so I went to bed, dreaming you hard, hard, woke with your name, like tears, soft, salt, on my lips, the sound of its bright syllables like a charm, like a spell.

Falling in love is glamorous hell.

Carol Ann Duffy, “You”

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*From Darkness to Promote Me*

**Chapter 12**

Bold Words Breaking the Horrid Silence, Thus Began

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2021

New Orleans, LA

Michael feels more at home in places with hot weather than Vee does, but there’s hot weather and there’s humidity so intense that it makes the air simmer over your skin. It’s dark now, but the heat of the day only cooled from excruciating to barely tolerable. Michael is surprised to find the house on the corner of Prytania Street warm inside and the air conditioner off.

There’s nobody home. Vee isn’t asleep in the master bedroom on the ground floor or reading in her beloved clawfoot bathtub, although he knows she unpacked at some point because her books are organized by genre and subgenre on the bookshelves scattered all over the house. Tiamat is curled up inside her terrarium, her serpentine body present while her astral self is off helping the hellhounds and furies with their research.

It occurs to him that she almost never goes anywhere without him. Vee is a homebody; always has been. Michael checks his phone and sees a text message from her: Mallory invited me over for
dinner. Coco apparently hasn’t watched SCD, so we’re gonna binge the first season. I might crash at their condo. Don’t wait up for me.

*What fresh hell is this?* Michael thinks. SCD is shorthand for *Santa Clarita Diet*, a Netflix show about zombies and cannibalism set in suburban California. It’s a hilarious black comedy, but that is neither here nor there.

Vee doesn’t have friends who aren’t him. After she graduated from the hell on earth that was high school, she grew apart from her age-appropriate human friends and didn’t get back in touch with any of them when they reached out to her because she didn’t want to put them in danger. Vee coming out of her antisocial shell is a good thing, in theory. Michael still doesn’t like the idea of her spending the night with other people, especially not on their first night in their new home. There’s nowhere else he’d rather be than wherever she is. It hurts to think that she doesn’t feel the same way about him.

It gets worse over the next two weeks. After the council designates him as the first and only level four warlock in the history of the coven, he gets a seat at the table. Unfortunately, being on the council means he actually has to work. There are forty-two male students at the Hawthorne school. Most are level one or two, but a few of them are level threes. Their curriculum is pretty basic. It consists of six core classes:

- **Magical Thinking**, the study of magical theory, magical phenomenology, magical histories, comparative religion and mythologies, taught by Baldwin.

- **Alchemy**, the art of arcane science and hermetic magic, taught by Baldwin. This encompasses the creation and practical application of talismans, healing magic, potionmaking, and herbology.

- **Synergy**, the art of transmogrification, taught by Behold. This is technically a kind of alchemy: the ability to alter or transform matter on a molecular level.

- **Spellcraft**, the art of incantation and ritual magic, taught by Behold. This encompasses invocation, enchantment, theurgy, and conjuration.

- **Stoicheomancy**, the art of elemental magic, taught by John Henry. This is technically also a kind of alchemy: the ability to manipulate the elements, properties, and states of matter.

- **Magical Combat**, the art of infusing physical attacks with metaphysical power, taught by John Henry. This encompasses defensive magic as well as offensive magic.

There are three sections of each class, since the students are separated by level and taught in a rotation. Robichaux uses the same curriculum: Zoe teaches Synergy and Spellcraft, Queenie teaches Magical Combat and Alchemy, and Cordelia teaches Magical Thinking and Stoicheomancy. There’s no level system of classification at Robichaux, though. Female students are designated as neophytes (beginners), adepts (intermediaries), magi (masters), or ipsissimum (of the highest order), a new rank Cordelia added to the coven hierarchy after Queenie ascended to become the Voodoo Queen, a Supreme of a different color. Zoe, Misty, and Mallory are magi. Madison is still an adept. Cordelia wants to expand the rank of ipsissimum for people like Mallory, Vee, Michael and even Zoe: those who have the ability to perform the Seven Wonders, but don’t want to lead the coven as autocrats.

Michael has been observing the integrated classes taught by the witches and other members of the council. After the school day ends, Ariel invites him to join the other warlocks for dinner. Michael stays because he’s learning so much about them—particularly their diabolical plans for usurping the Supreme. Ariel wishes he was a more impressionable young man, someone he could
mentor and manipulate into a pawn, but he’s been salivating over the possibility of a male caster with
the power to overthrow Cordelia since Michael first darkened his doorway. Baldwin is concocting a
toxic powder designed to poison only women and he and Ariel are planning to use it against the
witches. Which isn’t going to end well for either of them, but he still hasn’t told anyone else about
what they’re planning. Michael doesn’t want to worry Vee unnecessarily, since no warlock is going
to harm her. Unless they go through him first.

Cordelia wants her to start teaching Magical Thinking and Stoicheomancy. Vee hates teaching with
the fire of a thousand suns and she has a multitude of work to do in the library, so they’re at a
stalemate. Cordelia isn’t going to win that battle. Vee is stubborn as hell. Another trait she inherited
from her father.

Michael is pleasantly surprised when she walks into the classroom where Zoe and Behold teach
Synergy III with Mallory and Coco, dressed in a sleeveless cerise top dotted with black stylized
bumblebees over a rainbow checkerboard printed skirt punctuated by her wide corset belt, a pair of
black knee socks made of lace and pattered with roses, pink and black Oxford shoes with sensibly
low heels and velvet ribbons tied in bows instead of shoelaces, and a glamourie spell concealing her
wings because it’s too hot and humid for a heavy black cloak. Decorative clips shaped like golden
dragons glint in her hair, which is dog-eared: two sections twisted at her temples and pinned back
instead of braided. Those dragons match her earrings: small gold roses etched with black in between
the petals and delicate golden butterfly wings that flutter when she moves.

Vee might be horrified by the price tag on some of his designer clothes, but that doesn’t mean she
doesn’t care about the way she looks. Michael knows from experience that she doesn’t bother to
dress up for other people. Vee dresses the way she does, in carefully coordinated colorful outfits and
expensive lingerie, to make herself feel beautiful and confident. Michael thinks she looks perfect no
matter what she wears, but he likes seeing her this way: performing her preferred form of femininity
and paradoxically in full armor.[129]

There aren’t many students in the level III courses and most of them aren’t magi or level threes—
they’re adepts or level twos who tested out of the level I and II prerequisites. Zoe offers each of them
a white rose and they sit at one of the tables at the front of the room. Behold side-eyes the boy who
looks at the flowers like they have cooties.

Vee sits in the corner seat closest to the wall and hunches awkwardly in her chair, her back exposed
to the negative space of the room in a way he knows always makes her nervous. Mallory folds
herself into the chair next to her, with her friend on her other side. Coco is only an adept, with the
power to detect calories and divine other information about food within her line of sight. Which isn’t
a particularly impressive ability, but she has devoted her time and energy to studying incantation. If
you don’t have multiple powers, you can use your spells to compensate—as long as you aren’t using
them against an adversary with the ability to crush your throat with a thought.

Michael hasn’t gotten to spend much time with Vee lately because Coco has asked the librarian to
teach her the art nonverbal spellcasting. It bothers him that she wants to benefit from her traumatic
experiences. Vee learned nonverbal spellcasting as a coping mechanism after a member of the inner
circle of the Cooperative abducted her, cut out her tongue, and drugged her with the intent to remove
one of her kidneys and maybe part of her liver without her consent and use her eggs to impregnate
unsuspecting women undergoing IVF treatments with quasi-demonic fetuses. It was evil in a way
Michael can appreciate, in theory, even though he can’t forgive anyone for attempting to violate the
woman he loves. Coco seems too shallow to understand Vee, but she’s not spoiled to the point of
cruelty or a sense of entitled superiority. Nor is she a threat.

Zoe telekinetically shuts the door of the classroom with a flourish of her fingers and interrupts his
calculations with the beginning of her lecture. “It might seem easy to alter the color of a flower,” she says, “but the rose is unique. It resists change. Why?”

“Empress Joséphine Bonaparte,” Mallory says, “the wife of Napoléon and a proud French witch, cultivated the largest rose gardens in Europe.”

Zoe nods succinctly. “It’s said that Joséphine enchanted her roses so the colors she produced would remain fixed as she wanted them. Maybe so…” she holds up her own rose and transmogrifies the petals from white to pink to vivid red, “…but one thing’s certain: nothing is immutable when the will of a strong woman is applied. Now, show me how strong you are.”

“Rose was actually the name she preferred,” Vee says as the petals of her rose begin to darken from white to a deep shade of red that bleeds to black, “the empress was born Marie Joséphe Rose Tascher de La Pagerie. Alexandre de Beauharnais, her first husband, cheated on her frequently and openly until he was guillotined in 1794 during the Reign of Terror. Napoléon preferred to call her Joséphine, and that became her name after she met him in 1795. Joséphine had an affair in 1796 and their marriage deteriorated after that until he divorced her in 1810 because she failed to produce an heir, but he never stopped loving her. Napoléon died in 1821, seven years after her death, with her name in his mouth. When he was alive, the Russian Orthodox Church formally condemned him as the Antichrist and an enemy of God because he emancipated the Jewish peoples of his empire from ghettos. Napoléon was still anti-Semitic as fuck, because he implemented policies that regulated their religious practices with the intent to assimilate them and destroy the Jewish faith.”

Mallory turns her rose cobalt blue as the cacophony of magic coalesces into ringing in their ears and transmogrifies the petals into a kaleidoscope of butterflies that flit above the tabletop. When she did the same exercise in synergy five years ago, the nonverbal transmogrification spell didn’t stick. Mallory is more powerful than she ever was before, now that she isn’t afraid to grow.

Vee smiles after one of the butterflies lands in her hair and transmogrifies the petals of her rose into a dark cloud of bats. Behold gasps as they squeak and flutter to hang upside-down from the antique chandelier, folding their delicate wings around their bodies as the students below gape at them, wide-eyed. Vee slowly furls her fingers into a fist and casts a nonverbal teleportation spell to transport the bats through subspace to a protected habitat in Thailand. It would be a waste to transmogrify them back into a rose, because that particular species of bats is vulnerable to extinction.

“Showoff,” Michael says, teasing.

Vee shrugs, one-shouldered, before she turns in her seat to look at him. Michael is staring at her the way he always does: like she’s the only thing in the world that means anything to him. Vee bites her lip and forces herself not to crack beneath the intense pressure of his gaze. It occurs to her that she hasn’t seen him lately because she’s been so busy, and she has no one to blame for that but herself.

After she got her MLIS degree, she took a few months off to dig herself out of the hole of negative spoons that she had dug in grad school. When she came out of hibernation and finally started looking for a job, she learned unemployment rates for librarians were higher than she thought. Using witchcraft to get a job that she doesn’t actually need seemed totally unfair to other people who aren’t magic and don’t have the power to extort billions of dollars from the Cooperative, so Vee felt stuck in a rut of soulless online applications and interviews that never went anywhere. Cordelia, Zoe, and Queenie offering her a job in the library at Robichaux made her feel better than she’d felt in years.

Vee threw herself into her work because she missed being a librarian, but that’s not the only reason. Michael is codependent on her, he’s never made any friends, and he was never socialized. Constance kept him so isolated during the first three years of his life that he only interacted with nannies he
murdered, the private tutors his grandmother chose to divert his attention from his proclivity for killing and mutilating small animals, and ghosts trapped on the hellmouth next door. Michael went to college, but he didn’t make any friends at school like she hoped he would; instead, he spent all of his free time with her. Vee knows he’s going to dinner with the warlocks to observe them like nocturnal ambush predators do with their prey—snakes are nocturnal ambush predators and he’s the prodigal son of the adversary who is often interpreted as a serpent or a dragon—but he’s also socializing with the only people on earth who could be considered his peers. Which is progress, and it actually gave her a chance to miss him. Hey, she thinks and he can feel her shielding her thoughts so only he can hear her, *are you up for dinner at home tonight? I’ll cook, obviously.*

*I’m up for anything you want me to do,* Michael thinks, but he doesn’t let her hear that. “It’s a date,” he says.

Vee isn’t much for public displays of affection, so the fake dating strategy didn’t force her far out of her comfort zone. It wasn’t a total loss, though: he felt her viscerally respond every time he took her hand, or put an arm around her shoulders, or splayed his hand possessively over the small of her back. Vee is attracted to him, and now all he has to do is make her admit it.

After she cooks him dinner, he cleans the kitchen while she brushes her teeth. Vee wasn’t always a proponent of dental hygiene. Karen told him that she didn’t wash her hair or brush her teeth for *months* in her first year of junior high, because she was too depressed to care about the way she looked or smelled. Nephilim saliva apparently has a higher concentration of minerals than human spit, and that prevented her from getting cavities because her mouth repaired the enamel of her teeth faster than bacteria could damage them. Karen wouldn’t let her get braces in her third year of junior high, because she thought Vee couldn’t be trusted with orthodontia. So her bottom teeth are a little crooked and she has a sideways molar, but now she always brushes and flosses after she eats.

Michael cleans the kitchen with magic because he doesn’t like getting his hands dirty. Vee cooks like a human because she loves the feeling of a knife in her hand, of measuring ingredients, of arranging the elements of a recipe, of kneading dough, of drizzling oil, of assembling sandwiches, of creating instead of destroying. Michael likes watching her cook almost as much as he likes eating the delicious food she makes—the way she moves around the kitchen is kind of mesmerizing.

When she hobbles out of her bedroom and into the kitchen to pour herself a cup of cider, Vee finds him sitting at the island and leaning with his elbows on the granite countertop. Michael cocks his head and narrows his eyes at her in a way that seems both curious and predatory, the fingers of one hand curled loosely so his fingertips cast shadows over the elegant curve of his chiseled jaw. When she hobbles past him to open the refrigerator, he grabs her by the forearm and traps her in between him and the edge of the counter so fast his stool topples over and clatters on the floor. “What do you want from me?” he asks.

Vee blinks at him behind her glasses and is mortified by how unafraid she is, even though he’s planting a huge red flag in their kitchen right now. This should make her want to run, to fly, to get away—but apparently her fight or flight response doesn’t apply to Michael. Vee wriggles in his grip to avoid smushing her primary feathers and watches his eyes darken as she accidentally tilts her hips to meet his, his nostrils flaring. Because he knows she could get away if she wanted to—she could use Transmutation or knock him on his immaculate ass with Telekinesis—but she’s not even trying.

“I know you feel *something* for me,” Michael says with soft vehemence and tilts her face up with his other hand to look him in the eyes and feel her pulse spike under his palm before he adds, “you’re not as good at hiding your thoughts from me as you think you are. I do everything you ever ask of me, but not out of the goodness of my heart. I *love* you, Vee. I’m so fucking in love with
“Okay,” she thinks. Michael said he loves me and my world didn’t end. What the hell was I so afraid of? “Not everything is about you, Michael!” she retorts. “Yeah, our age gap makes me uncomfortable and sometimes I worry that maybe I unintentionally groomed you or something because I did raise you and now you’re kind of obsessed with me, but that’s not my only problem. I haven’t dated anyone since I was a teenager because every boy I ever dated told me they loved me before they broke my heart or raped me. I’m hypervigilant and I overthink everything to the point of inertia and my fight or flight response is heightened because trauma rewrites the brain,” she taps her temple with two fingers to emphasize her point and says, “and I was traumatized before you were born. I went to therapy, I did all the work, and I feel better now, but I’m still traumatized. I’m also in love with you,” she bites her lip and chews anxiously to mitigate the metaphysical weight of her words before she adds, “but us being in love won’t magically make my trauma go away. So just…” she reaches up and touches his face so gently that his grip on her other arm tightens and he exhales a breath he didn’t know he was holding, “…be patient with me. Please.”

Michael exhales sharply through his nose and stifles a groan because he’s so horribly in love and so hard it actually hurts. Ugly affection swells in his chest like an infected wound, sweet and exquisite and sharp. “How patient do you want me to be?” he asks her.

Vee rises on her tiptoes and kisses him slowly, tentatively; her soft mouth quantifying the shape of his before he remembers how to breathe and kisses her back. Michael drops her forearm and pins her between him and the counter with his body as heat melts down his spine and coils deep inside him, so intent on being kissed by her that he almost forgets how to breathe again without her gasping into his mouth. When his tongue slips into her mouth, the insistence of his lips caressing hers infuses her with longing that makes her knees go weak.

Michael cups her face possessively in one hand and snakes his other arm tight around her waist and up her back, twisting his fingers into the hair at the nape of her neck and tilting her head to intensify the kiss. Vee moans at the sensation of his tongue skimming the roof of her mouth and he feels it all the way down to his cock. Michael sucks her tongue into his mouth and gently bites down, feeling victorious as she clutches at his shoulders through his jacket and kisses him deeper than before.

Vee lightly sucks on his upper lip before she tugs his bottom lip in between her teeth and breaks the kiss. Michael stares down at her, the blue of his eyes a thin corona surrounding his blown pupils, wide and black with arousal. “I thought you were avoiding me,” he tells her, his voice low.

“No.” Vee shakes her head and he untangles the fingers in her hair. “I hoped you might actually make friends with other people if I took myself out of the equation,” she informs him, “but I was also really busy. It took me a week to integrate the card catalog from Hawthorne with the card catalog here at Robichaux. I have to create a digital library archive and an online catalog and a database, assign subject headings to everything based on systems of classification the card catalogs didn’t use, code subject guides for every unit from every course in the curriculum, order a fiction inventory because my library doesn’t have literature and that’s unacceptable, and special order expensive digitization equipment so I can start digitizing after I finish cataloging. I wish Kolya was here, because I could use some help with all of the coding. I also met with the Council to discuss the curriculum and Queenie wants to start teaching comprehensive co-ed classes for vodou practitioners only and Gabriel—her warlock boyfriend—wants to start teaching an elective class on the history of colonialism and brujería. I’m the only person on campus who’s taught undergraduate students at the university level, so they wanted my help coming up with lesson plans and stuff.”
Michael smiles at how fast she talks when she gets excited about something. When she went to grad school, UW offered Vee a part-time work study job that consisted of working at the reference desk in the main library ten hours a week and teaching an undergraduate course on information literacy for another ten hours a week. Officially her job was being a TA, but she had to conduct all of the in-person lectures and grade the assignments herself. When she finished grad school, she told anyone who’d listen that she’d never teach again. Vee’s last words on the subject were: “I would rather suck Donald Trump’s Cheeto-flavored micropenis.” Michael smiles wider at the memory. “You hated teaching,” he points out.

“What I hated,” Vee retorts, “was talking at two dozen undergrad zombies who thought my Information Literacy class was an easy A just because it was only a one credit hour course and dealing with the students that were dumb enough to plagiarize. I liked making the lesson plans and stuff.”

Michael caresses her cheek with the soft pad of his thumb and smirks when she blushes exponentially brighter, her brilliance multifaceted and radiant. “I sometimes forget what a nerd you are,” he says, his voice fond and teasing.

Vee rolls her eyes so far back in her head she almost sees the face of God before she conjures a pillow out of thin air onto the kitchen floor and gets on her knees in front of him.

Michael cocks his head and watches her with his heart in his throat, his cock throbbing in anticipation. It’s half agony, half hope. “What do you think you’re doing?” he asks.

“This,” Vee says and gestures from him to herself and back again, “has been a long time coming.” Pun intended, she thinks. “It feels like we’ve been on a first date for almost six years. I’m done overthinking how I feel about you, and I don’t want to be on a first date anymore. So,” she strokes the bulge in his pants with one fingertip and says, “I’m gonna take some of the pressure off. If that’s okay with you.”

Michael clenches his jaw and fists his hand in her hair again, tight enough to make her gasp softly. “Tell me what you want,” he says, “beg me for it.”

Vee bites her lip and a thrill rolls through her as the mood shifts from light and snarky to dark and sensual. Love is a many-splendored thing. Vee inhales deeply through her nose and exhales a quiet gust of air as she relinquishes control of the situation to him. “I want to suck your cock,” she informs him as she tugs his zipper down, “can I? Please?”

Michael shakes his head slowly. “No,” he says, pitching his voice low so his velvet tone makes her clench deep inside, “you didn’t ask properly, so you can’t have it—” he unbuttons his pants and takes his cock out as if to taunt her with his impressive erection before he adds, “—the correct term is ‘may I?’”

“This coming from the guy who tried to choke his grandmother to death for correcting his grammar,” Vee retorts and smiles at his adorably affronted arrogant expressions before she asks, “may I please suck your cock?”

Michael blanks hard because he doesn’t want her to see how overwhelmed he is by the sight of her on her knees at his feet, despite her tendency to remind him of his foibles even in the heat of the moment. Vee is submitting to him of her own free will, and he wouldn’t want her any other way. Michael flexes the fingers of the hand twisted in her hair and watches her unfurl her wings so her feathers spread and fan out around her on the floor. It makes him feel blasphemous—like he’s about to corrupt an angel. “Yes,” he says. “I want to fuck your face,” he tells her and rubs the head of his cock against her face to mark her flushed cheek with his precum and emphasize those dirty words,
“and I won’t stop until I come all the way down your throat.”

Vee opens her mouth and sticks her tongue out at him, but she’s not being contrary or rude. Yes, she thinks and holds his gaze as she delicately licks more of his precum from his slit and transforms his whole body into an exquisite ache, please.

Michael stares at her as her tongue circles his tip and curls over the ridge of his crown to tease the sensitized frenulum underneath once, twice before she tilts her head and licks the vein on the underside of his shaft. “Good,” he says as her tongue moves around his length in jagged strokes before she ducks and sucks on one of his balls. Pleasure coils at the base of his spine and shakes through him like an earthquake as she takes his whole sac into the heat of her mouth, licking and sucking obscenely as precum drips from the slit on the head and trickles down the curve of his throbbing shaft.

Vee abruptly wraps her lips around his cock and takes him deep, so deep he wonders if she’s using some carnal kind of magic to deepthroat him without triggering her sensitive gag reflex. Michael grits his teeth and tries not to thrust into her mouth, tries to stay in control. Vee moans with her lips stretched tight around his girth, his pubic hair tickling her nose before she pulls back and slowly drags her tongue along his whole length. When she flicks her tongue over the head of him again, his control snaps and he stuffs her mouth full of his cock again with no warning. Vee whimpers at the sensation of him fucking her throat and hollows her cheeks out to suck as hard as inhumanly possible, fluttering her tongue up against his pulse in the vein on the underside while his ball sac bumps into her chin and her own arousal seeps through her panties under her skirt as the smell of his sweat and skin fills her nostrils.

Michael grunts and that undignified noise spilling out of his clenched jaw makes another thrill roll through her. “I’m gonna come,” he tells her. “Take it all.”

Yes, Vee thinks as her mouth waters in anticipation and a thin strand of drool starts to drip out of one corner of her lips and trickles down her chin, please. I want it.

Michael closes his eyes and every muscle in his body goes taut with need before he moans her name and tightens his grip on her hair reflexively and feels her suck and swallow around him as the electricity buzzes erratically in the flickering light bulbs above them and lights fall behind his eyelids like a host of rebel angels. Vee squeezes his wrist and he loosens his grip on her hair, gratified that he didn’t yank any of the strands out by the roots in the throes of passion. When he opens his eyes, she pulls back and lets him slip out from in between her swollen pink lips with a soft pop. Vee opens her mouth and sticks her tongue out to show him what a mess he made before she holds his gaze and takes it all down her throat in one concupiscent swallow. Michael sucks in a sharp breath and clenches his teeth to stifle another undignified noise, one that sounds like hng. “Take off your clothes,” he orders, his voice raw with how desperately he wants her.

Vee unsnaps the belt around her waist and pulls her knee socks off before she unzips her skirt and folds it up on the countertop. Michael stares at her with a hooded, focused expression on his face as she unbuttons her blouse and folds it up on top of her skirt. Vee unfastens the buttons slowly, but she’s not being seductive; her arthrodesis surgery took a toll on her dexterity and left a scar on the back of her dominant hand. There are stretch marks on the pale flesh of her soft belly and freckles all over her body—the ones on her lower extremities are darker than the ones on the parts of her that never see the sun. Vee doesn’t have any freckles on her face or her neck, probably because her hair is thick enough to block out the sun; the words tattooed on the curve of her right shoulder are obscured by the fall of her loose dark curls, but he knows them by heart. If she didn’t have wings, she would look unequivocally human.
Michael flicks his gaze down from her face to devour the silk and lace confection framing her breasts with his eyes. Vee moves to unhook the clasp of her bra and he holds up a hand to stop her. “No,” he says, “leave the lingerie on for now…” he puts his hand on her shoulder before he translocates her onto her bed and stands at the edge of her mattress while he unbuttons his impeccably tailored jacket, “…I’ll take it off you myself.”

Vee flops back against her pillows with her wings spread out behind her and watches him undress. Michael doesn’t look human with his clothes off: his preternaturally smooth sun-kissed skin makes him look otherworldly, like some kind of solar god. There are no blemishes or scars anywhere on his body, no visible imperfections except the Mark of the Beast. Michael doesn’t have any hair on his chest, just a line of dark golden hair on his sternum that delineates over his navel to the coarse patch of pubic hair at the base of his cock. Vee watches him crawl into bed with her and her cunt tightens around nothing before he cups her face in his hands and kisses her again.

There’s no patience in the way his lips claim hers, hard and heavy. Michael angles his head to deepen the kiss and devours her moans when she opens her mouth, fucking her with his lips and tongue and conquering her mouth with intent strokes and dominant slides to give her a glimpse of what he wants to do to her with his body and demanding her response. Vee kisses him back and revels in the scorching warmth of his body looming over her, making her feel small in the best possible way; she outweighs him by almost thirty pounds, but he can still lift her up and manhandle her like she weighs nothing at all. Michael breaks the kiss to work hot open-mouthed kisses down her throat, nipping and sucking feverishly at her skin and riding the sharp edge of his control.

Vee sinks her left hand into his hair and sighs at the sensation of the soft silken strands in between her fingers as her arousal hums through her. Michael grins and holds her gaze, curling his hands possessively over her waist and skimming them up her ribcage to palm and squeeze her breasts roughly through her bra and yank the cups down with his fingers. Vee flushes at the sight of them in his hands, his warm skin dark enough to contrast her glow-in-the-dark shade of pale. When he licks her nipples and sucks them both into the heat of his mouth, shimmers of desire pulse from her breasts to the swollen nub of her clit. Michael belatedly unhooks her bra and strips it away by dragging the straps over her arms before he buries his face in between her breasts and rubs her slick nipples with his fingers and thumbs, his stubble rough against her hypersensitive skin.

“I love these,” he tells her with utmost seriousness and kisses the hollow between them.

Vee blushed at the praise. It’s not like her tits are special—they’re pretty big, sure, but they’re not perky by any stretch of the imagination. Vee is thirty, her breasts started growing when she was ten, and gravity is a thing. Nephilim physiology means gravity can only make them sag to a certain point, but they’re not preternaturally firm and they never will be.

Michael kisses the swell of her flabby belly, as if he knows she’s thinking low self-esteem thoughts and he wants her to pay attention to him instead. “You’re so wet,” he says and strokes the gusset of her panties with one fingertip. “You liked sucking my cock that much?”

Vee flushes brighter as his fingertip sinks into the damp fabric to slick over her slit. “I liked it,” she confesses, “giving head always makes me feel powerful.”

Michael is torn between jealousy and transcendence because she loves him, but he isn’t her first. It mollifies him that all of the human boys she loved before he was born weren’t truly capable of understanding her. Michael is the only person who loves her for the monster she is, not in spite of her monstrosity. Although he loves her humanity, too—her adaptability, her kindness, her sympathy for the son of the Devil. Michael is still a virgin because sex for the sake of carnal pleasure alone doesn’t
interest him. When you’re constantly aware of the deepest darkest desires of everyone around you whether you want to sense them or not, sex loses its appeal—especially if you’re a child in the body of a man and most adults look at you like they want to fuck you or get fucked by you. Michael is jaded in the way that people working behind the scenes in the porn industry are: he’s seen it all, and now he’s desensitized. So while he still occasionally finds people besides Vee attractive, he doesn’t want to fuck anyone else. “Does it,” he murmurs and holds her gaze as his fingertip rubs her aching clit through her panties, “and shall I feel the same way after I eat you out?”

Vee inhales and feels her breath snag in her throat at the glimmers of pleasure that bloom deep inside her. “I hope so,” she says.

Michael smiles at her with a wicked gleam in his eyes before he dips his head between her thighs and inhales deeply through his nose to breathe in the scent of her arousal.

Vee bites down on the inside of her cheek as his fingers hook under the waistband of her panties and he peels them off slowly, deliberately. Michael skims his thumbs over the sensitive hollows behind her knees, his warm hands smoothing up the insides of her thighs in unspoken appeal. Vee spreads her legs for him and tugs her bottom lip between her teeth at the sight of the ravenous look in his eyes. Michael parts the plump lips of her labia with his thumbs and swirls his tongue over her hole, tasting and teasing. Vee gasps at the first slow flick of his tongue against her clit, the hot tip finding the perfect angle that makes her thighs quake and tremble before he thrusts his tongue deep inside her.

Michael has never tasted anything quite like her before. It’s not sweet or sugary, like something out of a romance novel; she tastes musky and dark and salty, delicious and raw and primordial. Michael licks and sucks at the folds of her cunt softly at first, then harder and harder until she jerks her hips helplessly and moans his name.

When he stops fucking her with his tongue and pulls back to flit a fingertip up and down her shining wet hole, she bites her bottom lip in a futile attempt to muffle a high-pitched sound of pleasure. Michael looks at her face and watches her reaction while he curls one clever finger inside her reverently and smirks as she constricts around him, her cunt tight and hot and fluttering. It feels magnificent, just on the wrong side of holy.

Vee squirms and narrows her eyes at him as the heat of her breath fogs up the rims of her glasses because somehow he seems to know exactly how to touch her, how hard and for how long, to torment her with the edge of sweet release. It builds up inside her until all she can think is almost, yes, please, more—

Michael pulls away abruptly and disbelief churns through her at the sudden loss. Vee whimpers in frustration. Michael smirks wider before he drops his head, tugs her clit in between his lips and sucks. Vee slaps both hands over her mouth to muffle a scream as she comes harder than she ever has by herself, explosions of phosphenes sparkling like bright glitter behind her closed eyelids. Michael somehow knows not to stop after her first orgasm subsides. Instead he circles the hood of her clit again, again over and over until she writhes and shudders desperately while he flicks his tongue into her cunt to gorge himself on the liquid heat of her arousal.

Vee trembles, strung out with the pleasure still glistening inside her from the crown of her head to the tips of her toes. Michael licks his lips and crawls up her body, his cock thick and hard again between her legs. Vee kisses him desperately and tastes herself in his mouth, on his tongue. Michael rubs the head of him against her clit and strokes up and down her slit before he slips his blunt tip inside her. “I’m going to ruin you,” he says fervently.
Then someone knocks on the doorframe of her bedroom and cockblocks the Antichrist, because of course they fucking do. Michael turns and looks over his shoulder at Vesper, a slip of a girl with pale green skin, twigs and bright yellow leaves on her head instead of hair, and clusters of roots on her fingertips and toes instead of nails.

Vesper is a hamadryad: the wood nymph or spirit of the forbidden tree Vee grew.[134] There aren’t many dryads left in the world, not after the mass exodus of all the fey creatures on earth to the lower heavens during the burning times between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Faerie, a network of chaotic realms where angels fear to tread, contains the surviving fairies and their descendants. Those who chose to remain on earth died out because of industrialization and deforestation. Vesper is alive because Vee grew her tree of knowledge in a climate-controlled greenhouse with customized air filters and conjured her garden into a new greenhouse retrofitted with the same amenities—she wouldn’t’ve left the safety of her grove to knock on their door unless something has gone horribly wrong.

“What?” Michael snaps at her.

Vesper bites her bottom lip and the clusters of leaves on her head darken from yellow to orange to red in embarrassment. It’s the dryadic equivalent of blushing: nervousness causes the chlorophylls in their foliage to spontaneously degrade and changes the color of their leaves. Vesper can’t turn red in the face because she has sap in her veins instead of blood. “Sorry to interrupt,” the hamadryad says, “but there’s a dead boy in the garden.”

[125] Proclus (b. 412 CE – d. 485 CE), a Greek philosopher, defined the magic of theurgy as “a power higher than all human wisdom” in his commentaries on the theology of Plato. Neoplatonists used this kind of magic to invoke deities with the intent of achieving henosis, or deification, by connecting with the primordial energy of the universe. It’s used by esoteric Christians to attempt to understand the relationship between God and individual consciousness, and by Jewish mystics and philosophers to meditate on the emanations from the Godhead or Shekinah. According to the ancient Greeks, theurgy is rituals or meditations or prayers used to connect with the four emanations:

tó ἐν: the All, the Good, the One, the Absolute, the Hermetic version of God or the universe. It’s the divine power within yourself and your experiences as part of the whole of reality. This is the light that Cordelia describes as the source of all magic.

Νοῦς: the Mind, the ability to perceive what is real in the physical and metaphysical realms.

Ψυχή: the Soul, the ability to awaken your spiritual or incorporeal self.

Φύσις: Nature, the ability to grow or become.

Here, in a modern context, the art of theurgy is ritual magic that involves a physical object as the catalyst for a complex spell (e.g. the maze Fiona used to curse the witch hunters and bankrupt their corporation).

[126] There was an organization of occult practitioners called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn founded in the late nineteenth century. It had a hierarchical structure of ten ranks, based on the Kabbalistic tree of life. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, E. Nesbit, and W. B. Yeats were members of this organization. Neophyte, Adept (divided into the Second Order ranks of Adeptus Minor, Adeptus Major, and Adeptus Exemptus) and Magus are ranks from their hierarchy. Ipsissimus, the highest rank, is the equivalent of the Supreme.

[127] Zoe performed all of the Seven Wonders in Coven: Pyrokinesis in “Bitchcraft,” Telekinesis and Vitalum Vitalis in “Go to Hell,” Divination in “The Axeman Cometh,” and Concilium, Descensum, and Transmutation in “The Seven Wonders,” although she technically failed her test of Transmutation. It’s been seven years since then, so ostensibly she’s learned how to teleport without splinching herself. Queenie canonically performed six of the Seven Wonders:
Divination in “Battle Royale,” Concilium and Transmutation in “The Seven Wonders,” and Telekinesis, Descensum, and Vitalum Vitalis in “Go to Hell,” although she failed her test of Vitalum Vitalis in “The Seven Wonders.” Pyrokinesis is the only Supreme power she doesn’t possess, and ostensibly she could have learned that at some point between 2014 and 2021.

[128] I actually came up with a course schedule for Robichaux and Hawthorne:

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<tr>
<th>Monday &amp; Wednesday</th>
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<th>Friday</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BLOCK 1: 9:30am – 11:30am</strong></td>
<td><strong>BLOCK 1: 9:30am – 11:30am</strong></td>
<td><strong>BLOCK 1: 9:30am – 11:30am</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoicheomancy I, taught by Cordelia &amp; John Henry</td>
<td>Magical Thinking I, taught by Cordelia &amp; Baldwin</td>
<td>Electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Synergy II, taught by Zoe &amp; Behold</td>
<td>Magical Combat II, taught by Queenie &amp; John Henry</td>
<td>Electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alchemy III, taught by Queenie &amp; Baldwin</td>
<td>Spellcraft III, taught by Zoe &amp; Behold</td>
<td>Electives</td>
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<td><strong>LUNCH: 11:45am – 12:45pm</strong></td>
<td><strong>LUNCH: 11:45am – 12:45pm</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BLOCK 2: 1:00pm – 3:00pm</strong></td>
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<td>Spellcraft I, taught by Zoe &amp; Behold</td>
<td>Synergy I, taught by Zoe &amp; Behold</td>
<td>Electives</td>
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<td>Alchemy II, taught by Queenie &amp; Baldwin</td>
<td>Magical Thinking II, taught by Cordelia &amp; Baldwin</td>
<td>Electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stoicheomancy III, taught by Cordelia &amp; John Henry</td>
<td>Magical Combat III, taught by Queenie &amp; John Henry</td>
<td>Electives</td>
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<td><strong>BLOCK 3: 3:15pm – 5:15pm</strong></td>
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<td><strong>BLOCK 3: 3:15pm – 5:15pm</strong></td>
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<td>Alchemy I, taught by Queenie &amp; Baldwin</td>
<td>Magical Combat I, taught by Queenie &amp; John Henry</td>
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<td>Stoicheomancy II, taught by Cordelia &amp; John Henry</td>
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<td>Electives</td>
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</tbody>
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This curriculum works better in a collegiate format instead of a high school equivalent. Older students take asynchronous online courses if they also want to attend nonmagical universities. When anyone comes to the coven without their high school equivalency, I imagine that Cordelia helps them get their GED or any other certification they might need before they begin their magic studies. There are mandatory exams at the ends of every unit within each course and optional exams students can take to test out of the beginner courses into the intermediate or advanced courses. Unlike the core classes, electives are taught by one instructor and they are typically more specialized magical fields of study. Ariel doesn’t teach any subject because in “Could It Be...Satan?” Baldwin offers to arrange a celebration the night he arrives so the students can meet their Grand Chancellor, implying that Ariel doesn’t spend much of his time at the school. Ergo, he’s ostensibly an administrator, not faculty.

[129] IsoldeDax mentioned in a comment on Chapter 8 that choosing not to ignore Michael’s chronological age is a bold choice. This is part of the reason why I did that: because the preconceived notions of a person who aged so abnormally compared to ordinary people would be totally different than anything that could be considered normal. Michael can also see into the hearts of others, so arguably his perception of beauty as a concept encompasses the body and mind and soul. It’s obvious that he understands the value placed on physical attractiveness in society and he uses his physical attractiveness to his full advantage, but I think his personal standards of beauty and ugliness would be unorthodox.
Napoleon wrote “[it is necessary to] reduce, if not destroy, the tendency of Jewish people to practice a very great number of activities that are harmful to civilisation and to public order in society in all the countries of the world. It is necessary to stop the harm by preventing it; to prevent it, it is necessary to change the Jews” to Jean-Baptiste de Norpere de Champagny, his Minister of the Interior, in correspondence dated 29 November 1806. Then he called Jewish people “the most despicable of mankind” in a letter he wrote to his brother Jerome in 1808. Yikes.

Vee conjures about a dozen of Kitti’s hog-nosed bats, the smallest mammals in the world: they’re native to Thailand and Myanmar, adult specimens are between 1.1 and 1.3 inches long, and they weigh approximately 0.07 ounces. Also called bumblebee bats because they’re so tiny.

Brujería is a Latinx word for witchcraft. It encompasses spiritual practices across the Afro-Latin diaspora, including Haitian Vodou, Cuban Santería, Brazilian Candomblé, Afro-Brazilian Umbanda, and Puerto Rican Brujería. Colonialism has made the modern forms of brujería into syncretic amalgamations of African ideologies, Catholicism and Spiritism. There’s some misconceptions and crossover because of violent assimilation, but: brujos/brujas are different from curanderos/curanderas and curandeiros/curandeiras because the latter spiritual traditions are rooted in the practices of indigenous healers or shamans of Latin America rather than diasporic peoples displaced from Africa and southern Europe.

This was my attempt to explain why Michael canonically seems kind of sex-repulsed (see: his responses to Gallant in “The Morning After” and “Forbidden Fruit” + his reactions to Madelyn and Mutt & Jeff mentioning the carnal aspects of their diabolic pacts in “Sojourn”). It could also be attributed to his chronological age, but I digress.

Hamadryads (Greek: Ἁμαδρυάδες) or just dryads are woodnymphs from Greek mythology: fey or nature spirits bonded to a specific tree rather than a grove or a forest, the equivalent of the Vily in Russian folklore. Vesper is specifically a Meliad (Greek: Μηλιαδες), an apple tree nymph. Contrariwise, the Hesperides can be interpreted as the nymphs of the grove in Hera’s apple orchard. Vesper can mean “the evening star” in Latin, in contrast to Lucifer, the morning star. Basically, in naming the hamadryad of her tree of knowledge that, Vee immortalized her Faustian rebellion. It’s also a nod to the Garden of the Hesperides, the Greek mythology analog to the Garden of Eden: Vesper is also the Latin version of the ancient Greek word Hesperos (“evening”), the root of the word Hesperides (“originates from evening”). SYMBOLISM EVERYWHERE.
How Awful Goodness Is

Chapter Summary

Vee suspects that an archdemon is behind the dead boy in the garden.

Chapter Notes

MagnetGirl11511, tragically the only story idea I thought of for CAoS was a crossover with AHS in which Michael attempts to follow Mallory back in time through the water she used as a portal and ends up stranded in Greendale instead, where he learns that he has a half-sister named Sabrina and meets an alternate version of Vee, who probably works in the library at Baxter High and is friends with Hilda because they know each other from the bookstore. I’m trash, sorry not sorry.

Personally, I’m a mess of conflicting impulses—I’m independent and greedy and I also want to belong and share and be a part of the whole. I doubt that I’m the only one who feels this way. It’s the core of monster making, actually. Wanna make a monster? Take the parts of yourself that make you uncomfortable—your weaknesses, bad thoughts, vanities, and hungers—and pretend they’re across the room. It’s too ugly to be human. It’s too ugly to be you. Children are afraid of the dark because they have nothing real to work with. Adults are afraid of themselves.

Oh we’re a mess, poor humans, poor flesh—hybrids of angels and animals, dolls with diamonds stuffed inside them—we’ve been to the moon and we’re still fighting over Jerusalem. Let me tell you what I do know: I am more than one thing, and not all of those things are good. The truth is complicated. It’s two-toned, multi-vocal, bittersweet. I used to think that if I dug deep enough to discover something sad and ugly, I’d know it was something true. Now I’m trying to dig deeper.

Richard Siken, “Black Telephone”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 13
How Awful Goodness Is

2018
Bremerton, WA

Vee goes to the shooting range in the aftermath of the Brett Kavanaugh hearings and empties three whole clips into the head of her target in rapid succession before the weight in her chest starts to
unknot, disgust still roiling in the abyss of her stomach. If she were shooting for real, she wouldn’t need that many bullets. Vee carries a .38 Special revolver because .357 Magnum cartridges are capable of turning faces into mincemeat with one shot.

Michael is watching her from a safe distance away in the spectator area, with his noise cancelling muffs curling around his neck instead of covering his ears. Vee herself is wearing earplugs underneath her earmuffs and a pair of tinted shooting glasses over her prescription glasses. Nephilim physiology means they can’t permanently damage their stereocilia with the decibels emitted by firearms, but they’re both passing for human so they’re wearing the hearing protection anyway.[135] Michael smiles at the sight of the faceless target as she takes it down and picks up a fresh sheet of paper shaped like a dark human silhouette, one that isn’t riddled with dozens of bullet holes. “Why don’t you just kill them?” he asks her after she takes her earmuffs off. “Kavanaugh, Trump, Romney, Pence, Musk, Bezos, all those politicians and billionaires you rant about. Put a contrapasso spell on them and destroy them all the way that you cursed those members of the Cooperative.[136] No jury could ever convict you,” he adds as she turns and looks at him over her shoulder. “No human prison could hold you. No one would be able to stop you.”

Vee bites her lip and chews anxiously before she articulates a heavy sigh. “Okay,” she says, “but then where does it end? If I start cursing and killing people for doing things I don’t like, where do I stop? With the rapists? Child molesters? Republicans? Centrists? Libertarians? Democrats whose policies I don’t like? Privileged white boys who shoot up schools or entitled douchebags who kill girls for saying no? Those assholes from Steubenville who peed on a girl and raped her in the most public way possible by posting about it all over social media, and everyone that was more worried about the accusations ruining the bright futures of two high school football players than what they did to her?[137] Cops who shoot unarmed black kids? Anti-vaxxers? Autism Speaks? Anyone who hurts my feelings?” she shakes her head slowly. “I don’t get to play God,” she says and flicks her gaze to the rolled up target sheet with a gaping hole where its blank face should be. “I’m terrible at moderation.”

2021
New Orleans, LA

Vesper waits in the hallway while they get dressed. Michael doesn’t bother to put his bespoke suit on again; he pulls his black silk boxer briefs back on, but leaves his pants, waistcoat, shirt, and jacket where he folded them on the back of the chair sitting at the cluttered desk. Vee conjures up a black negligee trimmed with ivory lace and a matching pair of panties, because the ones she wore all day are still wet. Michael turns and looks at her apprehensively as she picks up her discarded bra and underwear and drops them in the laundry basket that lurks underneath her desk. It occurs to him that she might have second thoughts about her decision to have sex with him now that the mood has been ruined, and his stomach fills with dread before she reaches out with one of her winglets and touches his face. Michael has touched her wings before—he helps her gather the stray plumes after she molts every month and bundle them in colorful mason jars to make talismans—but their softness never ceases to enchant him, her feathers like gossamer against the skin of his cheek.

“I’m not gonna regret it,” she informs him, her voice soft and sure. Making that statement doesn’t solve everything between them, but love is fundamentally unsolvable. Like the chaotic ebbs and flows of the world, they can only deal with problems as they present themselves—but from now on they can do that as a couple instead of attempting to face every obstacle alone.

Michael beams and surges forward to snake his arms tight around her: one encircling her shoulders,
the other coiling around her waist to hold her flush against him from hip to chest. It makes him think of the first time he hugged her, six years ago in Petaluma, and how far they’ve come since then. Michael bends to nuzzle the crook of her neck as she hugs back with her wings instead of her arms, furling them around him while she runs the fingers of one hand through his hair and uses the other to grip the handle of her cane.

“Okay,” she says, elongating the oh syllable into an ooh when he kisses the side of her neck. “I love you, too, but: dead boy in the garden. We should probably go deal with that.”

Their greenhouse is beautiful on the outside, a glass and chromium and stone building shaped like a small palace and decorated with intricate metallic spires that split the firmament above it, and a magical work of art on the inside: a spatial distortion that contains all kinds of plants, mostly edible things and plants with medicinal or magical properties. It wasn’t practical to bring the greenhouse her father built to New Orleans, so they bought a house that came with an ornate Victorian glass and cast-iron one in the backyard. Vee retrofitted it with decontamination spells that she designed and transmogrified the metal into something that wouldn’t kill Vesper or the Blodynryds—rose nymphs, a subspecies of Anthousai, or flower spirits.[138] Other floral fey flit away from the panes of the greenhouse when she descends onto the cobblestone pathway arcing from the door of the greenhouse to the steps of the back porch and conjures a chromium key into the hand she isn’t using to grip her cane.

Knox Moore—the five-year-old son of Behold and John Henry—is crumpled by the entrance of her greenhouse facedown with his neck twisted sideways, his eyes wide open and opaque because the blood in his body hasn’t been circulating and oxygenating his corneas. Vee crouches next to him with her cane in one hand and cocks her head curiously as she wrinkles her nose at the effluvius stench of voided bowel. If she were anyone else, the sight of a dead kindergartner would probably upset her. Vee is Death, though, and that means she’s going to bring him back to life as soon as she figures out what the fuck he was doing in her garden. “Still in algor mortis,” she murmurs and picks up his heartwrenchingly small hand to check for rigidity in his fingers, “no sign of rigor mortis in his limbs. Which,” she gently puts his tiny hand down and rises to her feet before she adds, “means the body is room temperature, but it’s not stiff yet.”

“So he’s been dead for less than six hours,” Michael says.

Vee nods, a sharp descent of her chin. “Probably closer to three hours since his eyes are clouded over like that,” she informs him, “someone kept the silent alarm I spelled into my wards from going off. I don’t know how powerful this little boy is, but I doubt he could do that.”[139]

Aspidakinesis is a lost art. It takes more finesse than any other kind of magic that Michael has seen her demonstrate. Casting wards involves the layering of complex spells in a plethora of patterns that coalesce into a magic shield that consumes all other magical energy—including the life force of anyone who crosses it without permission from the person who created the wards. It’s a power that originated with the cherubim, the angels who guard the gates of the upper heavens and guarded the Garden of Eden before the Fall. Vee only knows how to make wards because of the knowledge her father bestowed on her. No human caster is capable of replicating that ability.

Vee crafted a barrier spell around the house to warn her about intruders. It would’ve been stupid not to take precautions because she has the fruit of the forbidden tree in her greenhouse and several dangerous magical tomes, manuscripts, and other artifacts in her collection that could technically be considered a magic arsenal. Vee also has texts from the lower heavens and she’s cultivated plants that aren’t supposed to grow on earth. Forget invasive species—try species from another dimension. There are high court fey that absolutely love processed American foodstuffs like Twinkies or potato chips, and sidhe are immortal so they understand the importance of stockpiling heirloom seeds. Pike
Place Market in Seattle has a secret corridor where interdimensional business is conducted between earth and Faerie. It looks perpetually blocked off to anyone who doesn’t have the power of True Sight, the ability to see through illusions that fairies call glamourie. Which is a power that Vee inherited from her ancestor Kuzunoha—who, incidentally, is the one who introduced Vee to all of the best fey merchants and is also the reason none of them have ever tried to fleece her. Kuzunoha is a kitsune, a Japanese fox goddess, and kitsune eat people that piss them off.

“What did you see when you touched him?” Michael wants to know.

Vee shakes her head slowly. “Nothing,” she informs him. “Psychometry is the ability to absorb psychic imprints through physical contact. When you touch a person, you pick up electrochemical signals from their brains that contain information: memories, thoughts, feelings. Knox is dead, and corpses typically don’t have functioning neurons, unless they’re undead. When you touch an object, you pick up trace amounts of psychic information or residue transmitted by the person or people who owned it. Those imprints can be erased by magic, if you know how. Whoever told him to break into my garden was able to destroy any telltale psychic imprints on his body.”

“Meaning we’re dealing with someone with psychic abilities,” Michael deduces, “probably a warlock or a witch who wants the fruit of the forbidden tree. I’d guess warlock since they’re all power-hungry and pathetic, but I wouldn’t rule out witches like Madison.”

Vee shakes her head again. “No,” she says. “Madison wouldn’t bother with subterfuge, she’d just say ‘bitch, give me the forbidden fruit. It’s bogus that Mallory got an apple and I didn’t. Besides, we’re sisters now, and sisters are supposed to share or whatever.’”

Michael laughs at how uncanny her impression of Madison is, a low giggle that bubbles up deep in his stomach before it bursts out of his mouth.

Vee slants her gaze to him and narrows her eyes in response to the niggling feeling in her gut. “You told Ariel that I grew my own tree of knowledge,” she says.

Michael cocks his head and shrugs, a tacit confession. Vee knows him better than anyone, and he can’t lie to her. “I wanted to see what he would do with the information,” he says.

Vee groans and the noise snarls in her throat as she tilts her head heavenward and looks at the night sky as if to say, Why me? Michael is an unrepentant shit-stirrer; he literally can’t help himself. Vee should have seen this coming. If she hadn’t been so busy, she would have.

Michael frowns at the expression on her face, because the last thing he wants to do is upset her. “We can bring him back,” he says. “I’ll do it myself if you don’t have the spoons for Vitalum Vitalis.”

Vee shakes her head yet again. “It’s not that,” she says. “Whoever did this coerced a five-year-old into walking out of his parents’ condo in the middle of the night without his parents noticing, three blocks up the street to our house, past the barrier spell I put on the fence and by proxy on the front gate, and he died on contact with the ward on the greenhouse without the silent alarm component of either the barrier spell or the ward itself altering me that he was here. No witch or warlock should have that kind of power. Only an angel or an archdemon could get through my barrier spell and mute my ward undetected, and an angel would never sacrifice an innocent child. We can also eliminate an angel from our suspect pool because there’s a tree of knowledge in Yetzirah, a heavenly realm accessible to every angelic order.”

“So you think our culprit is possessed by a demon lord,” Michael deduces. Not a prince or princess, but a lord. Most demonology grimoires written by humans rank demons of the ruling class according to earthly hierarchies of nobility and peerdom—lord, earl, duke, count, viscount, baron, marquis—
but archdemons have no such distinctions. There are three noble tiers of peerage in Hell: the king and queen, the princes and princesses, the lords and ladies. Michael is the crown prince and he’s one of two potential heirs to the throne; Vee is a princess and sole heiress to her father’s seat of power, although being an heir or heiress is more of a formality than anything else when your predecessor is deathless.

Vee nods. “Or a eudemon,” she clarifies, “the fallen ones who obtained godhood and their descendants can’t ascend to Yetzirah either.[142] We can eliminate the sídhe and lesser fey like Vesper from our suspect pool too, because children are considered precious in Faerie and most of them wouldn’t harm a child—they’d glamour an adult instead. Or they’d approach me through my interdimensional black market contacts. Maybe they’d hire a Spriggan or a Metalzauber to break into my garden if they’re desperate, because those species are immune to iron and more resistant to carcinogens than other fey, but they’d use the ley line to bypass the ward.”[143]

Michael cocks his head and looks down at the corpse on the ground. According to Vee, capitalism isn’t a thing in Faerie. Their economy is based on a complex system of interworld trade, and they use bartering as a method of exchange instead of currency. What one realm or kingdom needs, another realm or kingdom will provide or negotiate with yet another realm or kingdom to obtain. These multifaceted trade agreements form alliances that are often cemented by marriages to strengthen ties between ruling families. It’s a symbiotically structured society where the hoarding of resources is considered parasitic and abhorrent.

Faerie has a caste system, like any realm: the sídhe or the gentry who hold court in their kingdoms and have metaphysical ties binding them to their land and their people, the lesser fey that serve the gentry in exchange for protection and land and education, the solitary fey that function as wanderers or mercenaries with no ties to the land or the ruling families, and merchants who negotiate trade agreements between the gentry and keep the economy of Faerie running smoothly. Thieves are punished harshly and gentry who fail to provide for their people and persist in their failures instead of abdicating their seat of power and crowning a better ruler are consumed body and soul by the land itself. Faerie isn’t a utopia, though. It’s glittering and gruesome, beautiful and brutal, and more hellish than heavenly for humans who find themselves there.

Michael wants to visit Faerie, someday. It sounds like fun. Most fey also understandably have the tendency to avoid the hellhole that is earth because the atmosphere is toxic to them, so eliminating fairies as potential suspects makes perfect sense. “If a demon lord was here,” he says, “why didn’t we sense anything?”

Vee blushes and bites her bottom lip. “I don’t know about you,” she mumbles, “but I was… distracted.”

Michael curls his left hand over her right shoulder and squeezes gently, circling the ink on her skin with the pad of his thumb before he leans in and whispers hot and heavy in her ear, “So was I.”

Vee inhales a sharp breath as his voice suffuses her with heat and paradoxical shivers of cold, his breath a dark and exquisite touch ghosting over her skin. This is why she was afraid of her feelings, of what lurks in her hideous heart. Love turns her into a raw, exposed nerve and she’s not comfortable with how vulnerable that makes her feel. “Okay,” she murmurs, “should we put Knox in stasis and call the council in the morning?”

“No.” Michael conjures his phone into his other hand and calls John Henry. “It’s the witching hour,” he says as soon as the cynical warlock answers, “do you know where your child is?”
Michael didn’t want to inform Cordelia of the incident before they interrogated the warlocks, but questioning them without informing the Supreme could be construed as the alleged Alpha attempting to undermine her authority. Which is what Ariel so desperately wants from him, and he’s not going to give the Grand Chancellor the satisfaction. Michael knows it’s petty, but he resents whoever spoiled the mood right when he finally had Vee where he wanted her. Vee asked me to be patient with her, he thinks, but I feel even more impatient than I was when I thought I might have to wait a decade or longer for this to happen. Most humans want what they can’t have, but I want her more now that I know she’s mine. How ironic.

Vee conjures the dead boy onto the granite island looming in the center of the kitchen and folds herself onto a stool, her cane propped up against the side of the refrigerator; she didn’t bother to change out of her slip and into something more appropriate for a council meeting because anyone who interrupts her night after hours doesn’t get to complain about seeing her in lingerie masquerading as pajamas. Michael is wearing a black dressing gown—it’s handwoven cashmere lined with red silk, because of course it would be. Vee doesn’t let him put his arm around her because her autism says that even the finest wool has a bad texture, so instead he leans back against the door of the refrigerator and watches the council fill the open kitchen.

Cordelia and Misty are both dressed in black, although without dramatic cloaks because even in the middle of the night it’s too hot for that aesthetic. Zoe is wearing red Wonder Woman symbol patterned shorts and a soft faded black shirt that obviously used to belong to Kyle. Queenie is still in her pajamas: black sweatpants and a gray t-shirt with PHENOMENAL WOMAN proclaimed on the front in all caps. It’s never too late for Maya Angelou. Ariel is the only warlock that bothered to dress up, his suit out of place in this context even though it probably cost less than what the Antichrist is wearing. John Henry, Behold and Baldwin were too worried about Knox to care. Behold gasps as the sight of the small body on the counter and glares at Vee, who stares back until he looks away. Michael smiles and lets his demonic appearance slip out for all to see: the white face and black eyes a hellish threat display.

“What the hell did you do to my son?” John Henry demands.

Vee sighs. “Nothing,” she informs him, “we found him in the backyard outside my greenhouse. I’m guessing that one of you,” she flicks her gaze to Baldwin and to Ariel to make it clear who she’s implicating before she says, “coerced him to break into my garden because you thought I would show mercy to a child if Knox got caught. Which you must’ve known he would, since I have a barrier spell on the fence and wards on the house and greenhouse.”

“Wardsmithing is a myth,” Ariel retorts, “no witch or warlock is capable of harnessing that power. Not even the Supreme.”

Vee gnaws on the inside of her cheek as her anger bubbles up from the bottomless pit of her stomach, bright and voracious. Whoever did this to Knox did it because they didn’t believe she has the abilities she claims to have, because they chose to underestimate her instead. This wasn’t some nefarious plot. It was a simple miscalculation, with unacceptable consequences.

Behold watches her breathe life back into his son and sobs as Knox blinks, his brown eyes no longer morbidly opaque. John Henry snatches the little boy into his arms before he backs up and narrows his eyes at Michael in disbelief, and in suspicion.

Vee adjusts her glasses with two fingers and looks at Ariel. “You could’ve just asked me for an apple,” she says in a soft deadly tone of voice, “but no. You’re too bloated with resentment and toxic male pride to ask a woman for anything—”
Something pulses in the cool air of the open kitchen and cuts her rant off. Otherworldly sparks erupt into a rip in the fabric of reality, frayed at the edges and shrieking with a visceral sound that resonates inside her chest. Harsh wind tangles in her hair and brings with it a cold scent that chills her down to the bone.

Vee doesn’t get cold, not like humans do; she wears camisoles and flip-flops in winter. It’s the heat she can’t tolerate, in spite of her infernal lineage. Vee squeezes her eyelids shut on instinct and struggles to ignore the fear emanating from everyone around her. When ice begins to crystallize in her hair, she opens her eyes and stares at the giant watching her from across the island. Its skin is blue and rough, like a glacier. Horns curl down from above its ears around its cheeks, the pale growths crenulated and terminating in gory points. It roars, eyes flashing with pure rage at being torn out of its realm. Michael grabs her shoulder and translocates her out of the room before she asks the giant what it’s doing in her house and offer to send it back to the lower heavens where it belongs. Vee hears its fist smash into the granite countertop of the island, the *crack* ricocheting through the house so the walls shudder at the impact.

“What the hell was that?” Queenie shouts, appearing out of thin air next to them.

Vee glances around, doing a headcount. Misty and Cordelia are to her right; Zoe is with Queenie to her left. John Henry and Behold are gone—they’re not in the house, so they must have taken poor Knox home. Which is good, because he’s been traumatized enough for one day. Baldwin and Ariel are nowhere to be seen, but she can sense them on the street three blocks away. Vee snorts, disgusted. *Cowards,* she thinks. “It’s a Jötunn,” she says, “a frost giant.”

“Wait, like Loki?” Zoe asks, her forehead scrunching up in confusion.

Vee groans internally. *Marvel ruins everything,* she thinks ruefully. “No,” she says out loud. “Jötnar are giants from Norse mythology. It’s a term for both the frost giants of Jötunheimr and fire giants of Múspellheimr. Jötunn is singular.”

“Jötnar are descended from the primeval being Ymir,” Michael adds.

Vee laughs in spite of herself, because her response to fear is skewed more toward cackling than crying. “Yeah,” she says as the Jötunn roars from below, “from his armpits. According to the cosmogonic myth chronicled in the *Poetic Edda,* Ymir was killed by Odin, Vili and Vé and they fashioned the universe from his flesh, the mountains from his bones, the oceans from his blood, the world of men from his eyebrows, the heavens from his skull, the trees from his hair, the clouds from his brains, and dwarves from his corpse. It echoes the Zoroastrian creation myth Škend Gumānīg Wizār and an Old Indic hymn called the *Purusha sukta* from the Rigveda. Jörð, the Norse personification of the earth, is a Jötunn goddess and mother of Thor by Odin.”[^146]

“What’s it doing here?” Zoe wants to know.

“Jötunn is singular.” Michael nods in agreement. “It’s not happy about that,” he says, stating the blatantly obvious.
“Jötnar are immune to hellfire and elemental magic,” Vee explains as she points with her index finger and sketches glyphs in midair, a sequence of archaic sigils that glow with ancient power. “So they’re pretty much the closest thing Nephilim have to natural enemies. Which is kind of ironic, since the word ‘Nephilim’ is often translated into English as ‘giants.’”

Cordelia watches her, memorizing the shapes. This is deep magic, the kind of power that was lost centuries ago because no one bothered to write the symbols down. Cordelia has seen Vee work ancient magic so casually, so effortlessly, so precisely. It’s such a waste for someone with that kind of ability to spend all of her time in the labyrinth of the library, instead of teaching. “Those are symbols of protection,” she deduces.

“I can’t open a portal to Jötunheimr without them,” Vee informs her, “unless I want to freeze my kitchen. Which I don’t. Some of them are meant to make sure that nothing else comes through while the portal is open—” she yelps as the huge blue hand punches up through the floor and fists around her only to grip negative space as she translocates herself across the room and casts, “—vade retro, invocato a nobis sancto et terribili nomine, quem inferi tremunt!”

Michael hisses as the words she borrowed from an exorcism incantation burn his ears. Vee shoots him an apologetic look as the portal swallows the Jötunn and shuts its gaping maw with a noise that sounds uncannily like the belch of an eldritch horror. Michael puts his hands on her waist and holds her as she wobbles on her feet, deflated and wheezing. This confirms your theory about the demon lord, he points out telepathically, only an archdemon or a eudemon could summon a Jötunn past your ward.

Vee gnaws anxiously on the inside of her cheek. I know, she thinks, but there’s no infernal residue in the kitchen.

Michael frowns. So whoever summoned the Jötunn was in this realm, he deduces, where an archdemon or a eudemon can only exist by possessing a human host.

Question is, Vee thinks back, who among the warlocks was desperate enough to sell their soul to a demon lord?

[135] Stereocilia are organelles in our inner ear hairs that convert various stimuli into electrical stimuli and send those electrical signals to our brains. Which is how we hear. Stereocilia can be damaged by sounds above a certain level of decibels and if they are, they don’t regrow. Gunshots are loud enough to cause permanent hearing loss, so always wear hearing protection when shooting a firearm. I use earmuffs and earplugs, although unlike Vee, I don’t own a revolver. Most shooting ranges have rental pistols.

[136] Contrapasso is a reference to process by which sinners are punished that either resembles or contrasts their sins in the Divine Comedy, specifically the Inferno. It means “the punishment fits the crime” in Florentine, the precursor to modern Italian that Dante used.

[137] Ma’lik Richmond and Trent Mays raped an unconscious girl and peed on her, photographed it and filmed it with their phones, distributed the pictures, and bragged about it over texts with their friends on 12 August 2012. When the story was circulating, people cared more about the boys and their bright futures as high school athletes than what they did to their victim. Richmond was sentenced to a year in juvenile detention on 17 March 2013, the minimum for a minor convicted of raping another minor in Ohio. Mays got another year because he was also convicted on child pornography charges. Richmond was released on 5 January 2014. Mays was released a year later in January of 2015. Since they were only sixteen, they weren’t even registered as sex offenders. Now they’re both out there in the world, and I believe it would be a better place if they were dead. Mays was accused of sexual assault once again in March of 2019, and he took pictures of his latest victim. So, the system works! Not.
Blodynbydrys are rose dryads from the *October Daye* series by Seanan McGuire. Anthousai (singular: Anthousa) are flower spirits or nymphs from Greek mythology.

Algor mortis is the postmortem change in body temperature. It begins immediately after someone dies. Rigor mortis is postmortem stiffness or rigidity caused by the chemical breakdown of musculature. It can begin as soon as four hours after death. When all your muscles relax after death, before they start breaking down, your corpse voids your bowels and shits itself. It’s not pretty. Discoloration of the cornea and lens of the eyes can occur as soon as two hours after death.

Pike Place is where I always imagined the Seattle equivalent of Diagon Alley from *Harry Potter* would be.

Japanese demons are youkai 「妖怪」, a catchall term for supernatural creatures. These creatures were originally ara-mitama or malevolent spirits that could not be calmed and turned into nig-i-mitama or benevolent spirits, through a Shinto ritual called the chinkon (“the calming of spirits”). Subtypes include mononoke 「物の怪」 (spirits), ayakashi 「妖」 (spirits or feylike creatures that appear as ghost lights above bodies of water, sometimes characterized as vengeful spirits of people who died at sea, similar to the will o’ the wisp or hinkypunk from European folklore), bakemono 「化け物」 (shapeshifters), oni 「鬼」 (ogrelike demons with horns and claws), kijo 「鬼女」 (female oni), onibaba 「鬼婆」 (female oni that are crones instead of beautiful women), tengu 「天狗」 (birdlike demons), kitsune 「狐」 (werefoxes), senri 「仙狸」 (wereleopards), mujina 「貉」 (werebadgers), bakeneko 「化け猫」 (werecats), and kasha 「火車」 (hellcats). There are three basic kinds of mononoke: vengeful spirits 「怨霊」 (malevolent ghosts that inflict tatari 「祟り」 or curses on the living that are often depicted in horror films like *The Grudge* or *The Ring*), dead spirits 「死霊」 (benevolent ghosts) and living spirits 「生霊」 (astral projections). Japanese has separate terms for creatures from Western folklore: fairies are yousei 「妖精」 and ghosts are yuurei 「幽霊」. Kuzunoha 「葛の葉」 is a fox goddess who is called a kami 「神」 rather than a youkai. There’s a shrine to her in Izumi, a city in Osaka. According to legend, Abe no Seimei was her son.

I’ve explained in previous annotations that “demon” etymologically comes from the ancient Greek daimon (δαίμων), meaning “godlike” or “power,” and eudemons is the ancient Greek term for benevolent deities or spirits as opposed to malevolent ones (i.e. cacodemons, a term I used in this fic to define a class of lesser demonic entities). Basically, eudemon is a catchall term for a fallen angel worshipped as a god or goddess by humans that dwells in the lower heavens instead of ruling in Hell. Their descendants are the fey, or any nonhuman supernatural entities.

Spriggans, also called Coblynau, Kobolds, or Knockers, are lesser fey that dwell in mines or quarries and work metal or cause rockslides. Metalzauber is a similar fey species characterized by Patricia Briggs in her *Mercy Thompson* urban fantasy series, but the way they’re described makes them seem more like high court fey (i.e. sídhe) than lesser fey. Spriggan is also pronounced “sprid-jan,” because it’s a Cornish word and Celtic languages are weird.

This dressing gown would cost $3,300, not including tax. Jeepers.

Maya Angelou, “Phenomenal Woman” (1978). I love this poem. Gabourey Sidibe also owns that shirt IRL, so I’m guessing she does too.

Ymir—also named Aurgelmir, Brímir, or Bláinn—is mentioned in both the *Poetic Edda* and *Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson. Proto-Indo-European mythologies have similar cosmogonic myths with Purusha in the *Parusha sukta* from the Rigveda (c. 10th century BCE), Tuisto in *Germania* (c. 1st century CE) by Tacitus, Atlas in the *Metamorphoses* (c. 1st century CE) by Ovid, and Kūnī in the *Škend Gamănığ Wizăr* (c. 9th century CE) by Mardan-Farukh.

These are incantations from two exorcisms. *Vade retro* is Latin for “go back,” and *invocato a nobis sancto et terribili nomine, quem inferi tremunt* means “I invoke the sacred and terrible name which makes those down below tremble.”
I am afraid.
Learning not to be ashamed.
Learning to let go of people
who only want temporary from me,
of the jealousy creeping up vinelike and crippling,
of the restless dance my bones fall prey to, of the unhinging worry of tension, of time.
I am standing at the precipice, terrified—
everything is moving and I jump, bound, leap, fall, come up for air,
days later, even my thoughts threaten to spiral and dissolve, I keep moving forward.

This is the punchback, a reckoning with every big
beautiful thing and in the coming years I am born again
daily and growing into current and tree root
and the space where the soil marries the sky.

One day, I plan to keep only the good things,
to adorn myself in nothing but glitter,
to fall in love with the naked flesh, the generous pulse.

One day, I plan to love so loudly,
my body abandons every demon harvesting me.

Arati Warrier, “Alive”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 14
Our Torments Also May in Length of Time Become Our Elements

2021
New Orleans, LA

Vee sleeps with Michael that night, in the literal sense of the phrase. After they use magic to repair the damage the displaced Jötunn did to their kitchen, she takes his hand and hobbles into her bedroom, where they unceremoniously pass out on top of her duvet in a tangle of limbs. Vee wakes
up again in the unholy hours of the morning to pee groggily and pokes Michael until he gets underneath the blankets with her when she crawls back in bed with him, but nothing sexy occurs because they’re both exhausted and burnt out.

Michael kisses the nape of her neck before he gets out of bed later that morning, sinking his teeth into the skin between her neck and shoulder to leave a bruise that looks so pretty in contrast with her pale flesh. Vee squirms and moans softly, but doesn’t open her eyes; his harbinger of death sleeps like the dead, and she’s been living with nociceptive chronic pain for over a decade so her pain threshold is extremely high. It’s one of her many paradoxical quirks, since her whole body is gloriously hypersensitive.

Vee doesn’t even notice the bruise until she gets out of the shower and catches sight of herself in the bathroom mirror, after she cleans her glasses and puts them back on. There are other vivid marks on her neck, her breasts, the insides of her thighs. Vee pokes one of the love bites on her chest and watches it darken under the pressure of her fingertip, inciting a twinge of pain. Then she finagles her breasts into a black lace and satin bra with red polka dots and casts a nonverbal spell to dry her wet hair before she uses telekinesis to braid it and yanks the matching pair of satin and lace panties on.

It’s still too damn hot in Nawlins for all the heavy fabrics she used to wear in Washington—flannels and thermals—so most of her outfits are rayon and cotton and linen, and silk too. Although she always feels uncomfortably fancy in luxurious garments that aren’t lingerie, like she’s out of her element. It’s one thing to wear satin and silk and lace underneath her clothes. Those fashion statements are for her and her alone, not Michael or anyone else. It’s another to wear such nice fabrics where everyone can see and judge her too fat or too ugly for pretty clothes.

This bone-deep insecurity is left over from the girls who bullied her in high school: pretty, skinny girls in cheerleading uniforms or designer clothes they bought in the city who made her feel both monstrously large and small in the worst possible way. Vee is uncomfortable around most of the coven because they remind her of those other girls: blonde and thin and beautiful. Mallory isn’t actually blonde anymore—she let her hair grow back out in her natural auburn because apparently the dyed blonde hair was part of the identity spell from the darkest timeline—but still. Being seen in public with Michael used to make her uncomfortable for that reason: he’s one of the most attractive people she’s ever seen and she’s…not. It boggles her mind that he wants her, and part of her worries that someday he’s going to realize he could have someone prettier or skinnier or neurotypical and leave her.

Michael didn’t look disgusted when he saw her naked in spite of her freckles and her thunder thighs and her flabby stomach and her gravity compliant tits and her stretch marks and her ugly scars that inspired Killian to call her Frankenhand in the aftermath of her surgery, because her brother is a dick like that. So her worries aren’t rational. Vee pops another half a SSRI to dull the roar of her anxiety disorder and swishes a swallow of cider around in her mouth to drown the bitter taste before she grabs her bag and translocates herself from her bedroom into the chair behind her desk in the library.

There are boxes of books stacked behind the desk—portions of the fiction inventory that she ordered. Mostly classics and YA because the student population of Robichaux is 97% teenagers. Vee also couldn’t resist ordering copies of her favorite urban fantasy and paranormal romance novels. It’s always interesting to see how the human authors of stories about the supernatural interpret myths and legends, to see if they get close to the truth. Those series never bore her, because the genres are more versatile than misogynists who pigeonhole them as vampire porn realize. It doesn’t matter that she knows the truth—the fictionalizations and misinterpretations of the facts are still endlessly fascinating to her in context. Vee doesn’t like the copious amount of rape in some paranormal romance series, though.
“Hey, bitch.”

Vee stops telekinetically unpacking and shelving the fiction inventory to look at Madison, who appears out of thin air to sit on the edge of the circulation desk in her periphery and stares back at her with an incongruously cheerful and cynical expression. It doesn’t take a telepath or even an empath to sense that Madison is lonely. Most of the other witches that survived the boarding school era of Robichaux are married or otherwise paired up: Cordelia and Misty, Zoe and Kyle, Queenie and Gabriel. Mallory and Coco aren’t a couple, but they have each other; Madison doesn’t have anyone, no boyfriend or girlfriend or best friend. It sucks, being the odd one out.

“So,” Madison says and flicks her shrewd gaze to the contusion on her neck, “the Antichrist is a biter. Why am I not surprised?”

Vee sighs and rolls her eyes at that.

“What I don’t get,” Madison says, “is how it took you six years to jump his bones. If someone like that ever looked at me the way he looks at you, I’d get down on my knees right there.”

Vee gnaws on the inside of her cheek to stop herself from blurting out, This is why you don’t have any friends. “I don’t believe in good and evil,” she says, apropos of nothing, “I believe in right and wrong, but not in moral absolutism or moral universalism. What’s right for one person or culture is wrong for another, and evil can only flourish if we as people or a culture make a choice to discriminate against other people and dehumanize them. I’m a monster, but I’m not a bad person. Michael has chosen to be good for me even though he was made to be evil. Satan engineered him by manipulating his genetic code during his conception and gestation, that’s why he’s more powerful than any other male caster in history except possibly Merlin, but he’s a cambion and he lives in Vegas now.”

Madison scowls at her. “Merlin’s alive?” she asks, skepticism oozing from the word alive.

Vee hums, a quiet uh-huh. “Yeah,” she says, “but he goes by John these days. I used to want so desperately to be human,” she adds, “but I got over that shit after I was traumatized by humans. I’m not an angel, or a demon, or a human, or even a witch. I thought I was unique,” she says and chews on the inside of her cheek before she adds, “I thought I was alone.”


Vee nods, a sharp descent of her chin. “Yeah,” she murmurs and grins in a sweet but shy way that makes her light up before she says, “Michael loves everything about me. When he looks at me, I feel known. I’ve never felt like that before, and I probably never will again. Not with anyone else. It scares me, because he even loves the parts of me that I don’t like—the appetite for destruction, the anger, the capacity for violence, the good, the bad, the ugly. I haven’t been in therapy for years, but that emotional response is called backdraft. Or the fear of compassion. When people who’ve been traumatized experience unconditional love, it triggers a flood of memories and we relive being unloved or abused in the past. It’s common for rape survivors like us.”

Madison glares at her as she tries and fails to conceal the flinch that bubbles up along her spine to lodge in the line of her shoulders. “I never told you that,” she mumbles.

Vee wonders if she knows the neophytes still talk about her flipping the party bus full of fraternity bros who gangraped her in hushed, almost reverent tones; she may not have friends, but Madison has fans. “Witch, please. I’m psychometric,” she points out. “I know everything about everyone after one touch. Michael is the only person who can block me, and only because I let him.”
“Because you’re too chicken to read his mind and see that all he thinks about is you?” Madison
snarks back.

Vee shrugs, one-shouldered; a nonverbal Yeah, pretty much.

“I offered to blow him, you know.”

Vee snorts at the blatant attempt to make her jealous. “I actually blew him yesterday,” she retorts.

“So—”

Madison holds up her hands in mock surrender. “What I was going to say is that he didn’t seem
interested,” she clarifies. “Not in sex, or in me. What I was going to say is that you have no idea how
lucky you are. I’d give anything to have someone look at me the way Michael looks at you.”

Vee is terrible at social cues, but even she recognizes a rare moment of vulnerability from one of the
baddest witch bitches on campus. This is what her therapist might call a breakthrough. Or the
beginning of a beautiful friendship. Est unusquisque faber ipsae suae fortunae, she thinks. Each
person makes their own luck. “I do know,” she says, “that I’m lucky. I can be aware of that and
terrified. I contain multitudes.”[151]

Madison smiles at that in spite of herself. Vee is disturbingly easy to talk to. Maybe because she
doesn’t have the ugly history with Madison that pretty much every other witch in the upper echelon
of the coven has. Or because Vee knows everything about her, and she’s being nice instead of using
that against her. I can’t even begin to compete with that shit, Madison thinks. “I didn’t just come here
to chat,” she says. “Cordelia is calling another meeting of the council at midday to make an
announcement.”

Vee glances back at the clock on the wall behind her with a neck twist of inhuman proportions, like
an eerily accurate impression of that girl from The Exorcist. Madison blinks, eyes gone wide at how
casually she does something that no human should be able to pull off without popping vessels and
tearing muscle tissues.[152] Vee is less than half human, though. Maybe she doesn’t have two socket
pivot joints in her neck.

“Oh,” Madison says, “one more thing. There’s a kid I need you to talk to after the midday
gathering.”

Vee arches her eyebrows at that until they disappear beneath her bangs. “I’m not good with kids,”
she mutters.

Madison huffs impatiently. “This isn’t just a kid,” she elaborates before she translocates her ass out of
the library and into the midday gathering, “she’s a changeling.”

Some fairytales say that changelings are fey children abandoned by their parents and enchanted to
resemble stolen human children. Those fairytales are written by humans who feared the dark and the
things that went bump in the night before the burning times. Most fey aren’t fertile by human
standards—full siblings that aren’t the result of multiple pregnancies are rare in Faerie and typically
born centuries apart. It was common for the fey to glamour a bundle of sticks or a doll to replace the
human they stole. Most of the children stolen from humans were, in fact, changelings: part-fey, part-
human hybrids.

Vee is technically a changeling because she has fey ancestors in her fucked up family tree and she
inherited the fey powers of Glamourie and True Sight, but her fey ancestry is too far back in her
bloodline for that heritage to supersede her parentage. Kuzonoha still claimed her as a member of the
House of Inari, but that was to grant her noble status among the sídhe and protection under the law in Faerie—where unclaimed humans don’t have any rights. Vee is classified as a leathdhiabhal, a demi-devil. Other changelings fall under one of two classifications in Faerie: leathdhia (demigods) and leathdhuine (demi-human).

There’s another, crueler term for people like Vee: mheasctha (mongrel), a slur that gets thrown at pretty much anyone who isn’t a pureblood. Most fey species aren’t capable of crossbreeding, so hybrids with more than one kind of fairy species mixed into their bloodline are typically part-human changelings whose parents were changelings too.

Vee is also technically a member of the House of Muragarasu, a clan of corvid kami called karasutengu and yatagarasu. Kamo no Yasunori—one of her onmyouji ancestors—was a changeling and the son of Aja, a daitengu who ruled her domain of Higo Province from Mount Aso before the burning times. Vee is also descended from the gods Amanozako and Taketsunimi-no-Mikoto through her Kamo ancestors. So even though she knows people think she got her wings from her biological father, she likes to think the genetic component for them came from her biological mother. It would explain why Michael and Mallory don’t have wings. Neither of them are descended from crow kami, as far as she knows.

There weren’t many changelings left on earth in the aftermath of the mass exodus from the world to the Otherworld that began with the departure of the Tuatha Dé Danann in the thirteenth century BCE after the invasion of the Milesians and ended at the beginning of the burning times in the fifteenth century CE. Most academics think of the Irish pseudo-historiographies written and compiled in the seventeenth century as mythopoeia. Those pseudo-historiographies are tainted by the earthly biases and beliefs of the humans who authored them, but every myth contains tiny kernels of truth. Otherwise the mythic stories wouldn’t be told and retold. There were eudemons who bound their souls to the nonsentient souls or essences of loci in Assiah: mountains, oceans, forests, rivers, deserts, and even cities in the lower heavens. Nature spirits like dryads and nymphs are the fey children of eudemons. Those who bonded with the essences of places on earth became gods shaped by the people and cultures that worshipped them. Others bound themselves to otherworldly loci in the network of heavenly subdimensions that became the realms of Faerie. When the people and cultures that worshipped them inevitably dwindled or died out, the eudemons who became pantheons of gods ascended to the Otherworld.

With the essences of the land separated from the land itself, lesser demons seeped into the world. Possessions and diabolic pacts brokered on behalf of the Devil became more rampant and seeds of evil flourished into the current political climate of late-stage capitalism, white supremacy, and neo-fascism. Satan worshippers became the 1% by selling their immortal souls in exchange for instant gratification, greed and gluttony—and damned the rest of the human race in the process.

Vee doesn’t want Michael to bring on nuclear Armageddon because she believes the exploited and the oppressed shouldn’t be punished for the sins of the powerful and the privileged. Satan planted the seeds, but he didn’t force the members of the Cooperative to make their Faustian deals—he didn’t have to. Vee knows from experience that sometimes humans are the real monsters.

Maybe that’s why she hasn’t destroyed the world, but she hasn’t done everything in her power to save it, either. Passive resistance and good intentions can only get you so far. Sloth is the deadliest sin because evil triumphs only when good people do nothing.

Vee doesn’t just do nothing—she does research on every issue, she votes in elections at every level from local to state to national, she donates to grassroots organizations and campaigns of politicians whose platforms don’t make her want to destroy things, she calls her representatives and signs
petitions to protest injustice, she doesn’t cross picket lines during strikes, she goes to the Women’s March and SlutWalk rallies and Pride in Seattle in her wheelchair, she uses her privilege to advocate for people who don’t have power or privilege to advocate for themselves. Hell, she taught the Antichrist to act #woke and she’s the last woman standing between the world and nuclear winter.

There’s still more she could be doing: she could egocissor the president, the vice president, the electoral college, the supreme court, lobbyists and congress to legalize things like universal healthcare and universal basic income and raise the statutory tax rates on corporations and people in higher tax brackets. It feels like a human rights violation to essentially mind-rape thousands of people, but exploiting the working class and refusing to give approximately three hundred million people the wages and medical benefits they literally need to survive is also a human rights violation.

Vee hasn’t done anything inhuman to change the world because she’s afraid that if she starts using magic to change the world, she won’t know where to stop. There’s no easy solution to complex problems, even for someone with the ultimate power. Not if the chosen ones don’t want to lose their humanity in order to save humanity from itself.

When she hobbles into the sunlit ancestral room, the crystalline light refracting in glittering shards from the chandelier stabs her in the face. Demons are photophobic, and Vee has always been oversensitive to certain forms of stimuli. There’s a spell on her glasses to mitigate the bright sting, but sometimes the light bypasses the prescription lenses to blare at her.

Misty smiles at her from her seat to the right of the empty parlor chair at the head of the table. Queenie waves and smiles from the seat to her left. Zoe is sitting behind her, beside the fireplace in one of two chairs that doesn’t fit at the table. Michael is seated at the foot of the table, looking for all the world like a king on his throne watching his subjects. Ariel sits in the chair to his left and a sour expression flickers across his face before he smiles at her, too. Baldwin is sitting to his left, his grin so polished she thinks it’s going to crack; Behold sits on his other side, with his husband beside him. John Henry smiles at her, and even though it comes out as more of a grimace she appreciates the attempt to acknowledge what she did for his son.

“Hey girl,” Queenie says.

Vee smiles back at her before she props her cane against the wall by another empty seat, the chair by the fireplace unoccupied by Kyle. If she wasn’t expected to sit at the table, she would sit with the wall at her back where nothing can sneak up behind her. “Hi,” she says.

Sheraton parlor neoclassical-style chair back, she thinks as she folds herself into the chair next to Michael on what is unquestionably the witch side of the table, federal period antique. Not intricate enough for Hepplewhite, but still expensive.

While the chairs are painted white, the table is made of dark wood that matches the bureaus topped with ornate candelabras on either side of the doorway from the main hallway to the ancestral room. It’s easier to focus on the furniture than participate in the obvious power struggle going on under her nose. Michael takes her hand and curls his fingers around hers on top of the table, his thumb caressing her knuckles. Vee bites her lips and squeezes his fingers, feeling shy even though he’s been holding her hand for weeks now under the pretense of being her boyfriend. Only now he actually is her boyfriend, so the public display of affection feels more intimate somehow. Not as intimate as his face between her thighs, but still.

“So what happened with the Jötunn?” Kyle wants to know. “Zoe told me you opened a portal to
Jötunheimr, but should the coven be worried about more frost giants attacking us?"

Vee shakes her head slowly. “I’m the princess of Chamas,” she informs him, “the Seventh Circle of Hell, and a member of both the royal sídhe house of Inari and Muragarasu. Amanozako, matriarch of the House of Muragarasu and a goddess that is literally the embodiment of her father’s rage, isn’t someone you want to piss off. I call her my Anego, which is a yakuza term for ‘older sister.’ Nál, the ruler of Jötunheimr,\[161\] has already sent an envoy to assure my ancestors they weren’t attempting to assassinate me. It’d be one thing if I didn’t have any family or allies in Faerie, since my father’s infernal legions can’t ascend to the lower heavens, but I was claimed by not one but two fey royal houses after I accidentally found myself in the Borderlands and merchants almost sold me into slavery as a breeder.”\[162\]

“How do you accidentally find yourself in Faerie?” Behold asks incredulously.

Michael smirks at her. “If you’re Vee,” he says, “you drink a mocha with too many shots of espresso and you end up being so overcaffeinated that you vibrate into another dimension.”

Vee rolls her eyes at him. “It was finals week,” she retorts. “I needed all three of those espresso shots to stay awake.”

Michael smirks wider and cocks his head to look at her with amusement because they both know she didn’t need to stay awake because she’d been up all night studying—she’d been up all night bingewatching the final season of *How I Met Your Mother* and looking for fix-it fic in the aftermath because the series finale sucked. “I wanted to go and rescue her,” he says, “but Kolya talked me out of it because he didn’t want me to cause an interdimensional incident. Vee came back with two Japanese goddesses, Otherworldly royal status, and a few dozen freed human slaves.”

Vee gnaws on the inside of her cheek as everyone gapes at her. “It was such a weird day,” she mumbles, downplaying the whole debacle.

Technically she freed hundreds of slaves, all of the humans at the market they brought her to, but some of them had been in Faerie since the burning times and some of them didn’t want her to rescue them because they wanted to marry into one of the royal houses of Faerie by having children with fey lords. So they needed fake identities and someone to reacclimate them back into human society. There’s an organization of changelings and indigenous casters who stay the hell away from the coven that also runs shelters for people like the slaves Vee freed all over the Americas. Most of the changelings in the organization are either the children of indigenous casters whose mothers didn’t let their fathers steal them, or changelings whose fathers stole them away when they were old enough to remember their mothers and they crossed back over when they were old enough to escape on their own power.

Cordelia enters the room and sits gracefully at the head of the table before the council has a chance to ask Vee any more questions. Silence falls as the Supreme looks at each of them in turn, with smiles for each of the witches that wither as she looks into the eyes of the warlocks. “When I was a student at this academy over thirty years ago,” Cordelia says, “I thought my best friend would become the next Supreme. Lyn Hoozuki wanted to change the way our coven has always done things,” she flicks her gaze to Vee before she adds, “she wanted to desegregate the witches and warlocks, track potential casters by researching our shared genealogy, hold annual summits for witches and warlocks from all over the world, and even abolish the autocratic Supremacy. I’m proud to say that since my ascension in 2014, I’ve made three of her dreams a reality. Now I plan to achieve her final goal, with her only daughter as my witness.”

Michael sends a stroke of heat skimming up the inside of her thigh and Vee has to bite the inside of
her cheek hard to stop herself from interrupting such a heartfelt speech with a lewd noise. It feels like the delicious pressure of his palm, warm and soft under the skirt of her dress. Don’t, she thinks as the spark of heat flutters over her clit.

Cordelia is mercifully oblivious. “In two weeks’ time,” she says, “at the rise of the Blood Moon, Zoe, Mallory, Vee, and Michael will all take the test of the Seven Wonders. I will be administering the test not to choose my successor, but to add four new members to the rank of ipsissimum within our coven. These members will have rank equal to that of the Supreme and will be part of a new Council,” she watches Ariel clench his jaw and grit his teeth because he can’t rule the coven through a male Supreme if the Supremacy isn’t a singular authority anymore and smiles more to herself than at him before she says, “and it will change everything.”

[148] Immanuel Kant (b. 1724 CE – d. 1804 CE) defined moral absolutism as the philosophy that all actions are intrinsically right or wrong. Kant defined moral universalism or moral objectivism as the belief in a universal system of ethics or imperatives that apply to all individuals, as opposed to moral relativism and moral nihilism. It’s a meta-ethical theory in moral philosophy. I differentiate between moral absolutism and moral universalism here because some forms of moral universalism aren’t monist or absolutist. Vee is talking about the meta-ethical branch of moral relativism, specifically the philosophy that concepts like “good” and “bad” and “evil” and “right” and “wrong” aren’t universal truths but instead are contingent on the value systems of people on both the individual and cultural/societal level.

There are some actions that are intrinsically wrong (e.g. rape, abuse, slavery) but we think so because of our individual and cultural/societal influences, and even those are less absolute than we think. Look no further than people who believe in spanking as a form of discipline, or people who perpetuate rape culture that focuses on blaming and shaming the victim instead of holding the rapist accountable for their actions, or the entire state of Mississippi failing to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment until 2013 and technically not abolishing slavery until six years ago. Those concepts exist in the contexts of their environment, and unfortunately our environment can be hostile af.

[149] Merlin goes by John Pritkin and lives in Las Vegas in the Cassie Palmer series by Karen Chance. Pritkin is half-incubus, so: a cambion. Rosier, his incubus father, is Lilith’s twin brother in this fic.


[152] Owls and some other birds (i.e. red-tailed hawks) can rotate their necks a maximum of 270 degrees without popping blood vessels or tearing their tendons. Which is necessary because some birds have fixed eye sockets, and that means they don’t have peripheral vision. Owls are flexible because they only have one socket pivot or occipital articulation, and their jugular veins have bypass connector blood vessels to keep the blood supply to their brains from being compromised by the movement of their heads.

[153] Inari Ookami 「稲荷大神」 is a Shinto kami or deity of foxes, agriculture, fertility, prosperity, industry, tea, rice and sake, patron of swordsmiths, warriors, blacksmiths, and merchants. Over a third of the shrines in Japan are dedicated to Inari and modern corporations still worship them. Inari appears as male, female, and androgynous, hence my use of they/them pronouns. Japanese fox kami or spirits called kitsune accompany Inari as their messengers. These kitsune are pure white, as opposed to red like the foxes of earth. Kuzunoha is a kitsune but is also a deity or goddess, not a messenger. This is one of those things that gets lost in translation: kami 「神」 or the plural kamigami 「神々」 can mean any manifestations of musubi 「結び」, the interconnecting energies of the universe. So, the gods are kami, nature spirits are kami, venerated spirits of your ancestors can be kami, guardian spirits are kami, anthropomorphic manifestations are kami. It’s more nuanced than a term for gods or God.
So, changelings is a catchall term for anyone part-human and part-fey. Leathdhiabhal means “demi-devil” in Irish Gaelic and is the Faerie term for Nephilim. Leathdhia means “demigod” and it applies to any child of a eudemon and either a lesser spiritual entity or a human. Leathdhuine means “demi-man” or “demi-human” and is the most common kind of changeling. Mheasctha is a catchall derogatory term or slur for anyone that isn’t a pureblood fey, in particular anyone descended from two or more races.

There are so many paranormal romance series where the protagonist is the Only Hybrid in the History of the World, but that makes no sense. If humans and supernatural creatures are capable of crossbreeding in the world you’re building, hybrids would’ve existed throughout history—and they wouldn’t only be crossbreeds of two distinct species. Unless your crossbreeds are sterile like mules, but that has its own racist implications.

Muragarasu 「群鴉」 means “a murder of crows.”

Yatagarasu 「八咫烏」 is the Japanese name for Sanzuwu 「三足鳥」, the three-legged sun crow in Chinese mythology. According to legend, ten sun crows with red feathers who lived in the Valley of the Sun took turns traveling around the world in a carriage driven by their mother, the solar goddess Xihe. Then, in 2170 BCE, all of the crows went out on the same day and the world burned. Hou Yi, the husband of the lunar goddess Chang’e who is either human, a demigod, or a god of archery depending on the interpretation of the legend, shot and killed all but one of the crows. This legend is retold as part of the Mid-Autumn Festival celebrated in China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Korea. According to Japanese depictions in Shinto mythology, Yatagarasu guided Emperor Jimmu—the first emperor of Japan who ascended c. 660 BCE—to Yamato Province in ancient Japan (i.e. Nara Prefecture in modern Japan) and ended a great war. Taketsunimi-no-Mikoto, a kami and progenitor of the Kamo onmyouji clan, supposedly transformed into a crow to save the clan and to end another war. Amanozako 「天逆毎」 is the embodiment of the rage of Susanoo, god of the sea and storms, who disgorged her—her name means “heaven in opposition to everything” and she was called the tengu kami or goddess. So her being the wife of Taketsumi-no-Mikoto and mother of all tengu makes sense.

Karasutengu 「烏天狗」 or crow tengu are a type of kami or youkai from Japanese mythology. There are different kinds of tengu: daitengu 「大天狗」, the more powerful and more anthropomorphic kami who shapeshift from human to animal form, and kotengu 「小天狗」, less powerful youkai who only appear as birds or dogs (the word “tengu” is written as “heavenly dogs” even though it’s often translated as “goblin”). When tengu appear as dogs, they’re called guhin 「狗賓」 (literally “dog guests”). Ajari 「阿闍梨」 was named in the Tengu Meigikou (c. 18th century CE) as the daitengu of Mount Aso of Higo Province in ancient Japan (i.e. Kumamoto Prefecture in modern Japan).

There are conflicting dates for when the Milesians, a group of invading Gaels from Hispania (i.e. the Iberian Peninsula), ousted the Tuatha Dé Danann and became High Kings of Ireland. Geoffrey Keating (b. 1569 CE – d. 1644 CE) dates the reigns of the Milesians as High Kings from 1287 BCE to 80 CE, while the Annals of the Four Masters (c. 1632 CE – 1636 CE) dates the reigns of the Milesians from 1700 BCE to 76 CE. These medieval histories were debunked by early Brehon law, medieval Irish secular texts, and modern scholars—the historical (i.e. the ones whose existence were confirmed by actual historical records as opposed to myths and legends and pseudo-Christian doctrine) High Kings of Ireland ruled between 846 CE and 1198 CE.

Keating used the histories he wrote to promote the legitimacy of the Stuart dynasty after the Union of the Crowns, the ascension of James VI and I to the thrones of Scotland, England and Ireland in 1603. When he wrote Foras Feasa ar Éirinn (tr. “Foundation of Knowledge on Ireland”) in 1634, he claimed that Charles I was descended from the biblical Adam through Noah and Brian Bóruma mac Cennétig (b. 941 CE – d. 1014 CE), the king who ended the High Kingship of Ireland. These pseudohistories, along with the Lebor Gabála Érenn (tr. “Book of the Taking of Ireland”), are based on the works of Christian philosophers and reinterpretations of Gaelic and Celtic myths into written history similar to the history of the Israelites in the Hebrew Bible. So this isn’t historically accurate, but Ireland is mythic because you can’t prove that it’s totally inaccurate either.

There are four basic methods of tax rates. One of them, statutory rates, are legally mandated. There can be
different levels of statutory rates for different levels of income, or flat statutory rates for sales tax.

[161] Nál is another name for Laufey, the mother of Loki and consort of Fárbauti. It means “needle.” I refer to Nál as a ruler instead of a queen because frost giants are genderfluid.

[162] Japanese mythology has its own netherworlds: Yomi-no-Kuni 「黄泉の国」, the land of the dead, Tokoyo-no-Kuni 「常世国」, the land of eternity, where the fruit of immortality grows (depicted in Japanese legend as citrus fruit of the Tachibana tree as opposed to apples from Greco-Roman and Norse mythology, and later Christianity), and Ne-no-Kuni 「根の国」, the land of roots or the borderlands.

There’s an obvious similarity between Greek mythology where Zeus is given the heavens, Poseidon is given the sea and Hades is given the underworld, and Japanese mythology where Amaterasu is given the heavens (Takamagahara), Susanoo is given the sea and Tsukuyomi is given the night (Yoru-no-Wosu-no-Kuni). Susanoo cried over his dead mother Izanami too much, so his father Izanagi banished him to the borderlands or the underworld of Yomi. Owatatsumi-no-kami or Ryuujin, the dragon god, became the sea god instead.
Chapter Summary

Michael is a seductive little shit. Vee is Doing Her Best.

Chapter Notes

Davina89 and witchbitch, this one’s for both of you. YEET.

Then I could see into the life of things, that systems seek only to reproduce the conditions of their own reproduction.
If I had to pick between shadows and essences, I’d pick shadows. They’re better dancers.
They always sing their telegrams.
Their old gods do not die.

Dean Young, “Romanticism 101”

From Darkness to Promote Me
Chapter 15
With Complicated Monsters

Karasuza, the Borderlands

Karasuza, the domain of the House of Muragarasu, is one of many kingdoms in the Borderlands. Its wild grasslands and vast fields of farmland sprout a seething city surrounded by deep, dark forests that separate the land of crows from Ryuuguujou, the land of dragons, and Kitsunezuka, the land of foxes. Above the eerie convex urban cityscape made of glossy metal and shiny technicolor glass that soaks up solar energy generated by the sun and by the local yatagarasu, the ancient wood and stone fortress lurks on top of a hill. Its turrets have towering black spires that split the pink, orange, and golden sky.

Amanozako, goddess of primordial rage and mother of all tengu, daughter of Susanoo, god of the sea and storms and ruler of the Borderlands, mother of Amanosaku, god of disobedience and ruler of all malevolent kami, wife of Taketsumi, god of the sun and father of all tengu, and matriarch of the House of Muragarasu, stares at the red sun from the balcony of her bedroom in one of the many turrets of her castle with a bored expression on her face.
When goddesses are bored, the universe is doomed.

Amanozako inhales the scent of afternoon sunshine tinged with something else on the wind: the metallic tang of spilled blood suffused with cold iron, the blood of a human with a hint of something other and familiar. This human bleeding is her descendant, the blood thin but horrifically strong and reeking of sulfur.

_Demon_, she thinks and curls her long tongue out to taste the scent of blood wafting in the sunlit air like a serpent, _leathdhiabhal_. How rare.

There’s a contingent of gentry and merchants in her castle with a fresh crop of humans. Amanozako has always been of the opinion that humans don’t belong in Faerie at all, but she can afford to think that because tengu and yatagarasu don’t have the fertility issues that sídhé do. There are colonies of humans bred specifically to become the brides of fey lords that gain high noble status through breeding or playmates, bodyguards, or body doubles of highborn fey children who gain lesser noble status through a permanent form of fosterage. Some young human girls are willing to have children with fey lords, because marriage in Faerie is contingent upon children and divorce is only permitted with the consent of both spouses. It’s a rarity for courtly fey ladies to marry young human men, because fey women die from sharing a blood supply with their children if the changeling in their womb has iron lurking in their bloodstream.

Some humans who find themselves in Faerie are given a choice by the more ethical merchants: stay in Faerie as a creature with no rights if unclaimed by a House or get thrown back through whatever portal from whence they came. Other less ethical merchants and mercenaries don’t offer humans a choice, but those merchants deal specifically in humans with magical bloodlines—or changelings like the _leathdhiabhal_ bleeding in her castle. It only takes a small drop of blood to incapacitate most fey species, from the glittering elves of the high court to the abhorrent sluagh, and humans with power in their veins fight back.

Amanozako unfolds her magnificent wings, her black feathers refracting the sunshine into shards of bright light tinted with every hue of the rainbow, and flutters out through her open window. If there’s carnage afoot within the walls of her castle, she wants to witness the violence herself. Maybe join in and spill more blood. It’s been too long since the last war that she fought in, and opportunities to slake her bloodlust by slaying her enemies are scarce in peacetime.

Kuzunoha steps into the fray, shedding her silver vulpine form and shapeshifting into a petite woman in a green awase satin kimono patterned with chrysanthemum blooms in hues of blue and white and gold, a black underkimono, a black silk maru-obi embroidered on both sides with flowers stitched in metallic thread, a lace haneri that matches the lace obiage and obiban, and a silver obijime cord adorned with a silver obidome shaped like a kudzu leaf. It matches one of the many pairs of earrings that pierce her pointed fox ears, which are silver like the shining fur of her nine tails; her hair, however, is a fathomless shade of black that seems to swallow the light and long enough to trail in tendrils on the floor behind her when she walks.

There’s a pair of humans standing behind her: one of them is cowering, the other girl is not. Amanozako stares at the wings on her back, her feathers black and variegated, unfurled in a threat display that’s pure karasutengu. Otherwise, she looks underwhelmingly human: frazzled brown hair slithering over her shoulders, iron gray eyes, thick-framed glasses with smudged lenses, skin pale like sour milk, arms festooned with freckles, lips swollen from a nervous tendency to chew on them, button nose dotted with blackheads. Amanozako narrows her eyes at the sight of the undiluted power surging under her skin before she flicks her gaze to the dead high lord at her feet who comes back to life and gasps for breath after she exhales and unceremoniously shoves his poor unfortunate soul back into his body. Somehow the magic reverses the anaphylaxis that killed him, and he blindly
scrambles back away from her on his hands in a totally undignified crustacean way that would definitely not make his elvish ancestors proud.

“When someone tells you No,” the winged girl murmurs in a soft, deadly tone of voice, “you respect that.”

Kuzunoha flicks her gaze to the tengu goddess, her fluffy tails gently twitching in amusement before she addresses the assorted gentry and merchants. “I am the reigning matriarch of the House of Inari,” she murmurs, the ritual and formality of the words suffusing her voice with quiet, inexorable magic. “I claim this human as kin.”

“I’m staking my own claim,” Amanozako interjects without bothering with the pomp and circumstance of ritual, her kotodama incantation bleeding power. “What should I call you?” she asks the winged girl.

Vee notices the goddess doesn’t ask for her name, because true names have power over you in Faerie. It’s a sign of respect, one that she appreciates exponentially. “Vee,” she says.

“You have some real power, Vee.” Amanozako inhales deeply through her nose and holds her breath in before she exhales. “I can smell it,” she hisses, “but do you know how to use it?”

Michael leans back in his seat and watches the chaos unfold after Cordelia makes her announcement with a devilish smile on his angelic face. Ariel stands up abruptly, his chair scraping the hardwood floor harshly enough to evoke a wince before he storms out with melodramatic stomps of his expensive Italian shoes and Baldwin hot on his heels. Michael looks at John Henry and offers the scowling warlock another glimpse of his demonic face to stir the pot, his eyes going from electric blue to pitch-black and back again in the space between one blink and the next. Vee squirms when he takes her hand in both of his, idly playing with her fingers while he teases her through her panties with hot touches of his magic and smirks when her skin prickles with goosebumps from her forearms to the tops of her breasts.

When she told him Don’t, she didn’t mean No. Vee just didn’t want him to interrupt Cordelia during her speech. If she wanted him to stop touching her, physically or metaphysically, she would just say that. Vee is the one who taught him to take No for an answer, after all; the one who taught him that each word means something, the multifaceted specificity of etymology.

Now that he knows she loves him back and knows what her cunt tastes like and how she looks and sounds when she comes with his name in her mouth, all Michael wants to do is lock her up in the house they bought together and fuck her until she can’t walk for days afterward because of reasons that don’t have anything whatsoever to do with her rheumatoid arthritis. Chain her to his bed and ruin his Egyptian cotton sheets before he falls asleep naked in her bed with her in his arms. But alas, they have jobs and positions of authority within the hierarchy of the coven and tedious responsibilities they can’t blow off so he can fuck her brains out.

There are preparations going on all over campus to accommodate the delegations of witches attending the annual international summit that begins on Halloween. Wànshèngyè in China, Noć vještica in Bosnia,[169] Undas in the Philippines, Hop-tu-Naa in the Isle of Man, Nos Galan Gaeaf in Wales, the first day of Samhain in Ireland and of Día de Muertos in Mexico. Vee suggested hiring a private security company owned and operated by werewolves and other shapeshifters to deter any
witch hunters from attacking the summit. Fiona Goode and Marie Laveau massacred an order of witch hunters based out of Atlanta, but that wasn’t the only clandestine organization of witch hunters in America before Cordelia made the existence of witches public knowledge. New hate groups had sprung up like weeds in the aftermath of her first broadcast and pre-existing clandestine groups had gotten an influx of fresh recruits. It took an extraordinary amount of power to cover up the attacks on the first, second, third, and fourth annual summit. This summit is the seventh, and no one attacked the fifth or sixth because the witch hunters based out of Europe who orchestrated the attempts were dealt with on foreign soil before the delegations arrived in New Orleans.

Zoe is staring at him, her brow furrowed. Michael cocks his head and wonders if she can sense what he’s doing to Vee. Zoe is technically a cambion—part-succubus, part-human—but only 12.5% of her genetic material is demonic. Eisheth, his half-sister on his unholy father’s side and her great-grandmother, faked her death before her granddaughter Nora was born. Zoe doesn’t seem to know where her black widow power originated from, and he doesn’t feel compelled to enlighten her.

Michael turns and looks at Vee when she bites her lip and shivers. “Cold?” he asks her with false concern that drips from his voice like sweet honey laced with smugness because he knows she feels all hot and bothered.

Vee inhales sharply through her nose and shudders as she blushes from the apples of her cheeks to the tops of her breasts and shakes her head slowly. Michael can see her feathers ruffle through her glamourie and he smiles wider at the sight of her wings folded but puffed up behind her back. Vee looks back at him and lets her bottom lip slip out from in between her teeth before she gulps audibly, but she doesn’t ask him to stop.

Michael almost makes her come twice before the midday gathering ends. Vee rises to her feet and conjures her cane back into her hand instead of hobbling over to where she left it propped up against the wall by the fireplace. Michael smirks and bends to nuzzle the crown of her head, unconcerned with the other people in the room.

I’m gonna see a girl about a changeling, Vee tells him telepathically, but you’re mine tonight. Be prepared.

Richard Goldschmidt proposed the hypothesis that mutations occasionally yield individuals within populations that deviate radically from the norm, and referred to such individuals as “hopeful monsters.” If the phenotypes of hopeful monsters expressed themselves under the right environmental circumstances, they would become fixed and those populations would create a new species. These mutations are classified as macroevolution, the model of evolution scaled above species or populations—as opposed to microevolution, small changes in allele frequencies that shift over generations within species or populations.[170]

Vee is the product of both macroevolution and microevolution: her wings are left over from her tengu ancestors, the variegated color of her feathers inherited from her father. Nephilim are hopeful monsters: a hybrid species of polyphyletic creatures neither angel nor human and neither witch nor demon. Changelings are hopeful monsters too: the byproducts of crossbreeding and hybrid speciation between humans and the fey, who themselves are descended from the fallen ones who attained godhood but were banished from all but the lower heavens.

If you analyze the billions of genetic components in humans, you will discover many similarities: all humans are 99.9% genetically similar to each other, 98.8% similar to chimpanzees and bonobos, 98.4% similar to gorillas, 96.9% similar to orangutans, 93% similar to monkeys, 90% similar to cats, 85% similar to mice, 84% similar to dogs, 80% similar to cattle, 69% similar to rats, 65% similar to
birds, 61% similar to fruit flies, 60% similar to chickens. These similarities prove the existence of common ancestors between humans and beasts, humans and insects. It refutes creationist rhetoric and what is written in the bible. Unless you consider the similarity of DNA base pairs that comprise all living organisms proof of intelligent design.

Vee knows that facts are malleable, and what is true depends on who is talking. When she taught information literacy, she taught her students about the CRAAP test methodology of evaluating sources. C is for Currency, R is for Relevance, A is for Authority and Accuracy, and P is for Purpose.[171] Cui bono, meaning Who benefits?

There are many different kinds of power. Hard power is using military and economic means to influence the behavior and interest of people and political bodies. It’s aggressive, forceful. Soft power is the ability to attract powerful allies, to co-opt rather than coerce. It’s the ability to shape the preferences of others until they begin to want the outcomes that you want.[172] True power is both force and charisma—a hybridized power.

Vee knows how to use both, although she doesn’t think of herself as being very charismatic. Michael is the one who enchants people like moths to a flame. Vee attracted Michael, though; her soft power over him is the only reason the world isn’t a landmass of scorched earth overshadowed by nuclear winter. Ariel also knows how to use both—his attempts to influence and co-opt Michael aren’t lost on her. What happens when he realizes he can’t manipulate the Antichrist?

“‘We’re here,’” Madison says, jolting her back out of her anxious thoughts. Queenie and Cordelia are standing in the hallway behind them.

Vee sighs as the door opens, her feathers ruffled under the veneer of her glamourie. There is a teenage girl asleep on a bed inside one of the many upstairs dorm rooms on the second floor of the manor, her black hair oddly tinged with highlights that shine from silver to green in the sunlight. Vee tastes verdant magic in the back of her throat, with a hint of something darker that makes her think of crows even though she’s never tasted crows in her life—her magical senses tend to free associate in odd ways like that. “Cernunnos,” Vee says, “progenitor of the House of Herla and leader of the Wild Hunt, worshipped by the ancient Celts and by ancient Roman-occupied Britain as Viridius, god of verdure, also known as the Green Man or the Horned God. This changeling is his daughter,” she flicks her gaze back over her shoulder at Cordelia before she adds, “and that makes her your half-sister.”

Fiona had told Cordelia that her father was her first husband, a man named Vandenheuvel—a variation on a Dutch toponymic surname that means “from the hill.” Underhill is another name for the realms of Faerie, for the mounds that were used as portals to the Otherworld before the burning times. Which explains her affinity for green magic and why she took so long to manifest the Supremacy: living in the industrialized world stunted the growth of her powers. Or her life expectancy is more fey than human, and forty isn’t middle-aged for a fairy. According to Vee, anyone younger than a century is considered a child in Faerie. Cordelia looks down at the young girl before she looks back at Vee. “Regan,” she says, “her name is Regan Zhuang.[173] When she arrived, she told us that her mother was poisoned with goblin fruit.”

Vee nods. “‘We must not look at goblin men,’” she quotes. “‘We must not buy their fruits. Who knows upon what soil they fed their hungry, thirsty roots?’ Christina Rossetti was right,” she adds, “goblin fruit only grows in the Summerlands of Faerie. It’s euphoric for sídhe, addictive to changelings, and fatal to humans.”[174]

“Yesterday she passed out,” Madison says. “Nothing we did woke her up. So,” she flailed one hand obliquely, “we need you to go do your psychometry thing and tell us what’s wrong with her—”
Vee flinches and makes a startled noise that sounds like *eep* when the crow flaps in through the cracked window and lands on her shoulder, its talons digging into her skin. Cordelia, Madison and Queenie stare at her as her gray eyes fade to white. Vee blinks and shakes the infernal defense mechanism off before she turns and looks at the bird perched on the hunch of her shoulder. “I know what’s wrong with her,” she says, “she’s a Vargr.”

“Okay,” Queenie says, “what the hell is a Vargr?”

Vee flinches again as the crow raucously caws at her. “It’s like warging from *A Song of Ice and Fire,*” she explains, “but without the skinchanging.”

“So like warging on *Game of Thrones,*” Queenie says, “not warging in the books.”

Vee hums so the sound gnarls under her tongue, a quiet *uh-huh.* “Exactly,” she says. “Regan is untrained, and she got stuck inside the body of a bird. I’m going to put your consciousness back in your own body,” she informs the crow. “Okay?”

Regan caws again. It makes her wince because her autistic ears think most noises are Much Too Loud.

Vee hobbles over to the bed and props her cane against the wall. This is what happens when a teenage girl has magical powers: she astral projects her consciousness into the body of a bird and gets stuck eating gods know what. Since corvids are omnivores, they eat pretty much anything: small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, insects, mollusks, other arthropods, eggs, carrion, seeds, grains, fruit, nuts, and sometimes even other birds. “Okay,” she echoes and ekes the *oh* sound out into an *oooh* before she casts, “*stercus accidit.*”[175]


[164] Ryuuguujou 「龍宮城」 means “dragon shrine palace.” It’s the undersea castle where the dragon god Ryuujin lives in Japanese mythology. According to legend, the palace has gardens for every season and each quarter of the palace is perpetually spring, winter, summer, or fall.


[166] Amanosaku, son of Amanozako, was so terrible and disobedient that he was designated as the ruler of all malevolent kami.

It’s not uncommon for Japanese deities to have children through parthenogenesis. Izanami accidentally created six other gods during the birth of Kagutsuchi, god of fire, which killed her. Ryuujin, dragon god of the sea, Kuraokami, dragon god of rain and snow, and fourteen other deities were born from the spilled blood and dismembered body of Kagutsuchi after his father Izanagi killed him. Izanagi accidentally created twenty-six gods, including Amaterasu, Susanoo, and Tsukuyomi, when he returned from the underworld in the aftermath of his failed attempt to bring Izanami back to life and performed a purification ritual to rid himself of the pollutants of Yomi.

[167] Awase is a type of lined kimono worn between the beginning of October and mid-May, typically made of fabric that is rich and bright in color. Usumono or summer fabrics are worn in July and August, and they are typically sheer or simple like yukata. Hitoe or unlined kimono are worn between mid-May and the end of September.

Haneri are pieces of fabric that either decorate or cover the collar of the nagajuban, the underkimon. Obi are the wide belts worn on top of the kimono; maru-obi specifically are very formal obi that were most popular during the Meiji and Taisho eras (c. 1868 – 1926), now worn exclusively by maiko, geisha, and brides in modern Japan. Obiage are sashes knotted above the obi used to add formality or just as fun accessories. Obiban are used to keep the obi flat and
can be trimmed with lace that peeks out from below the obi. Obijime are thin cords tied around the obi. Obidome are small accessories typically made of metal or lacquered wood fastened to the knot of the obijime. Kuzunoha 『葛の葉』 means “arrowroot” or “kudzu leaf” in Japanese.

[168] There are three different kinds of kitsune. Zenko 『善狐』 are benevolent celestial foxes. Their fur is white, and they act as messengers for Inari for a thousand years—until they become powerful enough to grow all nine tails. Yako 『野狐』 are mischievous or malevolent earthly foxes, also called nogitsune. Their fur is red or black, depending on how malicious they are. Tenko 『天狐』 are heavenly foxes. Their fur is silver or gold, and they have nine tails. When a kitsune uses astral projection to possess a human, it’s called ninko or hitogitsune 『人狐』. If a kitsune possesses a kitsune-zoru human family or becomes the familiar of a kitsune-mochi or kitsune-tsukai witch family, it’s called kanko or kudagitsune 『管狐』. Osaki-gitsune 『尾崎狐』 are kitsune born either after a tenko is slain and each of its tails are transformed into fox kits, or when a tail is cut off and is transformed into a baby fox. If a human is possessed by a kitsune, it’s called kitsune-tsuki 『狐憑き, 狐付き』. When kitsune shapeshift, legend says kitsunebi 『狐火』 or foxfire is transformed into jewels that contain the soul or power of the kitsune.

[169] Noć vještica means “the night of the witches.”


[171] Sarah Blakeslee and her team of librarians at CSU Chico developed the CRAAP test in 2004. It was first published in *LOEX Quarterly* Vol. 31: Issue 3, Article 4.


[173] Cordelia and Regan are both Shakespearean names, after the daughters of the eponymous King Lear. Leir, a legendary king of the Britons from the pseudohistorical *De gestis Britonum* by Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1136 CE) whose legend inspired the Shakespearean play, is the father of a heroic queen of the Britons named Cordelia. Only in the Shakespearean version of the legend, Cordelia is captured and murdered instead of becoming queen; in the pseudohistory, she kills herself after her nephews depose and imprison her. Cunedagus, the son and heir of her sister Regan, wins the subsequent war of succession and rules for thirty-three years. Regan and Goneril are evil in the play and minor antagonists in the pseudohistory. Goneril sounds more fey than Regan, in a Tolkien sort of way.

[174] This is both a reference to the narrative poem “The Goblin Market” by Christina Rossetti and to the October Daye series by Seanan McGuire.

[175] *Stercus accidit* is Latin that loosely translates as “shit falls upon every life.” Or, colloquially, “Shit happens.”
[Appendix I] Timeline

Chapter Summary

This is a timeline I created as part of the outline for this fic while I was researching the history of witchcraft. It will be updated every time I post a new chapter.

Chapter Notes

FUN FACT: Witchcraft is still technically illegal in the UK, because Schedule 4 of the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations passed in 2008 repealed the whole Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951, which had repealed the Witchcraft Act of 1735. So legally it’s still a crime to claim to have magical powers and to accuse someone else of possessing magical powers, and people can be convicted of practicing witchcraft.

FUN FACT 2.0: Since the Witchcraft Act of 1735 outlawed witch hunting and changed the punishment for practicing witchcraft from the death penalty to up to a year in prison, the witches of the United Kingdom aren’t in danger of being massacred by people using that outdated legislation as a legal precedent to burn people at the stake. I love being a librarian.

The Paleolithic Age

315,000 Years Ago:

God creates Eden and lives in Paradise with the first humans that went down in history as Adam and Eve.[1] Eden was the divine equivalent of a hellmouth: an interdimensional space occupied by heaven and earth.

Samael turns into a serpent and tempts Eve into eating the fruit of the forbidden tree to prove the point that humans don’t deserve dominion over the earth. This starts the Great War in Heaven that ends with the rebellion of the Irin and subsequent massacre of their children, the Nephilim.

Xii’s mass murder of his mother and half the other Nephilim was used by the archangels to justify the slaughter. However, the humans who married the Irin and survived the births of their half-demon children are spared. These humans were the first witches and warlocks.

The Common Era

646:

April 17: Zhang Liang, a Chinese general and government official who served as chancellor during the reign of Emperor Taizong in the Tang dynasty, is executed for witchcraft and treason.

917:
Kamo no Yasunori is born.

921:

February 21: Abe no Seimei is born to Abe no Yasuna and Kuzunoha, a kitsune.

927:

Kamo no Yasunori accompanies his father, Kamo no Tadayuki, to his first exorcism and is able to see youkai without formal training in onmyoudou.

977:

Kamo no Yasunori dies.

1005:

October 31: Abe no Seimei dies.

1066:

England is invaded by the Duke of Normandy, later styled as William the Conqueror after he ascended to the English throne and became the first Norman king of Britain.

1233:

Pope Gregory IX establishes a new branch of the Inquisition in Toulouse, France led by the Dominicans and intended to prosecute heretical groups such as the Cathars and the Waldensians. These prosecutors were members of the Order of Preachers, a Catholic order founded by Spanish priest Dominic of Caleruega in France and approved by Pope Honorius III in 1216.

1428-1783:

Witch trials are conducted all over Europe, resulting in between 57,401 and 61,651 casualties. This, however, is a soft number because the records from the early modern era aren’t comprehensive.

1432:

Scáthach discovers America before Columbus and becomes the first Supreme.

1458:

Alphonso de Spina writes the *Fortalitium Fidei*, the first book on witchcraft ever published.

1475:

Johannes Nider publishes the *Formicarius*, the second book on witchcraft ever published.

1484:

December 5: Pope Innocent VII publishes *Summis desiderantes affectibus* and declares witchcraft a reality, not a myth.

1487:
Heinrich Kramer, a Catholic inquisitor and clergyman, publishes the *Malleus Maleficarum*. It was later condemned by other theologians of the Inquisition in 1490.

1542:

Henry VIII passes the Witchcraft Act of 1542 that defines witchcraft as a felony punishable by death and forfeiture of goods.

1547:

Edward VI repeals the Witchcraft Act of 1542.

1563:

Elizabeth I passes the Witchcraft Act of 1563 that defines witchcraft as a felony punishable by imprisonment or death if harm was caused by the practitioner. Mary, Queen of Scots passes the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563.

1585:

John White settles on Roanoke Island with his first colony.[2]

1586:

Sir Francis Drake and John White return to England along with the majority of the settlers, leaving a splinter colony on the island.

1587:

January 7: Sir Walter Raleigh names John White the governor of the Roanoke colony.

July 22: John White returns to Roanoke.

August 18: Virginia Dare is born to Ananias and Eleanor Dare (née White).

John White returns to England at the behest of the Roanoke colony for supplies and is caught in the midst of the Anglo-Spanish War.

1589:

*Roanoke*. Thomasin White, the wife of John White and mother of Eleanor and Ambrose White, sells her soul to Scáthach and begins worshipping the Old Gods.

October 23: Thomasin massacres the other colonists. Scáthach curses them and tethers their spirits to the island.

1590:

August 18: John White returns to Roanoke again only to find the settlement deserted, his daughter and granddaughter disappeared.

October 24: John White abandons the search after his ship begins to fall apart because of the foul weather, and returns to England for a third and final time.

1595:
Nicholas Rémy publishes *Daemonolatreiae libri tres*.

1597:

James VI and I publishes *Daemonologie*.

1603:

Merga Bien, the pregnant wife of Blasius Bien, is condemned to burn at the stake by Balthasar Nuss in the autumn of 1603 after he forced her to confess that her child was conceived through sexual intercourse with the Devil.

1604:

James VI and I revises the Witchcraft Act of 1563 to change the penalty to death without the benefit of clergy to anyone who invoked evil spirits or familiars. This statute was enforced by Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General.

1608:

Francesco Maria Guazzo publishes the *Compendium Maleficarum*, a witch hunting manual.

1627:

May 11: Quiwe Baarsen, a Sami noaidi and one of twenty-six Sami people executed for witchcraft in seventeenth century Norway, is burned at the stake.

1630:

January 22: Alexander Hamilton, primary accuser during the Great Scottish Witch Hunt of 1628-1631 who claimed he made a diabolic pact with the Devil, is executed for witchcraft in East Lothian, Scotland. This man should not be confused with Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804), one of the Founding Fathers and co-author of the *Federalist Papers*.

May 17: Dorothea Flock is burned alive half an hour before the messenger could deliver the mandate obtained by her husband from the Imperial Aulic Council in Vienna ordering her release.

1636:

October 11: Johann Adelgrief, the German son of a Protestant minister and an alleged prophet, was executed for witchcraft after he claimed that angels came down from heaven and told him to banish evil monarchs from the world.

1643:

Sarah Osborne (née Warren) is born.

1646:

Goodwife Kendall is hanged for witchcraft in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

1647:

Alice Young is hanged for witchcraft in Hartford, Connecticut. Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General, publishes the *Discovery of Witches*.
1648:

June 15: Margaret Jones is hanged for witchcraft in Boston, Massachusetts.
Mary Johnson is hanged for witchcraft in Hartford, Connecticut.

1649:

Christians from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Covenanter regime of Presbyterians ratified the Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563 to make dealings with the Devil and communications with familiar spirits punishable by death.

1650:

Alice Lake is hanged for witchcraft in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

1651:

Mary Bassett is hanged for witchcraft in Fairfield, Connecticut.

1653:

Elizabeth Knapp is hanged for witchcraft in Fairfield, Connecticut.

1656:

Ann Hibbins is hanged for witchcraft in Boston, Massachusetts.

1662:

Nathaniel and Rebecca Greensmith are hanged for witchcraft in Hartford, Connecticut.

1668:

Elizabeth Osborne is born to Sarah Osborne and Robert Prince. Det stora Öväsendet (tr. “the Great Noise”), the Great Swedish Witch Hunt of 1668-1676, begins.

1688:

November 16: Ann Glover is hanged for witchcraft in Boston.

1692:

March 1: Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba are charged with practicing witchcraft.
March 7: Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba are arrested and found guilty of practicing witchcraft.
March 21: Martha Corey is arrested after being found guilty of practicing witchcraft.
March 24: Rebecca Nurse and four-year-old Dorothy Good are arrested and found guilty of practicing witchcraft.
May 10: Sarah Osborne dies in jail.
May 14: William Phipps, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and Increase Mather, father of
Cotton Mather, arrive in Salem.

May 27: William Phipps creates the Court of Oyer and Terminer.

June 10: Bridget Bishop is hanged for witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts.

June 16: Roger Toothaker dies under torture before his trial.

July 1: Candy, a slave belonging to Margaret Hawkes, is accused of witchcraft along with her mistress. Margaret Hawkes was never arrested. Candy was interrogated, but all the charges brought against her were dropped.

July 19: Mercy Good is born in jail and dies. Elizabeth Howe, Sarah Good, Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Wildes, and Susannah Martin are hanged for witchcraft.

August 19: Martha Carrier, George Burroughs, John Proctor, George Jacobs, and John Willard are hanged for witchcraft.

September 19: Giles Corey dies under torture during his trial.

September 22: Ann Pudeator, Mary Parker, Alice Parker, Margaret Scott, Wilmot Redd, Samuel Wardwell, Mary Eastey, and Martha Corey, wife of Giles Corey, are hanged for witchcraft. Benoni, her mulatto son, is used against Martha as evidence of her “checkered past” during her trial.

September 26: Rebecca Chamberlain dies in jail.

October 12: William Phipps forbids the imprisonment of anyone else accused of witchcraft and passes an Act Against Conjuration, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits into law.

October 27: William Phipps destroys the Court of Oyer and Terminer.

November 9: Samuel Ewert dies in jail.

December 3: Ann Foster dies in jail.

Coven. Prudence Mather sacrifices herself to perform the Sacred Taking ritual. Elizabeth Osborne rises as the next Supreme. After the Salem witch trials, the coven relocates to New Orleans.

1693:

January 3: William Phipps frees and pardons 153 prisoners accused of witchcraft. Sarah Cloyce, younger sister of Rebecca Nurse and Mary Eastey, is released along with Elizabeth Proctor, the pregnant wife of John Proctor.

January 21: Mary Black, a slave belonging to Nathaniel Putnam, is released from prison and returns to her master’s household.

March 10: Lydia Dustin, who is still imprisoned, dies in jail.

May 10: Viola Cantini is burned at the stake for witchcraft and vampirism in her village in Italy.

1727:

Janet Horne, the last person legally executed for witchcraft in the British Isles, is stripped, tarred, paraded around in a barrel, and burned at the stake in Dornoch, Scotland. Jenny, her disabled young daughter, escaped.
June 24: British parliament passes the Witchcraft Act of 1735, which criminalized accusing people of practicing witchcraft or having magical powers and subsequently abolished witch hunting and executions in Great Britain. This act is still in force in Israel because it was part of the legal system mandated by the British colonizers who occupied Palestine, and Israel regained its independence before it was repealed in 1951. Article 417 of the Israeli Penal code of 1977 states that practicing witchcraft for pay can be punishable by up to two years of imprisonment.

1746:

Antoine Augustin Calmet publishes the *Dissertations on the Apparitions of Angels, of Demons, and Spirits and on Revenants or Vampires*.

1751:

Antoine Augustin Calmet publishes the *Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits and on Vampires or Revenants*.

1779:

Sweden abolishes its laws against witchcraft.

1782:

June 13: Anna Göldi, the last woman executed for witchcraft in Europe, is beheaded in Switzerland.

1787:

*Coven*. Marie Delphine LaLaurie (née MacCarthy) is born.\[3\]

1790:

*Coven*. Miss Robichaux’s Academy for Exceptional Young Ladies is established as a finishing school.

1792:

*Roanoke*. Edward Philippe Mott supervises the construction of the Shaker mansion.

1801:

*Coven*. September 10: Marie Leveau is born.

1827:

*Coven*. Marie becomes the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans.

1834:

*Coven*. Marie sells her soul to Papa Legba and exchanges the life of her firstborn child for conditional immortality.

1849:
Coven. Marie curses and entombs Madame LaLaurie.

1861-1865:

Coven. Miss Robichaux’s Academy is converted into a military hospital during the Civil War.

1868:

Coven. Marianne Wharton purchases Miss Robichaux’s Academy and it becomes a haven for young witches.

1878:

Daniel Spofford is accused of witchcraft by Lucretia Brown in Ipswich, Massachusetts. This lawsuit terminated in the final witch trial held in America, called the Salem witchcraft trial or the Ipswich witchcraft trial.

1902:

Coven. Emilia “Mimi” DeLongpre becomes the Supreme after her predecessor dies.

1904:

Aleister Crowley founds the esoteric occult religion of Thelema.

1907:

Aleister Crowley founds the A.'.A.'.., which contained three hermetic orders: the Order of the Golden Dawn (ranks: probationer, neophyte, zelator, practicus, philosophus, dominus liminus), the Order of the Rosy Cross (ranks: adeptus minor, adeptus major, adeptus exemptus), and the Order of the Silver Star (ranks: magister templi, magus, ipsissimus).

1911:

Coven. Anna-Leigh Leighton is born.

1919:

Coven. Mimi’s coven murders the Axeman at the Academy.

1922:

Murder House. Charles and Nora Montgomery build the Murder House.

1924:

Sebastian DeLongpre is born to Mimi DeLongpre and a man named Tate.[4]

1926:

Hotel. Bartholomew, the dhampir son of Elizabeth (the Countess) and James Patrick March, is born in the murder house and kills a nurse.

Murder House. Thaddeus Montgomery is born, killed, and reanimated by Charles as the Infantata. Nora shoots Charles, then kills herself. Charles’ brother—Madison’s great-grandfather—sells the
Titania DeLongpre, mother of Constance Langdon, is born to Mimi DeLongpre and a man named Tate.

Montague Summers publishes his English translations of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), *Daemonolatreiae libri tres* (1595), the *Compendium Maleficarum* (1608), the *Discovery of Witches* (1647) and *De Daemomialitate et Incubis et Succubis*.

Anna-Leigh Leighton becomes the Supreme after her predecessor dies. Titania DeLongpre leaves the coven and moves to Virginia, where she meets her future husband.

Blanche, a young bride, is killed in the murder house on her wedding day.

Helen Duncan, a Scottish medium, is arrested and imprisoned for nine months under the Witchcraft Act of 1735 because she claimed to procure the spirits of the dead.

September 26: Jane Rebecca Yorke, the last person convicted under the Witchcraft Act of 1735, was charged with seven counts of pretending to cause the spirits of deceased persons to present themselves.

Elizabeth Short, the Black Dahlia, is murdered by Dr. Curran.

Constance Langdon (née Beauregard) is born to Titania Beauregard (née DeLongpre) and Michael Beauregard.

Malcolm and Stephen “Steve” DeLongpre are born to Sebastian DeLongpre.

Fiona Goode is born in Louisiana.

British and Welsh parliament passes the Fraudulent Mediums Act, which prohibited anyone from claiming they had spiritual powers. It repealed the Witchcraft Act of 1735, and was repealed in 2008. Five people were prosecuted and convicted under this act between 1980 and 1995.

Myrtle Snow is born.
1956:

Miranda DeLongpre (née Fisher) is born. Helen Duncan is arrested yet again during a séance.

1957:

*You’re Going to Die in There.* Celia Jacobs kills William and Loraine Baxter, then kills herself.

South African parliament ratifies the Witchcraft Suppression Act that criminalizes accusing people of witchcraft, imputing that any harm was caused by supernatural means, professing knowledge of witchcraft, seeking advice or services from anyone who claims to have knowledge of witchcraft, and practicing witchcraft for personal gain. This act is still legally in effect. It was based on legislation passed by the British colonizers who occupied the Cape Province of South Africa until 1957 in their Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1895. There are reviews and investigations of the Witchcraft Suppression Act that have been conducted in various capacities since apartheid ended in 1994, the most recent beginning in 2012 and still ongoing in 2019.

1960:

October 24: Baldwin Pennypacker is born, with the surname Leong.

1965:

August 7: Ariel Augustus is born.

1968:

*Murder House.* R. Franklin kills two nurses: Gladys and Maria.

1969:

September 21: Behold Chablis is born.

1971:

*You’re Going to Die in There.* Alex witnesses the murder of his sister Kate at the hands of the Infantata.

*Coven.* Fiona becomes the Supreme after she kills her predecessor.

*Apocalypse.* October 25: Coco St. Pierre Vanderbilt is born.

December 9: Gwendolyn “Lyn” Hoozuki is born to Hoozuki Sei and Vincent Malone.

1972:

*Murder House.* Adelaide “Addy” Langdon is born.

1974:

*Murder House.* Beauregard “Beau” Langdon is born.

*Coven.* Cordelia Goode is born to Fiona Goode and a man named Vandenheuvel.

1975:
July 12: John Henry Moore is born.

1977:

*Murder House*. January 20: Tate Langdon is born.

1978:

*Murder House*. Troy and Bryan are killed by the Infantata.

1979:


1982:

*Coven*. June 29: Misty Day is born.

1983:

*Murder House*. Constance shoots her husband Hugo and Moira O’Hara.

*Coven*. May 6: Queenie Ross is born.

1984:


*You’re Going to Die in There*. Stanley and Maria Argento are killed by the Infantata.

1988:

Baldwin debuts on Broadway in a production of *Madame Butterfly* that runs from 1988 to 1990.

1989:

Ariel graduates from the Mapúa Institute of Technology with a degree in Industrial Engineering, emigrates from Manila to Calabasas, and joins the American coven.

1990:

October 15: Gabriel Ramos is born to Stacy and Miguel Ramos.

Steve marries Evaline.

Ariel becomes an American citizen.

1991:

*Coven*. February 10: Madison Montgomery, great-grandniece of Charles and Nora Montgomery, is born.

July 12: Chapter 1. Vee is born. Lyn dies in childbirth. Marie offers the orphaned infant Vee to Papa Legba, who laughs in her face.
October 23: Ariel poisons his predecessor and becomes Grand Chancellor of the warlocks.

November 3: Chapter 1. Vee is adopted by Dr. and Mr. Roscoe.

1992:

Coven. July 17: Mallory DeLongpre is born to Miranda and Malcolm DeLongpre, used as conduits by the archdemon Belphegor.

1993:

Murder House. Larry Harvey moves into the Murder House with his family. After his wife kills herself and their daughters, Constance moves back in with her children.

1994:

Murder House. Larry smothers Beau to death at the behest of Constance. Tate sets Larry on fire and shoots up Westfield High. 

Coven. August 17: Zoe Benson is born.

Baldwin and Behold meet on Broadway during a revival of Grease! that ran from 1994 to 1997.

2001:

You’re Going to Die in There. Victor, a mysophobe, kills his spouse and child.

2007:

Coven. Marie Leveau hires Hank Foxx to hunt and kill the witches from the coven of Salem descendants.

2010:

Murder House. Tate kills Chad Warwick and Patrick.

Fic Timeline:

March 30: Chapter 9. Vee is raped by her boyfriend, uses the power of Descensum for the first time, and meets her father in the Seventh Circle of Hell. Abaddon metaphysically transplants his memories into her mind.

2011:

Murder House. Ben, Vivien, and Violet Harmon move to Los Angeles.

2012:

Murder House. March 20: Michael Langdon is born to Vivien Harmon and Tate Langdon, albeit used by Satan as conduits.

Coven. Cordelia finds Queenie, who joins the coven.

2014:

Murder House. Michael kills his nanny.
*Coven.* Cordelia makes the existence of witches public knowledge.

*Apocalypse.* Hawthorne School for Exceptional Young Men is moved underground after part of the school is burned down.

**2015:**

*Apocalypse.* Retcon Timeline: Constance kills herself. Michael is adopted by Miriam Mead.

*Apocalypse.* New Timeline: Mallory runs Michael over and changes the future.

**Fic Timeline:**

June 16: Chapter 1 & 2. Vee finds Michael dying in the street and saves his life.

June 17: Chapter 3, 4 & 5. Vee takes Michael to see a doctor at the El Camino Hospital. It goes badly.

June 18: Chapter 5. Vee alters reality so the Harmons never died and shuts the hellmouth that existed at the murder house.

June 24: Chapter 6. Madison and Mallory fly to L. A. to investigate the source of the quakes Vee caused when she closed the hellmouth.

**2016:**

*Hotel.* Retcon Timeline: Queenie dies at the Hotel Cortez.

**Fic Timeline:**

June 16: Chapter 6. Vee graduates from Seattle University with a degree in Literary Studies.

June 18: Chapter 6. Michael flies to NYC to visit the Church of Satan in Manhattan.

June 20: Chapter 6. Vee, Michael, and Kolya eat the fruit of the forbidden tree.

June 21: Chapter 6 & 7. Vee gets her wings.

October 8: Knox Moore is born to John Henry Moore and Behold Chablis.

**2017:**

*Apocalypse.* Retcon Timeline:

June 23: Michael is arrested for killing the butcher and is taken into custody by the warlocks, who think he’s their messianic Alpha.

July 12: Michael undergoes a test and becomes the only level four warlock in history.

September 21: Michael resurrects Queenie and Madison.

October 5: Michael is tested and performs the Seven Wonders.

November:

Madison and Behold visit the Murder House.
Ms. Mead is burned at the stake.

Michael seeks refuge with the Church of Satan and meets Madelyn, who introduces him to Jeff and Mutt—and by proxy to the Cooperative.

2018:

*Apocalypse*. Retcon Timeline: Michael and Ms. Mead 2.0 massacre the coven.

Fic Timeline:

May 17: Chapter 8. Vee sees her rapist at the grocery store. Michael kills him.

October 6: Chapter 13. Vee goes to the shooting range with Michael in the aftermath of Brett Kavanaugh being confirmed as Associate Justice of the SCOTUS.

2019:

Fic Timeline:

Chapter 11. Vee goes to a wedding shower for Sarah, her cousin Geoff’s fiancée.

Chapter 10. Michael pushes Vee off the highest ridge at the Grand Canyon. Vee spreads her wings and flies for the first time.

2020:

*Apocalypse*. Retcon Timeline:

April 30: Armageddon.

2021:

*Apocalypse*. Retcon Timeline:

October 8: Michael arrives at Outpost 3 eighteen months after nuclear Armageddon.

October 31: Mallory reverses time and cancels the Apocalypse.

New Timeline: Devan Campbell is born.

Fic Timeline:

June 21: Chapter 7, 8 & 9. Cordelia and the coven arrive in Poulsbo to confront Michael about his role in the Apocalypse that she foresaw and invites two of the Four Horsemen to Robichaux.

September 20: Chapter 10, 11 & 12. Vee and Michael arrive in New Orleans. Michael is tested by the warlocks and designated as the first and only level four in the history of the coven.

October 6: Chapter 12. Vee and Michael DTR.

October 7: Chapter 13. Vee returns a Jötunn summoned into her kitchen to its realm and deduces that one of the warlocks sold their soul to a demon lord.

Chapter 14. Cordelia announces her intention to administer the test of the Seven Wonders not to choose her successor, but to change the system of government the coven has used for almost five
2024:

_Apocalypse_. New Timeline: Devan kills his babysitter and is found by Anton LaVey, Miriam Mead, and Samantha Crowe.

[1] I chose to locate Eden in ancient Mesopotamia because the scholarship that doesn’t classify the garden as a mythical place hypothesizes that the Tigris and Euphrates were two of the four rivers that flowed through it. So, the Garden of Eden was located in what is now Iraq.

[2] This is a more historically accurate version of what canon did.

[3] Madame LaLaurie was canonically born in 1775. This is historically inaccurate, because she lived from 1787-1849.

[4] Constance named Tate after her grandfather.


[6] Constance mentions her cousins Steve and Evaline DeLongpre during the post-credits scene in “Afterbirth.”

[7] Emilia, Miranda, Titania, Malcolm, Sebastian, and Rosaline are Shakespearean names. Cordelia is also a Shakespearean name. I’m a giant nerd.
Glossary:

A

**Abaddon**: fallen angel, twin brother of Azriel, firstborn of the Benei Elohim, former Angel of Death, former Angel of Sanctification, former Angel of Presence, former sarim, former sar or ruler of the Ophanim, former Seraphim, former archangel, former Lord of Spirits, one of the five Grigori who tempted the other Irin to fall, the one who taught mankind the secrets of the universe and the art of writing, Third Prince of Hell, ruler of the Seventh Circle of Hell, embodiment of the deadly sin of Sloth, father of Xii, Anna the Prophetess, and Veronica “Vee” Roscoe, creator of Hellhounds and Erinyes. Abaddon (גָּדֶבְּאָנִין) means “the destroyer” in Hebrew. Also named Penemue (the inside), Penemuel, Phaniel, Phanuel, Pentuel, Paniel, Peniel, Fanuel, Faniel, Orfiel, Orphiel (face of God), Muriel (bitterness of God), Appolyon, Appolyon, Abraxas, the unbegotten father, progenitor of Nous (i.e. intelligence) and Logos (i.e. logic), the cause and first archetype, Shalim (Canaanite god of dusk).

**Abba**: Aramaic word meaning “father,” used in Jewish liturgical prayers as one of the epithets of God.

**Abjuration**: healing and protection magic.

**Adam Kadmon**: the highest realm. It contains the future emergence of creation, divine light with no vessels, and manifestations of the grand design. It’s supreme above the other realms because the divine light of creation that fills all worlds immanently originates from there. Its corresponding element is Spirit.

**Adramelech**: fallen angel, former archangel; a eudemon worshipped by the ancient Semitic peoples, Assyrians, and Mesopotamians. Also named Jegudiel, Jhudiel, Jehudiel (laudation of God), Aḏrammelek, Adramélekh, Addir-melek, Addir-milk, Adru-malku, Adar-malik (Adar is king), and Baal Addir (lord of majesty).

**Adze**: African strain of vampirism. These vampires can possess their victims and others, and they can feed discretely by possessing insects such as fireflies.

**Aerokinesis**: the ability to manipulate air or wind and other gaseous substances.

**Aeromancy**: divination by means of air. Specialized variant of Divination.

**Affanc**: freshwater-dwelling creatures who erase unwanted thoughts. Also called Addanc.

**Afflicted**: another name for vampires. Specifically those who inhabit the Hotel Cortez.

**Agares**: fallen angel, former Hashmallim; he teaches language, causes earthquakes, and commands thirty-six legions of demons. Also called Agreas, Agaros, Agarus, and Agarat.

**Agathion**: the ritual to bind a witch or warlock and their familiar.

**Agrat bat Mahalt**: succubus, daughter of Satan and Lilith. Also named Akkakhazu and Dimme-kur.

**Aigeiroi**: dryads of black poplars. Subspecies of Hamadryad.
Ailuranthropy: the ability to shapeshift into any kind of cat.

Al: demons of childbirth. Also called Hal, Alk, Ali, An, Ala, Ol, Xal, Khal, Almast, Albasti, and Halmasti.

Alal: demons of temptation.

Alastor: fallen angel, former archangel, former heavenly scribe, former Angel of Miracles, former Angel of Virtue, former Angel of Healing. Also named Sabriel, Pazriel, Sabrael, Pravuil, Sidriel, and Vretil.

Alchemy: the ability to alter the properties of something and change its chemical or molecular composition.


Alseids: dryads of glens and groves. Subspecies of Hamadryad. Also called Alsea.

Alú: spirits of Udug who once walked the earth; the enforcers of Hell. Also called Allu.

Alukah: Hebrew word for vampires.

Amanozako: tengu goddess, embodiment of the rage of Susanoo, god of the sea and storms, who disgorged her; wife of the yatagarasu Taketsumi-no-Mikoto, divine founder of the Kamo onmyouji clan.

Amaymon: fallen angel, Prime Minister of Hell, Second Princess of Hell, wife of Asmodeus, mother of Lilith; former Grigori sar or chief of tens, former sar or ruler of the Eshim, former sar or ruler of the Hashmallim, former sarim, former archangel, former Angel of Joy, former Angel of Perception; worshipped by ancient Mesopotamians as Inanna, by ancient Sumerians as Ishtar, by Canaanites as Qetesh, Astarte, and Asherah, by ancient Egyptians as Hathor, and by ancient Greeks as Dione. Also named Ananiel (rain of God), Anael/Aniel (grace of God), Hananiel (favor of God), Haniel (joy of God), Amaimon/Amoymon, Astaroth/Astoreth, Baaltis and Baalat Gebal.

Amilamiak: Basque term for freshwater mermaids.


Anakim: descendants of the Nephilim described as a race of giants. Goliath, who encounters the biblical David in 2 Samuel 21:15-22, is depicted as one of the Anakim. Also called Ānāqīm.

Annamelech: a lunar goddess worshipped by the Assyrians alongside Adramelech. Also named Aniel (the constrainer) and Anammelekh (Anu [God] is king).

Annwn (tr. “the deep realm”): Welsh otherworld. Another word for this heavenly dimension is Antumnos (tr. “otherworld”). It’s conflated with the Christian heaven or paradise, Avalon from Arthurian legends, the Gaulish heavenly realm of Albios, and with the Celtic otherworld of many names: Faerie, Fairyland, Tír na nÓg or Tír na hÓige (tr. “the land of youth”), Tír Tairngire (tr. “the
promised land”), Tír na mBeo (tr. “the land of the living”), Tír fo Thuinn (tr. undersea or “the land under the waves”), Mag Mell (tr. “the plain of delight”), Mag Ilathach (tr. “the plain of many colors”), Mag Findargat (tr. “the plain of silver and white”), Mag Argatnél (tr. “the plain of silver clouds”), Mag Cúin (“the gentle plain”), Emain Ablach (tr. “the isle of apples”) and Tech Duinn (tr. “the house of the dark one”).

**Anthousai:** flower spirits or fey.

**Áńtį́:** corpse powder or corpse poison, used to curse people with a disease that makes them waste away.

**'Ánti'įhnii:** the Navajo equivalent of a necromancer, a type of witch that uses dead things as catalysts to work magic.

**Aporia:** demons of need.

**Apotropaics:** talismans or rituals used to prevent the recently deceased from becoming ghosts, revenants, or zombies. Subtype of Theurgy.

**Araboth:** the throne of God. Also called the Korsia.

**Ara-mitama:** Japanese term for demons.

**Arbularyo:** Filipino term for shamans or folk healers. Also called Albularyo, Manggagámot (person who heals) and Manggagaway (person who makes).

**Archdemon:** catchall term for demons of the infernal ruling class.

**Ariel:** fallen angel, former Hashmallim, a eudemon worshipped by Zoroastrians as Ahriman, by ancient Greeks and Romans as Hades, by ancient Italo-Romans as Orcus, by ancient Romans as Pluto, by ancient Egyptians as Serapis, by ancient Mesopotamians as Nergal, by Canaanites as Mot, and by Akkadians as Erra; husband of Foras. Also named Arael and Arael (lion of God).

**Armaros:** fallen angel, former archangel, former Malakhim, former Angel of Undoing, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, the Irin who taught mankind sorcery. Also named Armârôs, Armans or Abaros (the cursed one), and Dadrail.

**Artiyail:** one of the Malakhim; believed to remove grief and memories of anxiety from humans. Often appears in the shape of a bird.

**Asanbosam:** African strain of vampirism that migrated to Jamaica in the eighteenth century when the Ashanti people of southern Ghana were enslaved. Also called Asasabonsam or Sasabonsam.

**Ásgarðr** (tr. “enclosure of the Æsir”): Norse otherworld where the Æsir live. This realm contains Valhalla and Fólkvangr, two heavenly subdimensions from Norse mythology. It’s the lowest of three heavenly dimensions in Norse cosmology.

**Asmodeus:** Second Prince of Hell, former Ophanim, former Seraphim, embodiment of the deadly sin of Lust, ruler of the Second Circle of Hell, lord of all incubi; one of the five Grigori who tempted the other Irin to fall, husband of Amaymon, father of Lilith. Also named Asbiel (greatness of God), Asbeel (forsaken by God), Asmodai, Asmoday, Ashmedai, Ashema-deva, Asmodee, Asmodée, Osmodeus, Osmodai, Hashmedai, Hashmodai, Hasmodai, Khashmodai, Khasmodai, Khammadai, Hammadai, Shamdon, Samdon, Shidonai, Sakhr, Aeshma, Aēšma, Aēšōma, Eshm, Kheshm and
Khashm.

**Aspïdakinesis**: the ability to generate magical wards or impenetrable shields that eat other magical energy like candy. Also called Protrusion.

**Assiah**: the fourth and lowest heavenly realm. It overlaps with the material world, contains the heavens where human souls go, and is ruled by the archangel Sandalphon. Also called Olam Asiyah, the World of Making. Its corresponding element is Earth.

**Astral Projection**: the ability to separate your soul from your body and travel anywhere in the universe, theoretically.

**Aswang**: shapeshifting demons that eat unborn fetuses or young children. Also named Asuwang, tik-tik, wak-wak, sok-sok, kling-kling. Subspecies of the Al.

**Atid**: one of the Malakhim; one of two heavenly scribes who record the actions of people on earth.

**Atzilut**: the highest of the four heavenly realms. This is a world of pure divinity ruled by the Shekinah, the presence of God. No being except the Angels of Presence can exist here without being overwhelmed by the presence of God and becoming unaware of their own existence. Also called Olam Atziluth, the World of Emanations. Its corresponding element is Fire.

**Aulonides**: female spirits or fey that dwell in mountain valleys or ravines.


**Avernales**: infernal female spirits or fey that dwell in the underworld and make prophecies. Also called Lampades and Lampads. These creatures were torch-bearers for Hecate in Greek mythology.

**Avianthropy**: the ability to shapeshift into any kind of bird.

**Ayakashi**: feylike creatures that appear as ghost lights above bodies of water, sometimes characterized as the vengeful spirits of people who died at sea. Conflated with the will o’ the wisp or hinkypunk from European folklore.

**Azazel**: fallen angel, former archangel, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, the Irin who taught mankind cosmology and weaponry, ruler of the Eighth Circle of Hell, husband of Naamah and father of the shedim. Also named Azazil (strength of God), Asael (made by God), Iblis, Eblis, Haris, Ḥārith, Haborim, Haborym, Baum, Rey, Raim, Raym, Räum, Aym and Aim.

**Azriel**: Angel of Death and Renewal, twin sister of Abaddon, firstborn of the Benei Elohim, former archangel. Also named Azrael, Azrail, Adriel (helper of God), Raguel, Ragual, Rasuil, Rufael, Raquel, Rakul, Reuel, and Akrasiel (friend of God), Shacath, Malak al-Mawt, and Malach ha-Maweth. Shacath (intérêt) means “the corrupter” in Hebrew.

**Babaylan**: one of many terms for pre-colonial shamanic religious leaders from the Philippines. Spanish clergymen persecuted them and suppressed their religions during their conquest in the seventeenth century until the religious practices of the indigenous peoples of the islands were assimilated with Christian mysticism and Western esotericism.

**Bakemono**: Japanese term for shapeshifters. Subtype of youkai.
**Bakeneko**: Japanese term for werecats. Subtype of youkai.

**Balanos**: dryads of oak trees. Subspecies of Hamadryad. Also called Querquetulanae virae in Roman mythology.

**Banishment**: the ability to banish objects or beings from a specific place. Also called Reverse Summoning.

**Baphomet**: fallen angel, a eudemon worshipped by Zoroastrians and Romans as Mithras the sun god, and by ancient Egyptians as Banebdjedet the ram god; husband of Hatmehit/Hatmehyt, the primordial water goddess, and father of Harpocrates/Har-pa-khered/Heru-pa-khered/Elagabalus/Aelagabalus/Heliogabalus/Sol Invictus, the sun god. Also named Baphometh, Bafomet, Baffometi, Bafometz, Bafumarias, Banebdjed, Mithra.

**Baraqiel**: fallen angel, former archangel, former Grigori chief of tens, former sar or ruler of the Seraphim, the one who taught mankind astrology; mother of the Nephilim king Hazael, wife of Remiel, worshipped in Ugarit as the goddess Atargatis and in ancient China as Dianmu or Leizi. Also named Barakiel, Barbriel, Baraqel, Barachiel (lightning of God), and Barak.

**Barghest**: hunters, descended from the mythological Freybug. Subspecies of Hellhound.

**Beelzebub**: fallen angel, First Prince of Hell, former Seraphim, embodiment of the deadly sin of Envy, ruler of the Fifth Circle of Hell, husband of Berith; former Grigori sar or chief of tens; one of the nine angels who is supposed to inherit the earth and govern the world in the aftermath of the Apocalypse. Also named Gadreel, Gadriel, Gaderel (wall of God), Zebulun, Zebulon, Zabulon, Zebuleon, Zaboules (exalted), Baal, Baal Zbûb, Baal Muian (lord of the flies), Baal Zebul (lord of the heavenly dwelling), Attar, Atthtar, Astar, Myiagros, Myacoris.

**Beged**: Hebrew word meaning “treachery,” the name of the Ninth Circle of Hell.

**Belial**: fallen angel, Fourth Prince of Hell, twin brother of Uzza, former Grigori, former Angel of Darkness, embodiment of the deadly sin of Pride, ruler of the Sixth Circle of Hell. Also named Bardiel (humiliated son of God), Belhor, Baalial, Beliar, Beliaall, Beliel, Beliyaal, the lawless one.

**Belphegor**: fallen angel, Sixth Prince of Hell, former Grigori, embodiment of the deadly sin of Gluttony, ruler of the Third Circle of Hell, spiritual father of Mallory DeLongpre; one of the five Grigori who tempted the other Irin to fall, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, worshipped by the Moabites and Israelites as a phallic deity; he gifts men with the ability to converse with animals, he shapeshifts into a thrush and in his human form he has wings and sometimes the head of a blackbird, he gives true answers when asked questions about things to come. Also named Tamiel (perfection of God), Baal Peor (lord of the gap), Caym, Chium, Caim, Chamos, Chemosh, Chemus.

**Benei Elohim**: a catchall term for angels that means “the Sons of God.”

**Bergtroll**: mountain troll.

**Beriah**: the second of the four heavenly realms; contains Arboth, the throne of God, and is inhabited by archangels, Seraphim, Cherubim, and Ophanim. Also called Olam Briyah, the World of Creation. Its corresponding element is Water.

**Berith**: fallen angel, former sar or ruler of the Cherubim, former Angel of Winds; Princess of Hell, Archivist of Hell, wife of Beelzebub. Also named Baal Berith (lord of the covenant), Beherit, and Rikbiel.
Bezaliel: fallen angel, former archangel, former Grigori sar or chief of tens. Also named Bezalael, Busasejal, Basasael (shadow of God), and Batriel (valley of God).

Binbougami: demons who cause poverty and misery from Japanese mythology.


Bolotnik: male freshwater spirits from Slavic mythology that dwell in swamps. Also called Balotnik (Belarusian) and Bolotyanik (Ukrainian). Their female counterparts are Bolotnica (singular: Bolotnitsa), spirits of swamps that cause storms, rain and hail.

Borderlands 「根の国」: otherworld from Japanese mythology ruled by Susanoo, god of the sea and storms.

Brujería: the Latinx word for witchcraft that encompasses spiritual practices across the Afro-Latin diaspora, including Haitian Vodou, Cuban Santería, Brazilian Candomblé, Afro-Brazilian Umbanda, and Puerto Rican Brujería. Colonialism has made the modern forms of brujería into syncretic amalgamations of African ideologies, Catholicism and Spiritism. There are some misconceptions and crossover because of violent assimilation, but: brujos/brujas are different from curanderos/curanderas and curandeiros/curandeiras because the latter spiritual traditions are rooted in the practices of indigenous healers or shamans of Latin America rather than diasporic peoples displaced from Africa and southern Europe. Also called Bruxaria.

Brujos/Brujas: practitioners of brujería. Cognate with Bruxos/Bruxas/Bruxes (Asturian, Portuguese, Galician), Bruixots/Bruxes (Catalan), and Bruèissas (Occitan).

Bucca: Cornish mermen with power over storms. Also called Bucka, Bucca Widn (white or good Bucca) and Bucca Dhu (black or evil Bucca).

Cacodemons: catchall term for lesser demonic entities that corrupt the body or flesh.

Caluminators: demons who tempt humans into making false accusations.

Camael: archangel, Angel of Strength, Angel of Courage, Angel of War, sar or ruler of the Elohim. Also named Chamael, Chamuel, Khamael, Camiel, Canniel, Cameel (heat of God or wrath of God), Qemuel, Kemuel (God is risen), Hofniel (fighter of God).

Cambion: part-human, part-incubus or succubus.

Čarodéj/Čarodéjka (чародей/чародейка): Russian word for sorcerer/sorceress. Plural: Čarodéj/Čarodéjki (чародеи/чародейки). Cognate with czarownik/czarownica (Polish), čaroděj/čarodějnice (Czech), and čarôvnik/čarôvnica (Slovene).

Čarodéjskij (чародейский): Russian word for sorcery. Also called čarodějníctví (Czech).

Caryatids: dryads of walnut or hazelnut trees. Subspecies of Hamadryad. Also called Karya.

Cassiel: one of the Eshim, former archangel; Angel of Tears, Angel of Solitude, Angel of Temperance. Also named Kasfail, Cafziel, Cafzyel, Caphziel, Casiel, Cassael, Casziel, Kafziel, Kasiel, Qafziel, Qaphziel, Qaspel, Qephetzial, Quaphziel (speed of God or God is my anger).

Ceraunoscophy: divination by means of thunder and lightning. Specialized variant of Divination.
Subtype of Aeromancy.


Chamas: Hebrew word meaning “violence,” the name of the Seventh Circle of Hell.

Changeling: part-human, part-fey.


Charmworker: translation of cailleach phiseogach, an Irish Gaelic term for witches.

Chazaqiel: fallen angel, the former Grigori sar or chief of tens who taught mankind the signs of the clouds (i.e. meteorology). Also named Êzêqêêl or Ezekeel (cloud of God or shooting star of God).

Cherubim: the second highest angelic order. These angels were originally the protectors of Eden. Also called the mighty ones. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Gabriel.

Chinkon: Japanese ritual used to calm malevolent spirits.

Chiromancy: divination by means of palmistry. Also called palm reading or Chirology.

Churel: Mauritian Creole word for witch.

Cia: fallen angel, former Erelim; she often appears in the form of a wolf. Also named Vasariah, Vasiahriah (simplicity of God), Marchocias and Marchosias.

Clairvoyance: the ability to read thoughts and project your own thoughts in order to communicate psychically with others. Also called Telepathy.

Concilium: the ability to control the mind and impose your will onto another person; one of the Seven Wonders.

Conjuration: the ability to move anything through subspace from anywhere, depending on the range of your power.

Contrapasso: a Stregherie curse of vengeance. It means “the punishment fits the crime.”

Cressil: demons of impurity. Created by Gressil.

Crinaeae: freshwater spirits or fey that dwell in fountains or wells. Subspecies of Naiad.

Crossroads Demons: fallen Malakhim who dwell in limbo and oversee the suffering of sinners in their personal hells when they’re not looking for souls to steal. These demons wheel and deal, and they shouldn’t be trusted.

Curae: demons of anxiety.

Cynanthropy: the ability to shapeshift into a dog.
**Daitengu**: greater tengu, capable of taking human or animal form.

**Danael**: fallen angel, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, a eudemon worshipped by the Canaanites as the goddess Shapash, Shapsh, Shapshu or Shemesh, and by pre-Islamic Arabs as Shams or Shamsun or Nuha; currently dwells in the lower heavens. Also named Daniel, Dânêl, Danjal (God has judged).

**Danim**: humans possessed by succubi or incubi. These possessions are usually voluntary because the human vessels get carnal pleasure out of the deal.

**Daphnaie**: dryads of laurel trees, descended from the mythological Daphne. Subspecies of Hamadryad.

**Descensum**: the ability to descend into the netherworld; one of the Seven Wonders. Specialized variant of Astral Projection.

**Dhampir**: half-vampire, half-human.

**Disfactum**: the ability to unmake or destroy things.

**Divination**: the ability to divine information using psychic means; one of the Seven Wonders.

**Djinn**: shadow jinn. Djinn use wind magic.

**Druden**: nightmare demons. Also called Oneiroi.

**Dullahan**: headless riders who carry their heads under their arms, part of the wild hunt. Also called Gan Ceann.

**Dumah**: one of the Seraphim; Angel of Silence, Angel of Death, Angel of Vindication. Also named Duma and Douma.

**Dziwożona**: Rusalki that dwell in freshwater. Also called dykaja žena (Hutsul), wódna żona (Sorb), Bogunka, Latawci, Boginka (Polish), Navi, Navjaci, Samovila, Samodiva (Bulgarian), and Nemodlika (Moravian).

**E**

**Egocissor**: the ability to control the mind and impose your will onto another person without them noticing. More powerful variant of Concilium.

**Eisheth Zenunim**: succubus, daughter of Satan and Lilith, eater of souls, great-grandmother of Zoe Benson.

**Eleionomae**: freshwater spirits or fey that dwell in marshes and wetlands. Also called Heleionomai. Subspecies of Naiad.

**Elohim**: the sixth angelic order. These angels regulate the cosmos. Also called the godly ones or the order of Powers. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Camael.

**Enerkinesis**: the ability to manipulate any kind of magical energy.

**Epimelides**: dryads of fruit trees. Also called Maliades or Meliades, Epimēliads or Epimēlides (Greek: Ἐπιμηλίδες). Subspecies of Hamadryad.
**Erelim**: the fourth angelic order. These angels regulate the duties of the lower angels. Also called the valiant ones or the order of Dominions. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Raziel.

**Ergokinesis**: the ability to convert any kind of energy into magical power.

**Erinyes**: vengeance demons; created by Abaddon. Also called Arae, Furies, Dirae, Furiae, and Eumenides. Singular: Erinys.

**Eshim**: the seventh angelic order. These angels regulate the guidance and protection of nations and cultures. Also called the flaming ones or the order of Rulers or Principalities. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Zaphiel.

**Eurynomoi**: demons who eat human flesh and other demons. Created by Euryonomos.

\[F\]

**Faerie**: catchall term for Otherworlds, used to refer to the heavenly subdimensions of Assiah inhabited by eudemons and their descendants.

**Fej** (фей): Russian word for the fey. Singular: Féja (фея).

**Fey**: catchall term for supernatural creatures that dwell in Faerie. Also called fae, faery, fay, fairies, and fata.

**Fluviales**: freshwater spirits or fey that dwell in rivers. Subspecies of Naiad.

**Foras**: fallen angel, former archangel; a eudemon worshipped by ancient Mesopotamians as Ereshkigal, by ancient Greeks as Persephone, and by ancient Romans as Proserpina; she teaches the virtues of herbs and precious stones, philosophy, Astronomy, Chiromancy, Pyromancy, invisibility, eloquence, rhetoric, ethics and logic; she rules forty-nine legions of demons and she can discover treasures and relocate lost things. Also named Forcas, Forrasis, Furcas, Ninkigal, Despoina (the mistress), Hagne (pure), Melindia, Melinoia (honey), Melivia, Melitodes, Aristicthonia, Praxidike (subterranean queen), Kore (the maiden), Kore Soteira (the savior maiden), Kore memagmeni (the mixed daughter), Neotera (the younger), Karpophoros (bringer of fruit), and Thesmophoros (legislator).

**Fossegrim**: male freshwater spirits or fey descended from the mythological Strömkarlen. These creatures teach people to play a musical instrument in exchange for offerings of meat. If the offering is unsatisfactory, they will only teach the supplicant how to tune their instrument.

**Fulgurkinesis**: the ability to manipulate electric charges.

\[G\]

**Garmr**: guardians, descended from the mythological Garm. Subspecies of Hellhound.

**Gaudia**: demons of guilty pleasure.

**Gavriel**: archangel, Angel of Revelation, Angel of Presence, former Angel of Death, one of the four Lords of Spirits, Keeper of Holiness, sar or ruler of the Cherubim, one of the nine angels who is supposed to inherit the earth and govern the world in the aftermath of the Apocalypse. Also named Gabreel (hero of God), Gabriel, Jibril, Jibrail (God is my strength), Chayyiel, Kerubiel, Cherubiel, Cerubiel.
Geokinesis: the ability to manipulate elements derived from earth.

Geomancy: divination by means of anything that comes from the earth. Specialized variant of Divination.

Geras: demons of senescence.

Ghillie Dhu: solitary birch tree spirits characterized as male in Celtic mythology. Also called Gille Dubh (Scottish Gaelic). Subspecies of Hamadryad.

Gressil: fallen angel, former Ophanim, former servant of Anael/Amaymon; demon of impurity and uncleanness; creator of the Cressil. Also named Graniel.

Grigori: the first heavenly sphere, which consists of the first, second, and third angelic orders of Seraphim, Cherubim, and Ophanim. Also called the awake ones or the Watchers. These angels don’t sleep.

Guhin: dog tengu.

H

Hahaiah: one of the Cherubim. Also named Heheayah, Heheeyah, Hahajah (refuge of God), and Atarph.

Hahasiah: one of the Eshim; twin sister of Imamiah.

Hallucinogenesis: the ability to create illusions that seem real. Also called Glamourie.

Hamadryad: catchall term for tree spirits or nymphs. Also called simply dryads, Dryades (Greek), Salabhanjika (Sanskrit), Schrötlein (Germanic), and Kodama (Japanese).

Hasdiel: Angel of Benevolence, Cherubim and chief aide of the archangel Uriel; twin sister of Shamsiel.

Hashmallim: the fifth angelic order. These angels help people find their path by creating signs or small miracles. Also called the virtuous ones or the order of Virtues. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Sachiel


Hayyoth: angels who manifest themselves in human form. It means “living creatures” (תֹוּחי) in Hebrew.

Heks/Heksa: Polish, Dutch, Norwegian, Danish, Limburgish, and Afrikaans term for witch. Plural: heksen (Dutch) or hekser (Norwegian).

Heliades: dryads of poplars, descended from the mythological Helia, Merope, Aetheria, Phoebe, and Dioxippe. Subspecies of Hamadryad.

Hellhounds: guardian beasts or psychopomps who bring the souls of the dead to limbo. Created by Abaddon.

Hemocyanin: an oxygen-transport metalloprotein present in the blood of some types of fey that lacks the ferrous atom of hemoglobin. This blood is blue. Octopus and horseshoe crab blood also contains
hemocyanin.

**Hemomancy:** the ability to manipulate blood, to make a spell or potion more potent or alter the properties of blood (e.g. increasing blood flow to accelerate healing in yourself or others, rupturing blood vessels to kill someone, changing the density of blood to make blood weapons or armor).

**Hemonigerin:** an oxygen-transport metalloprotein present in the blood of some types of fey that lacks the ferrous atom of hemoglobin. This blood is black.

**Hemoviridisin:** an oxygen-transport metalloprotein present in the blood of some types of fey that lacks the ferrous atom of hemoglobin. This blood is green.

**Hesperides:** nymphs of evening who dwelled in the Garden of Eden. Agrat, Naamah, and Eisheth were mischaracterized by Hyginus and Cicero as a triad of Hesperides.

**Hexen:** German word for witch. Singular: hexe.

**Hüidet:** Finnic term for eudemons tied to the land. Singular: Hiisi.

**Hutriel:** one of the seven Zabaniyah, angels of punishment who dwell in Hell; their name means “rod of God.”

**Hyades:** spirits or fey that bring rain.

**Hydrokinesis:** the ability to manipulate water and other liquids.

**Hydromancy:** divination by means of water.

**I**

**Ifrit:** infernal jinn. Ifrit use fire magic. Also called Afarit.

**Ikiryou:** Japanese term for living spirits. These ghosts are actually astral projections. Subtype of mononoke.

**Imamiah:** fallen angel, former Eshim; twin sister of Hahasiah.

**Inari:** kitsune, androgynous Japanese deity of foxes, agriculture, fertility, prosperity, industry, tea, rice and sake; patron of swordsmiths, warriors, blacksmiths, and merchants.

**Incantation:** the ability to combine words and magic to create a spell.

**Infernakinesis:** the ability to manipulate demonic entities and energies.

**Infernokinesis:** the ability to manipulate hellfire.

**Invocation:** the ability to summon or invoke spiritual entities.

**Ipupiara:** Brazilian mermaids descended from Iara, called Mãe das Águas (mother of waters). These mermaids can have the tails of fish, dolphins, or manatees.

**Irin:** the legions of two hundred Grigori who fell and begat children with humans.

**Ishim:** the third and lowest angelic sphere, which consists of the Eshim, Tarshishim, and Malakhim.
Also called the guardians.

**Itsasliamiak**: Basque term for saltwater mermaids.

**J**

**Janara**: ancient Italian term for witches, specifically the witches of Benevento.

**Jinrou**: Japanese term for werewolves. Subtype of youkai.

**Jötnar**: the word for “giants” in Old Norse. It’s used to describe both the frost giants of Jötunheimr and the fire giants of Múspellheimr. Singular: Jötunn.

**Jötunheimr** (tr. “world of giants”): Norse otherworld inhabited by frost giants. Also called Útgarðr or Udgård (tr. “outlands”).

**Jumbees**: catchall term for demons and malevolent spirits used in the Caribbean. Also called jumbies or mendo.

**K**

**Kalkail**: one of the Cherubim; Angel of Exorcism.

**Kalku**: Mapuche word for practitioners of black magic.

**Karasutengu**: crow tengu.

**Karasuza** 「烏座」: the kingdom of crows located in the Borderlands, ruled by Amanozako and Taketsumi; dwelling of the House of Muragarasu.

**Kijin**: the ritual to create a Shikigami using the essence or soul of a demon.

**Kimaris**: fallen angel, former Elohim, former Angel of the Moon; he tames wild animals and destroys the wealth of societies; he was worshipped by the ancient Egyptians as Horus. Also named Kyriel, Kirihel, Kiriel, Kirié, Kyrie, Kirik, Khem-our (black light), Cimeies, Cimejes and Cimeries.

**Kitsune**: fox demons from Japanese mythology. Subtype of youkai.

**Kitsunezuka** 「狐塚」: the kingdom of foxes located in the Borderlands, ruled by Inari and Kuzunoha; dwelling of the House of Inari.

**Kokabiel**: fallen angel, former Grigori chief of tens, former Angel of the Stars, the Irin who taught mankind astrology. Also named Kôkabiêl, Kôkhabîêl, Kakabel, Kochbiel, Kokbiel, Kabaiel, Kochab (star of God), and Wormwood.

**Koldovstvó** (колдовство): Russian word for witchcraft. Also called Koldovský (колдовской).


**Kotengu**: lesser tengu, only appear in animal form.

**Kotodama**: the ability to infuse words or incantations with magical power and make words into reality by speaking them. More powerful variant of Incantation.
**Kraneiae**: dryads of dogwood trees. Subspecies of Hamadryad.

**Kulam**: Filipino word for magic, specifically folk magic. Also called Pagkukulam.

**Kushiel**: one of the seven Zabaniyah, angels of punishment who dwell in Hell. Also named Kusiel (rigid one of God).

**Kuzunoha**: kitsune, a Japanese fox goddess with a shrine dedicated to her in Izumi, mother of the onmyouji Abe no Seimei.

L

**Labbim**: the second angelic sphere, which consists of the fourth, fifth, and sixth angelic orders of Erelim, Hashmallim, and Elohim. Also called the healing ones.

**Lahatiel**: one of the seven Zabaniyah, angels of punishment who dwell in Hell; their name means “flaming one of God.”

**Lamia**: anthropomorphic snake demons that eat children, created by Lilith. Plural: lamiai, lamiae, lamiae. Also called Lamme, Lammea, Nāga, Nagin, Nāği, and Nāgini.

**Lariscolae**: dryads of larches. Subspecies of Hamadryad.

**Leathdhia**: demigod. Faerie term for eudemon-human hybrids.

**Leathdhiabhal**: demi-devil. Faerie term for part-demon hybrids.

**Leathdhuinne**: demi-human. Faerie term for part-human, part-fey hybrids (i.e. changelings).

**Lectio Animo**: the ability to extract the truth from the mind or soul of a person. More powerful variant of Clairvoyance.

**Leliel**: one of the Cherubim; Angel of Childbirth; former Malakhim. Also named Lailah and Laylah (night).

**Leimoniad**: female spirits or fey that dwell in meadows. Also called Leimakids.

**Levitation**: the ability to levitate things and defy gravity with your mind. Specialized variant of Telekinesis. Also called Transvection.

**Lilim**: demonic races created by Lilith, including the lilitu, strix and lamia.


**Lilitu**: nightmare demons created by Lilith. Also called lilû, llin, and lili.
**Limnades**: freshwater spirits or fey that dwell in lakes, descendants of the Potamoi. Also called Gwragedd Annwn (Welsh), Limnads (Greek: Λημνάδες), Limnatides (Greek: Λημνατίδες) and Leimenids (Greek: Λειμνείδες). Subspecies of Naiad.

**Lycanthropy**: the ability to shapeshift into a wolf. Also called Werewolfism.

M

**Maalik**: former archangel, the one who guards the gates of Hell and Purgatory, twin brother of Riḍwan, sar or ruler of the Zabaniyah, worshipped by the Canaanites as Moloch, by the Ammonites as Malkam, by the Phoenicians as Melqart, by the Canaanites as Dagon, by Carthaginians as Baal Ḥammon, by the Egyptians as Amun, and by the Israelites by Molek; he commands forty legions and he understands all things past as well as all things to come. Also named Molech, Milcom, Malkam, Molok, Melchom, Melek, Melkart, Melkarth, Melgart, Milqartu, Baal Ṣür (lord of Tyre), Aamon, Ammon, Ammon, Amen, Ḥamon, Baal Qarnaim (lord of two horns), Temeluchus, Telémakhos, and Tartaruchus.

**Machi**: Mapuche word for religious leaders or shamans, practitioners of white magic.

**Maicoh**: Navajo word for witch. All witchcraft is seen as harmful by the Diné.

**Mairuak**: Basque term for giants or mountain spirits that are considered the male counterparts of Amilamiak and Itsaslamiak. Singular: Mairu. Also called Maideak, Intxisu, Mairiak, and Saindi Maidi.

**Mak**: daughter of Ariel and Foras; a eudemon worshipped as a goddess of blessed death. Also named Macaria or Makaria (blessed).

**Makatiel**: one of the seven Zabaniyah, angels of punishment who dwell in Hell; their name means “plague of God.”

**Malakhim**: the ninth and lowest angelic order. These angels spend time on earth and they can be messengers or guardian angels. Also called the messengers, al-mu’aqqibat (those who follow one upon another), al-hafathah, and hafazhah (the guards). Their sar or ruler is the archangel Uriel.

**Mammon**: Fifth Prince of Hell, former Grigori, embodiment of the deadly sin of Greed, ruler of the Fourth Circle of Hell; former Grigori sar or chief of tens, one of the five Grigori who tempted the other Irin to fall, worshipped by the ancient Greeks as Plutus or Ploutous, by the Romans as Dīs Pater or Dīs, by Proto-Indo-Europeans and Proto-Baltic people as Dievs, Dīvs, Dievas, Deywis, Deivas, Dyēus, and Dyāuṣ Pītṛ, and by Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains as Kubera, Kuvera, Kuber or Kuberan; husband of Meresin and creator of yakshas/yakshinis. Also named Balaam, Bilām, Yeqon, Yaqum (he [God] shall rise). Merkabah: the heavenly chariot.

**Mangkukulam**: Filipino word for witch.

**Manyeo**: Korean word for sorcerer/sorceress.

**Mara**: monsters who feed on nightmares and often appear in the form of demonic women or animals (e.g. horses, frogs, cats, dogs, oxen, birds, rabbits, bees and wasps). Also called kriksy, plachky, plaksy, plaksivicy, kriksy-varaksy, kriksy-plaksy, Mare (Germanic), Marra (Faroese), Maron (proto-Germanic), Moros (Greek and Indo-European), Mahr (German), Můra (Czech), Mòra, Mrake and Vidine (Croatian), Notsnitsa (Slavic), Načnica (Belarusian), Nocnica or Placzka (Polish), Gorska Majka and Nošno (Bulgarian: горска майка и ношно), Šumska Majka, Babice, and Noćnice
(Serbian: Шумска мајка, бабице и ноћнице), Nočnine and Mračnine (Slovene), Lidérc, Éjjeljáró (Hungarian), Külmking, Painaja (Estonian), Karabasan (Turkish), Pesanta (Catalan), Vrahnas or Varypnas (Greek: Βραχνάς or Βαρυπνάς), Ammuttadori (Sardinian), Haddiela (Maltese), Batibat (Ilocano), Bangungot (Tagalog), Guī Yā Shēn (Chinese: 鬼壓身 or 鬼壓身), Guī Yā Chuáng (Chinese: 鬼壓床 or 鬼压床), Mèng Yān (Chinese: 夢魇 or 梦魇), Gawi Nulim (Korean), Kara (Mongolian), Dip-non or Dip-phok (Tibetan), Dab tsog (Hmong), Ma đè or Bóng đè (Vietnamese), Kena Tindih (Malaysian), Sayaa (Kashmiri), Bakhtak (Pakistani and Persian), Motakka (Kurdish), Khapasa (Pashtun), Amuku Be or Amuku Pei (Sri Lankan), Khyaak (Nepalese and Newari), Jathoom (Arab), Ogun oru (Yoruba), Madzikirira (Zimbabwean Shona), Dukak (Ethiopian), Bou Rattat (Moroccan), Pisadeira (Brazilian), Night Hag (Scandinavian, Gullah, Nigerian, and Irish) and Phi Ahm (Thai: ภัยอหิม). These creatures are descended from a lesser demonic race called the druden (nightmare demons).

**Marid**: rebellious jinn. Marid use water magic.

**Meliades**: dryads of ash trees. Subspecies of Hamadryad. Also called the Meliae or Meliai.

**Melissae**: female spirits or fey that dwell in harmony with hives of bees.

**Melusine**: Scottish dragon shapeshifters often mistaken for river spirits or freshwater mermaids. These creatures are descended from Melusina, the changeling daughter of a fairy woman named Pressyne and King Elinas of Albany. Also called knuckers (British).

**Memtim**: angels of death and destruction.

**Mephistopheles**: fallen angel, former archangel, former Eshim, former Angel of Justice, former Angel of Truth, former Angel of Liberty; crossroads demon. Also named Mebahel, Mebehel, Mebeheil, Mebahiah (protector of God), Mephostophiles and Mephistophilis.

**Meresin**: fallen angel, former Seraphim, Princess of Hell, wife of Mammon, creator of pestilence and plague demons called the Merihem; worshipped by Hindus as Lakshmi and Jains as Bhadra. Also named Merasin, Meris, Metiris, Merihim, Meririm, Mererim, and Laxmi.

**Merihem**: demons of pestilence and plague. Created by Meresin.

**Merrow**: Irish mermaids and mermen descended from Lí Ban. Also called murúch, mūrdúchann and mūrdúchu. These merpeople are uniquely able to shapeshift into human form.

**Metatron**: archangel, twin brother of Sandalphon, Angel of Presence, Angel of Sanctification, Angel of the Veil, celestial scribe, the lesser YHWH and keeper of the name of god, sar or ruler of the Seraphim. Also named Mattatron, Miṭṭaṛūsh, Jehoel, Yahooel, Kemuel, and Shemuel.

**Meteormancy**: divination by means of meteors and other celestial events. Specialized variant of Divination. Subtype of Aeromancy.

**Mheasctha**: mongrel. Faerie slur for anyone descended from two or more species.

**Miengu/Maengu**: African mermaids that feature in the folklore of the Sawa peoples from Cameroon. Singular: Jengu/Liengu.

**Mikhail**: archangel, Angel of Presence, Angel of Sanctification, former Angel of Death, one of the four Lords of Spirits, highest ranked among the archangels, archistrategos or supreme commander of the heavenly host, patron saint of chivalry, twin brother of Samael, the one who cast Satan out of
Heaven, one of the nine angels who is supposed to inherit the earth and govern the world in the aftermath of the Apocalypse. Also named Michael and Mikhael (he who is like God).

**Mizuchi**: a type of Japanese water dragon. Also called Mizushi (蛟: dragon).

**Mononoke**: Japanese term for ghosts or souls.

**Moreae**: dryads of mulberry trees.

**Morgens**: Welsh mermaids, descended from the goddess Murigen. Also called Morgans or Mari-morgans.

**Moroi/Moroaică**: Romanian word for dhampir, specifically the children of Strigoi/Strigoaică.

**Mudang**: Korean word for shaman or witch.

**Mujina**: Japanese term for werebadgers. Subtype of youkai.

**Munkar**: one of two angels who preside over barzakh, a subdimension of limbo, and judge the dead to decide if they belong in Heaven or Hell; his name means “the denied.”

**Muses**: minor goddesses or spirits of knowledge and inspiration. Also called Moûsai (Greek: Μοûσαι).

**Mûspellheimr** (tr. “world of destruction“): Norse otherworld inhabited by fire giants. Also called Muspell.

\( N \)

**Naamah**: succubus, daughter of Satan and Lilith, ruler of the Eighth Circle of Hell, wife of Azazel, mother of the shedim. Also named Labasu. Nephilim: half-human, half fallen angel. Also called the violent ones.

**Nagualism**: the ability to shapeshift into one of twenty possible animal forms that coincide with the your day sign according to the sacred Mayan calendar. Specific to people of pre-Columbian Mesoamerican descent, in particular a nahuälli or shaman. There are twenty varieties: Imix (crocodile), Ik (hummingbird), Akbal (bat), Kan (spider), Chikchan (snake), Kimi (owl), Manik (deer), Lamat (rabbit), Muluk (shark), Ok (dog), Chuwen (monkey), Eb (puma), Ben (armadillo), Ix (jaguar), Men (quetzal), Kib (vulture), Kaban (woodpecker), Etznab (fish), Kawak (turtle), and Ahaw (conch).

**Naiads**: catchall term for freshwater spirits or fey. Also called Naiades (Greek: Ναϊάδες, singular Naiás or Naiad).

**Nakir**: one of two angels who preside over barzakh, a subdimension of limbo, and judge the dead to decide if they belong in Heaven or Hell; his name means “the denier.”

**Nanael**: one of the Eshim; her name means “communication of God.”

**Napaeae**: female spirits or fey that dwell in dells, valleys, and grottoes.

**Nephomancy**: divination by means of clouds. Specialized variant of Divination. Subtype of Aeromancy.
**Nereids**: female saltwater fey or spirits descended from Proteus or Nereus and Doris, a primordial sea deity and an Oceanid. Also called Nereides (Greek: Νηρηΐδες) and Nereis (Greek: Νηρηΐς).

**Niflheimr** (tr. “world of mist”): Norse otherworld where the goddess Hel and her subjects dwell. This is a primordial realm of cold and darkness that is sometimes conflated with Niflhel and Hell.

**Nigi-mitama**: Japanese term for angels or eudemons.

**Nisroch**: fallen angel, former Eshim; as a demonic entity he represents delicate temptation; he was worshipped by the ancient Mesopotamians as Ninurta, god of healing, agriculture, hunting, war and law. Also named Nithael, Nithhaiah, Nithjah, Nuthaheyah (generosity of God), Nesroch, Ningirsu, and Nimrod.

**Nixie**: shapeshifting freshwater spirits or fey that can appear in human form but sometimes appear as horses (kelpies, Ceffyl Dŵr, Bäckahästen) or crocodiles (nihhus). Plural: Nixen. Also called Nix (German, male), Nixe (German), Nikker, Nekker (Dutch), Nøkken (Norwegian), Näck (Swedish), Nääki (Finnish), Näkk (Estonian), Nicor, Vodník (Czech, male), Hastrman (German), Vetehinen or Vesihiisi.

**Noita**: Finnish and Karelian word for witch. Cognate with nõita (Votic), noaidi (Northern Sami), nõid (Estonian and Voro), and noid (Veps).

**Noitavoima**: Finnish word for witchcraft.

**Noituus**: Finnish word for sorcery.

**Nosferat**: Hungarian-Romanian strain of vampirism that originated when a cambion (i.e. half-incubus) named Zburător became a vampire. These vampires can feed on sex as well as blood.

**Nosoi**: demons who make people go mute.

**Nullification**: the ability to generate a null field or dead zone that prohibits magic within a certain radius. More powerful variant of Potentiprohiberis.

**Nybbas**: fallen angel, former Malakhim, former Eshim, former Angel of Eternity; he was worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples as Nebahaz and by ancient Mesopotamians as Nabu, god of literacy and wisdom. Also named Ielahiah, Jelahjah, Yolaheyah (eternity of God), Netzach (eternity), Nibhaz, Nebachas, Nisaba, and Nebo.

**Nymphs**: Greek catchall term for minor deities and supernatural entities characterized as female in Greco-Roman mythology.

**O**

**Oceanids**: minor goddesses born from the primordial waters of creation, daughters of Oceanus and Tethys in Greek mythology. Also called Oceanides (Greek: Ὠκεανίδες, singular: Ὠκεανίς).

**Olivier**: fallen angel, former archangel. Also named Kepharel.

**Öndlangr** (tr. “endlong”): Norse otherworld. Also called Andlångr or Andlang. It’s the second of the three heavenly dimensions in Norse cosmology. This realm was created as the dwelling where the souls of the dead go after the destruction of Ragnarök.

**Oni/Kijo/Onibaba**: ogrelike demons from Japanese mythology. Oni are male; Kijo are female.
Onibaba are female, but they appear as crones instead of young beautiful women.

**Onmyoudou**: “the way of yin and yang,” a Japanese philosophical system of esoteric cosmology that combines natural sciences and occult practices, traditionally used for divination and mysticism.

**Onmyouji**: practitioners of onmyoudo.

**Onryou**: Japanese term for vengeful spirits. These ghosts cast tatari or curses on people. Subtype of mononoke.

**Ophanim**: the third highest angelic order. These angels can become the “wheels” of the Merkabah, the heavenly chariot. Also called the many-eyed ones, Galgalim (meaning “whirlwinds” or “wheels”), or the order of Thrones. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Raphael, but they are also ruled by the archangel Sandalphon.

**Orestiades**: female spirits or fey that dwell in mountains.

**Orias**: demons of false prophecies.

**Osteomancy**: divination by means of bones. Also called Scapulimancy, Omoplatoscopy, Spatulamancy, and Plastromancy.

**P**

**Pahaliah**: one of the Ophanim; Angel of Virtuosity, Angel of Morality, Angel of Wisdom, Angel of Determination, Angel of Knowledge.

**Papa Legba**: fallen angel, former Malakhim, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, the Irin who taught mankind the signs of the earth, currently a crossroads demon, worshipped as Atiban Legba and Elegua. Also named Arakiel, Arâkîba, Artaqifa, Araqiel, Araquel, Araziel, Araciel, Arqael, Sarquael, Arkiel, Arkas, Araxiel (earth of God), Aretstikapha (world of distortion), and Urakabameel (earthly thunder of God).

**Paristan**: Middle Eastern word for fairyland or Faerie. Also called Pariyestân (Persian: پاریستان).

**Patasola**: Colombian strain of vampirism. These vampires are depicted as bloodthirsty disabled women. Also called Tunda, Madremonte or Marimonda.

**Pegaeae**: primordial water spirits or fey that dwell in springs.

**Penthos**: demons of grief.

**Pháp Thuậ**: Vietnamese word for witchcraft.

**Phylactery**: talismans made of paper scrolls enscribed with incantations or words of power.

**Potamoi**: river or lake deities born from the primordial waters of creation, sons of Oceanus and Tethys in Greek mythology. Also called Potamides. Their children were the first Limnades.

**Potentiprohiberis**: the ability to negate the powers of another witch or warlock.

**Potioncraft**: the ability to brew magic potions.

**Pricolici**: Romanian werewolf-vampire hybrids. These are Moroi that have been infected with
lycanthropy, but depending on the bloodline they can shapeshift into an owl, a dog, or a bat instead of a wolf. Pricolici are mortal, but they become vampires after they die.

**Pyrokinesis**: the ability to conjure and manipulate fire; one of the Seven Wonders.

**Pyromancy**: divination by means of water. Specialized variant of Pyrokinesis.

**Psychometry**: the ability to divine information about the past, present, or future from an object, location, or person using psychic means. Commonly triggered by physical contact. Specialized variant of Divination. Also called the Sight.

**Pteleae**: dryads of elm trees, descended from the mythological Erytheia. Subspecies of Hamadryad.

**Puriel**: one of the seven Zabaniyah, angels of punishment who dwell in Hell. Also named Pusiel (fire of God).

**Q**

**Qaddisin**: angels of judgment.

**Qandisa**: creatures from Moroccan folklore with hoofed legs and human torsos, descended from the mythological Aicha Kandicha.

**Quintessence**: the ability to generate limitless amounts of power from oneself. This power is specific to God, the firstborn of the Benei Elohim, and their descendants. Lyn Hoozuki acquired this ability by marrying Abaddon.

**R**

**Ragana**: Lithuanian and Latvian word for witch. Plural: Raganas.

**Raphael**: archangel, Angel of Healing, Angel of Presence, Angel of Silence, Angel of Knowledge, Angel of Science, sarim, sar or ruler of the Ophanim, former sar or ruler of the Seraphim, former sar or ruler of the Labbim, patron saint of Seattle, one of the four Lords of Spirits, one of the nine angels who is supposed to inherit the earth and govern the world in the aftermath of the Apocalypse; worshipped by the ancient Egyptians as the moon god Thoth. Also named Rafael (God heals), Israfil, Esrafil, Israfel, Seraphiel, Sarafel (prince of the high angelic order).

**Raqib**: one of the Malakhim; one of two heavenly scribes who record the actions of people on earth.

**Raziel**: an archangel whose name means “secret of God,” sarim, Keeper of Secrets, Angel of Presence, Angel of Mystery, Angel of Proclamation, former Ophanim, former Cherubim, former Seraphim, current sar or chief of the Erelim; one of the nine angels who is supposed to inherit the earth and govern the world in the aftermath of the Apocalypse. Also named Katriel (crown of God), Akatriel, Akrasiel, Aker, Zephaniel, and Galizur.

**Remiel**: a fallen angel, one of the Irin, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, former Angel of Visions, Angel of Hope, Angel of Dreams, former archangel, currently a eudemon who dwells in the lower heavens, husband of Baraqiel. Also named Remihel, Ramil, Ramiel, Rameel, Rameel, Rumael (thunder of god), Jeremiel, Jeremeel, Jerahmeel, Jeremiel, Eremiel, Hieremihel (mercy of God), Ramanu (thunderer), and Rimmon. Remiel has been worshipped as a sky or storm god in various human religions since he fell, and he has sixty-eight divine aspects: Hadad, Haddu (Ugaritic), Haddad (Akkadian), Iskur (Sumerian), Adad, Bel, Ishkur, Marduk (Babylonian/Assyrian), Teshub, Tarhunt (Hurrian), Set (Egyptian), Zibeltiurdos (Thracian), Gebeleizis (Dacian), Zeus, Jupiter,
Summanus, Ambisagrus, Taranis (Gallo-Roman), Atämshkai (Moshka), Afi (Abkhaz), Orko (Basque), Thor (Norse), Perêndi (Albanian/Ilyrian), Perkūnas (Baltic), Perkwunos (proto-Indo-European), Perun (Slavic), Ukko, Äijä, Äijö, Pitkänen, Isäinen, Isoinen (Finnish), Taara, Therapīta (Estonian), Indra (Hindu), Vajrapāṇi (Mahayana Buddhist), Aktzin (Totonac), Wakiŋyaŋ (Lakota), Xolotl (Aztec), Cocíjo (Zapotec), Chaac (Mayan), Chibchacum (Muisca), Apocatequil (Incan), Shango, Şangó, Changó, Xangó, Jakuta, Bâdê (Yoruba), Xevioso, Xewioso, Heviosso (Dahomey/So region), Amadioha (Igbo/Nigerian), Kiwanuka (Ugandan), Nan Sapwe (Pohnpeian), Tāwhirimātea, Tāwhiri, Te Uira, Te Kanapu (Māori/Polynesian), Mamaragan, Namarrkun (Australian Aboriginal), Ajisukitakahikone, Raijin, Raiden, Kaminari (Japanese), Leigong and Feng Lung (Chinese).

Rephaim: shades or remnants of dead souls without personality or strength.

Resurgence: the ability to resurrect oneself and others by returning a departed soul to a deceased body.

Riḍwan: the angel who guards the gates of Heaven, twin brother of Maalik. Also named Riswan.

Rogziel: one of the seven Zabaniyah, angels of punishment who dwell in Hell; their name means “wrath of God.”

Rosier: son of Asmodeus and Amaymon, twin brother of Lilith, prince of the incubi, father of Merlin.

Rusalki: nature spirits from Slavic folklore later demonized by the Church, descended from the Kostroma/Kostromo (a fertility god or goddess) and Kulapa/Kulapo (a solar god or goddess). Singular: Rusalka. Also called Moriana and Wodiana.

Ryuuguujou 「龍宮城」: the kingdom of dragons located in the Borderlands ruled by Ryuujin, the dragon god; dwelling of the House of Watatsumi.

S

Sachiels: archangel, Angel of Charity, Angel of Wealth, Angel of Dignity, Angel of Business, Angel of Freedom, Angel of Benevolence, Angel of Mercy, Angel of Forgiveness, Angel of Justice, sar or ruler of the Hashmallim, one of two standard bearers who accompany the archangel Michael into battle. Also named Saquiel, Sachquiel, Satquiel, Satquel, Shatqiel, Shataqiel, Sahaqiel, Shachaqiel, Shahaqiel, Zadkiel, Hesediel, Tzadkiel, Zedekiel, Zadakiel, Zedekul, Zerachiel, and Zachariel.

Sâher/Sâhere: Persian word for witch. Plural: Sâher-hâ/Sâhere-hâ or Sâherât. Also called Sâheri.

Sâḥir/Sâḥira: Arabic word for witch. Plural: Sâḥirât or Sawâḥir.

Sandalphon: archangel, twin sister of Metatron, Angel of the Moon, Angel of Records, former Cherubim, former Seraphim, former ruler of the Elohim, ranked Sarim (prince of heaven) and Hazzan (master of the heavenly song), Guardian of the Celestial Records and ruler of Assiah, the lowest of the four heavenly realms. Also named Radueriel, Ophan, Ophaniel, Ofaniel, Ofan, Ofniel, and Yahriel.

Sangomas: traditional folk healers or shamans of the Zulu, Nguni, Sotho-Tswana, and Tsonga peoples of South Africa who practice osteomancy.

Sariel: fallen angel, former archangel, former Seraphim, former Angel of Protection, former Angel of
Sanctification, former Angel of Presence, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, the Irin who taught mankind the phases of the moon. Also named Sāraquyael, Sārāqael, Suriel, Suriyel, Seriel, Sauriel, Samuil, Saraqael, Sarakiel, Suruel, Surufel, Sourial (prince of God or ministry of God), Arazyal, Asaradel. Sarim: Prince or Princess of Heaven.

Satan: the Devil, King of Hell, Prince of Darkness, former Angel of Death, former Angel of YHWH, former heavenly prosecutor, former archangel, former Seraphim, embodiment of the deadly sin of Wrath. Also named Samael, Samil, Samiel, Smil (“severity of God,” “venom of God,” or “blindness of God”), Lucifer, Mashhit (“destroyer”), Leviathan (“the torturous serpent”), Melkira (“king of evil”), Malkira, Malchira, Malachra (“messenger of evil” or “angel of iniquity”), Belkira, Baalqir (“lord of the wall”), Bechira, Bachir (“chosen by evil”), the accuser, the seducer, the adversary, Shakar (Canaanite god of dawn), and Mantus (Etruscan god of Hell).

Sathariel: fallen angel, former Angel of Deception, former Grigori sar or chief of tens. Also named Satariel or Satarêl (concealment of God).

Scrying: divination by means of reflective surfaces, like a mirror. Specialized variant of Divination.


Sensing: the ability to detect unseen energy (e.g. auras, emotions, magic, diseases, ghosts, angels, demons, life force, evil intent).

Seraphim: the highest angelic order, keepers of the celestial records. Also called the ḥamlat al-arsh (meaning “Bearers of the Throne”) or the burning ones, because they can burn themselves and self-destruct or self-nullify by ascending to Atzulit only to recreate themselves again in Beriah. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Metatron.

Shalbriri: demons who make people go blind.

Shamayim: seven heavenly subdimensions located in Assiah.

Shamsiel: fallen angel, the one who taught mankind the signs of the sun; former Cherubim, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, former guardian of Eden and chief aide of the archangel Uriel alongside his twin sister Hasdiel; worshiped by the ancient Mesopotamians as Utu, and by the ancient Babylonians as Shamash, husband of the Akkadian mother goddess Aya/Sherida, father of the truth goddess Kittu and the god of justice Misharu; currently a eudemon who dwells in the lower heavens. Also named Samsâpêêl, Shamshel, Shashiel, and Shamshiel (sun of God).

Shayāṭīn: demons of temptation who incite the minds of humans with their whisperings (waswās). Singular: Shayṭān.

Shedim: descendants of Azazel and Naamah. Shedim (שדím) is Hebrew for “jinn.”

Sheol: the hellish subdimension where Hellhounds and Erinyes were created, located in the bottomless pit where Abaddon rules. Also called primordial darkness or Erebus.

Shikigami: companions or servants of onmyouji.

Shinigami: angels of death from Japanese mythology.

Shiryou: Japanese term for spirits of the dead. These ghosts can be malevolent or benevolent. Subtype of mononoke.
**Shoftiel**: one of the seven Zabaniyah, angels of punishment who dwell in Hell; their name means “judge of God.”

**Shtriga**: Albanian strain of vampirism that originated when a striga or witch became a vampire. These vampires can shapeshift into flying insects (e.g. moths, bees, flies), they prefer to feed on infants, and their saliva can be used to cure anyone they infect to prevent transformation into a vampire. Also called Shtrigë, Shtrigan, Shtrigu (Albanian) and Strzyga (Polish).

**Shuck**: guides, descended from the mythological Capelthwaite. Subspecies of Hellhound.

**Sihuanaba**: shapeshifting woman from Central American folklore that lures men into danger and turns into a horse. Also called La Siguanaba (Guatemala), Ciguapa (Dominican), Ciguanaba (El Salvador), Cigua (Honduras) or Cegua (Costa Rica).

**Silah**: shapeshifter jinn. Silah use earth magic.

**Sirens**: bird shapeshifters with the power to Egocissor humans with their voices often mischaracterized as water demons. These creatures are earthly descendants of the strix. Also called Sirin (Russian: bird of sorrow), Alkonost (Russian: bird of joy), Peri (Turkish), Pari (Armenian and Persian, plural: pariān), and Tannīm (Hebrew).

**Sithnides**: freshwater spirits or fey created by flooding. Subspecies of Naiad.

**Skogstroll**: forest troll.

**Sonneillon**: demons of hate.

**Sopheriels**: the keepers of the Books of Life and Death. Their soul was torn in two during the war in Heaven and those fragments grew separate consciousnesses named Memeth and Mehayye.

**Sorcerer/Sorceress**: a human with magical abilities who is possessed by a demon. These possessions are usually voluntary because the human vessel gets a magic power boost from the demonic entity.

**Sorciers/Sorcières**: French word for witch.

**Sorsie/Sorsier**: Mauritian Creole word for sorcerer/sorceress.

**Sòsyè**: Haitian Creole word for witch.

**Soucouyant**: Caribbean strain of vampirism. Also called souciant (Dominica, St. Lucian, Trinidad, and Guadeloupe), ole-higue and ole haig (Guyana and Jamaica), Asema (Suriname), Hag (Bahamas), and Loogaroo (Haiti).

**Spellcraft**: the ability to cast spells and perform magic rituals.

**Spriggan**: Cornish subterranean fey that extract metals from the earth. Pronunciation: sprid-jan. Also called Kobolds (Germanic), Coblynau (Welsh), and Knockers (British).

**Stiricidium**: the magical equivalent of freeze distillation.

**Strega**: modern Italian and Corsican term for witches. Their form of magic is called Stregheria or Stregherie.
**Strigoi/Strigoaică**: Russian strain of vampirism that originated when a striga or witch became a vampire. These vampires can transform into animals, fly, and turn invisible. Moroi/Moroaică are dhampir children of Strigoi/Strigoaică.

**Strix**: anthropomorphic owl demons who feed on the flesh of humans, created by Lilith. Plural: strixes, strigæ, striges. Also called bubo.

**Suangi**: Indonesian strain of vampirism. These vampires feed on blood and eat the internal organs of their victims.

**Succorbenoth**: demons of jealousy.

**Succubi/Incubi**: demons of sexual and carnal pleasure. Created by Asmodeus.

**Suiko**: amphibious youkai from Japanese folklore, depicted as humanoid creatures with carapaces and webbed hands and feet. Its sara, a dish on top of the head, retains water and they are weaked if the water is spilled. Suiko is written as 「水虎」, meaning “water-tiger.” Also called Kawatora (川虎: river-tiger), Kawatarou (川太郎: river-boy), Komahiki (駒引: horse-puller), Kawappa, Kappa, Gawappa (河童: river-child), and Suitengu (水天狗: water-goblin).

**Summoning**: the ability to summon forth objects or beings.

**Sykeae**: dryads of fig trees. Subspecies of Hamadryad.

**Sylph**: female spirits or fey with power over the wind. Also called Sylphid (Latin), Apsara (Hindu), laukika (Hindu: earthly), daivika (Hindu: heavenly), Aurae, Aurai, Aetae, and Pnoae (Greek).

**Takamagahara 「高天原」**: otherworld from Japanese mythology ruled by Amaterasu, goddess of the universe and the sun; dwelling of the amatsukami, the heavenly gods.

**Taketsumi-no-Mikoto**: the only surviving yatagarasu from the original ten red sun crows, divine founder of the Kamo onmyouji clan, husband of the goddess Amanozako.

**Tarshishim**: the eighth angelic order. Also called the ardent ones or archangels. Their sar or ruler is the archangel Mikhail.

**Tehom**: the abyss located in Chamas that contains the primordial waters of creation. Used by archdemons to create lesser demonic entities.

**Telekinesis**: the ability to move things with your mind; one of the Seven Wonders.

**Telekinetic Earthquake**: the ability to create seismic quakes and move the earth with your mind. Also called Seismokinesis. Specialized variant of Telekinesis.

**Telekinetic Combustion**: the ability to create a charged plasma field that makes things explode with your mind. Also called Thermokinesis. Specialized variant of Telekinesis.

**Tengu**: birdlike demons from Japanese mythology. Subtype of youkai.

**Thammuz**: fallen angel, former archangel; he teaches philosophy, liberal arts, invisibility, how to summon a familiar, he provides medical care for women, helps them attract a lover, and renders them infertile; a eudemon worshipped by ancient Mesopotamians as Dumuzid, by Akkadians as Duzu, a
solar god of the underworld, death and resurrection, agriculture, vegetation and farming, and by the Norse as Freyr, one of the Vanir and ruler of the otherworld Álfheimr, a solar god of peace and fertility. Also named Serathiel, Sarathiel, Salathiel, Selaphiel, Sealatiel, Shealtiel, Tzelathiel (prayer of God), Sealiah, Saalayah, Saaljah (God stirs all men), Gaap, Coap, Goap, Caap, Taob, Tap, the wise one, the lord of knowledge, Tammuz, Tamuz, Thamuz, Tammuzi (flawless), Damuzi, Dimmuzi, Damuzid, Dumuzida, Dumuzi, Damu (the child), Gishzida, Ama-Ushumgal-Anna (power in the date palm), Dumu-Zi-Ama-Ushum-Galana (quickener of the date bud), Dumu-Zi-Abzu (Tammuz of the abyss) and Yngvi.

Thaumaturgy: the power that epitomizes all powers. Also called the Supremacy. It means “working a miracle.”

Thây Phát Thuỷ/Phù Thuỷ: Vietnamese word for witch. Variants: mụ phát thủy (a wicked witch) and pháp sự (wizard).

Therianthropy: the ability to shapeshift from human into an animal form.

Theurgy: the theory and practice of ritual magic. Originally this meant a kind of ritualistic practice that involved the invocation of divine or demonic entities, but it has since been rebranded by modern witches who wanted to abolish the association of witchcraft and magic with Satan.


Tovenarij: Dutch word for sorcery. Also called toverij.

Transmutation: the ability to transport yourself through subspace from one location to another; one of the Seven Wonders. Also called Teleportation or Salire per Spatium.

Tsukimono-suji: matriarchal Japanese witch families that are bound to fox youkai or demons known as kitsune who grant them magic, luck, and prosperity. Their progenitors are kitsune-mochi, witches that agreed to feed and care for kitsune in exchange for magical powers.

Tsukumogami: a type of youkai that originates when objects are possessed by a kami or spirit. Also called Dokkaebi (Korean). There are several varieties, including: abumi-guchi (stirrup), bakezoori (zoori sandals), biwa-bokuboku (lute), boroboroton (futon), chouchinobake (lantern), ichiren-bozu (prayer beads), ittan-momem (roll of cotton), jatai (cloth draped from a folding screen), kameosa (sake jar), kasa-obake (umbrella), kosode-no-te (kimono), koto-furunishi (zither), kurayarou (saddle), kyourinrin (scrolls or papers), menreiki (a monster formed out of sixty-six giga masks), minowaraji (straw coat), morinji-no-okama (teakettle), shamichoro (shamisen), shigorou (gong), shougorou (mirror), yamaoroshi (grater), and zorigami (clock).

Turiel: fallen angel, former archangel, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, a eudemon worshipped by the ancient Egyptians as Mafdet, primordial goddess of execution, judgment, and justice; she merged with the soul of a mountain in the lower heavens and became a deity who sometimes appears in the form of a leopard. Also named Turael, Tûrêl, Turail (mountain of God or rock of God), Mefdet, Mafet, lady of the house of life, slayer of serpents, the great cat, Flauros, Hauras, Flavros, Haures, and Havres.

Uchawi: Swahili word for witchcraft.
**Udug**: poisonous demons.

**Ultipotence**: the ability to possess unlimited raw power; a less potent version of omnipotence. This power is specific to the firstborn of the Benei Elohim and their descendants. Lyn Hoozuki acquired this ability by marrying Abaddon.

**Undines**: water elementals. Also called Ondines.

**Upir**: Slavic and Turkic strain of vampirism. These vampires feed on the life force or souls of their victims as well as blood. Also called Upyr (Russian, Belarusan and Ukrainian), Ubir (Turkish), Vupär or Vupkân (Chuvash).

**Urdemons**: catchall term for lesser demonic entities that corrupt the soul or mind.

**Uriel**: archangel, former Seraphim, former Cherubim, Angel of Presence, Angel of Hailstorms, Angel of Salvation, Angel of Wisdom, Angel of Sanctity, Angel of Glory, one of the four Lords of Spirits, sar or ruler of the Malakhim, one of the nine angels who is supposed to inherit the earth and govern the world in the aftermath of the Apocalypse. Also named Auriel, Urial, Uryan, Usiel, Uzziel, Oriel, (God is my light), Nuriel (fire of God).

**Uzza**: fallen angel, the one who orchestrated the fall of the other Irin, the one who taught mankind the secrets of enchantment and rootcutting, former Seraphim, former Angel of Persecution, former sarim, former Grigori sar or chief of tens, twin sister of Belial, mother of the Nephilim twins Ohyah and Hahyah and Hiwa and Hiya, worshipped by pre-Islamic Arabs as the goddess Al-Uzzā (العزيز). Also named Anmael, Samsaweel, Sahjaza, Semihazah, Shemyazaz, Shemyaza, Semyaza, Sêmîazâz, Semjâzâ, Samjâzâ, Samyaza, Shemhazai, (he [God] sees the name), Ouza, Amezyarak, Azza, Aza, Mastema.

V

**Vanaheimr** (tr. “home of the Vanir”): Norse otherworld where the Vanir, gods associated with fertility and precognition, dwell.

**Vargr**: a person with the fey-specific ability to astral project their consciousness into the minds and bodies of others. Plural: Vargar.

**Vedmak/Vedma** (ведьмак/ведьма): Russian word for witch. Plural: Vedmy (ведьмы). Also called wiedźma (Polish).

**Věštac/Věštica** (вещтац/вештица): Bulgarian and Serbo-Croatian word for witch. Also called vjéštac/vjèštica (Ijekavian).

**Vetala**: demons of putrefaction.

**Vetis**: demons who corrupt the holy.

**Vily**: Rusalki that dwell in forests. Singular: Vila. Also called Wila, Navje, Mavje (Slovenian), Nejka, Majka, Mavka (Ukrainian), Navia and Navka. These fey shapeshift into horses, wolves, snakes, falcons, or swans.

**Vitalum Vitalis**: the power to use your own energy or life force to heal or bring someone back to life; one of the Seven Wonders.
Vodyanoy: male freshwater spirits from Russian folklore with long hair, green beards, black fish scales, the face of a frog, a body covered in algae and muck, webbed paws, a fishtail, and dark eyes that burn like red-hot coals. Also called Vodyanoi (Russian: водяной).

Volšébnik/Volšébnica (волшебница/волшебница): Russian word for witch.

Volšebstvó (волшебство): Russian word for Theurgy.

Vrăjitor/Vrăjitoare: Romanian word for witch. Plural: Vrăjitori.

Vrăjitură: Romanian word for witchcraft.

Vrykolas: Greek term for werewolves. Also called vorvolakas or vourdoulakas (Greek: βρυκόλακας), vârkolak (Slavic), wilkolak (Polish), vukolak (Serbian), vîkolakъ (proto-Slavic), vilkolakis (Lithuanian), and vârcolac (Romanian). Mischaracterized as vampires in the folklore of Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and sometimes Bulgaria.

W


Waganga: Swahili word for shamans or folk healers. Singular: mganga.

Wallim: catchall term for angels that dwell in the lowest heavenly realm.

Witches: practitioners of magic. This was originally a plural genderless word rooted in the Old English wicce (female) and wicca (male). Vee typically uses the term “caster” instead to avoid the negative connotations of the word in its modern context.

X

Xathaniel: Seraphim, Angel of Vengeance, Angel of Belief, Angel of Enlightenment, Angel of Presence. Also named Nathanael or Zathael (gift of God).

Xylokinesis: the ability to manipulate wood.

Y

Yaksha/Yakshini: demons of the wilderness that devour travelers. These demons can be malevolent or benevolent, and they are connected with fertility, trees, forests, water, and treasure. Also called yakṣa, yakan, yakṣi, yakṣiṇī, iyakan, yakkha, or jōkyō.

Yakubyougami: demons who cause disease and pestilence from Japanese mythology.

Yatagarasu: three-legged solar crow deities from Japanese mythology. Also called Sanzuwu (Chinese) and Samjogo (Korean).

Yee Naaldlooshii: means “by means of [black magic], it goes on all fours” in Navajo. These are a type of witches or ’ánti’įhnii who obtain the ability to disguise themselves as animals by sacrificing a beast and skinning its corpse. Also called skinwalkers.

Yetzirah: the third heavenly realm. This realm is considered half-good and half-evil and is inhabited by all of the angels who don’t live in Beriah. It’s the place where souls are formed. Also called Olam Yetzirah, the World of Formation. Its corresponding element is Air.
**Yomi 「黄泉の国」**: otherworld from Japanese mythology ruled by Tsukuyomi, god of the moon; dwelling of Izanami, goddess of creation and death.

**Yomiel**: fallen angel, former Grigori sar or chief of tens. Also named Yomael, Yomyael or Jômjâël (day of God).

**Youkai**: Japanese catchall term for supernatural creatures.

**Yousei**: Japanese term for the fey.

**Yuurei**: Japanese term for ghosts as they appear in Western folklore.

Z

**Zabaniyah**: the seven Angels of Punishment who dwell in Hell. Their sar or ruler is Maalik. Also called Tartaruchi, Zebani and Malake Habbalah.

**Zagan**: demons of deceit.

**Zaphiel**: archangel, former Cherubim, Angel of Wisdom, Angel of Judgment, Angel of Presence, sar or ruler of the Eshim, patron of artists, one of two standard bearers who accompany the archangel Michael into battle. Also named Tzaphqiel, Tzaphkiel, Zafkiel, Zafchial, Zaphchial, Zaphkiel, or Zelel (knowledge of God), Jophiel, Iophiel, Iofiel, Jofiel, Yofiel, Youfiel (beauty of God), Zophiel, Tsophiel (watchman of God), Zuriel, Tsuriel (God is my rock), and Dina.

**Zaqiel**: fallen angel, former Angel of Wisdom, former Angel of Presence, former Angel of Sanctification, former Grigori sar or chief of tens; she was the angel who appeared to Moses in Exodus 3:2. Also named Zagzagel, Zagagel (righteousness of God), Zaqaqel (purity of God), and Zavebe (God protects).

**Zauberer/Zauberin**: German word for sorcerers/sorceresses.

**Zoanthropy**: the ability to forcibly turn people into animals.
Vee

**Name:** Veronica Enid “Vee” Roscoe

**Etymology:**

Veronica is the Latin form of the Berenice (Βερενίκη), the ancient Greek derivative of the ancient Macedonian name Phereníkē (Φερενίκη), meaning “bringer of victory.” Vee, the diminutive, is also an anagram of the biblical name Eve. Enid is rooted in the Middle Welsh eneit, meaning “soul.” It comes from a Proto-Indo-European verb meaning “to breathe.” Roscoe is rooted in the Old Norse rá, meaning “roebuck,” and skógr, meaning “forest.”

**Age:** b. 12 July 1991

**Zodiac:** Cancer, Year of the Sheep (or Ram, or Goat)

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good (The Balance Seeker)

**Height:** 5’2”

**Weight:** 207 pounds

**Hair:** Ash brown with a copper burnish in some lights, type 2A wavy curls, always contained in a braid

**Eyes:** Light gray, with flecks of green; long eyelashes; is very nearsighted and pretty much blind without her glasses

**Skin:** Glow-in-the-dark shade of pale, with freckles everywhere but on her face and neck

**Body:** Curvy; size 16 in the chest with the DD cup tits, size 12 everywhere else; hourglass figure, but chubby; itsy-bitsy size 6 feet

**Fancast:** B. K. Cannon

**Place of Birth:** Seattle, WA

**Former Residence:** Poulsbo, WA

**Current Residence:** New Orleans, LA

**Political Beliefs:** Left-wing, with a side of intersectional feminism and green anarchism

**Motivations:**

Knowledge

Survival

Mental and physical health

Whatever makes her happy without doing any harm to others

**Race:** Nephilim (part-human, part-angel, part-witch, part-kitsune, part-tengu, part-yatagarasu)

**Ethnicity:** Multiracial (Irish, Japanese, Italian), but white-passing

**Bloodlines:**

Janara (Italian strega bloodline that originated in the 6th century)

Malone (Gaelic charmworker bloodline that originated in the 8th century)

Kamo (Japanese onmyouji bloodline that originated in the 10th century)

Abeno (Japanese onmyouji bloodline that originated in the 10th century)
Warren (American witch bloodline that originated in the 17th century)

**Family:**

**Parents**
Abaddeon (biological father)
Gwendolyn “Lyn” Hoozuki (biological mother, deceased)
Matthias “Matt” Roscoe (adoptive father)
Karen Roscoe (adoptive mother)

**Siblings**
Mortimer “Morty” Roscoe (adoptive older brother)
Puck Roscoe (adoptive older brother)
Sarah “Sadie” Roscoe (adoptive older sister)
Killian Roscoe (adoptive younger brother)
Xii (biological half-brother, deceased)
Anna the Prophetess (biological half-sister, deceased)

**Grandparents**
God (biological paternal grandparent)
Vincent Malone (biological maternal grandfather, deceased)
Hoozuki Sei (biological maternal grandmother, deceased)

**Ancestors**
Amanozako (karasutengu)
Taketsunimi-no-Mikoto (yatagarasu, founder of the Kamo onmyouji clan)
Ajari (ancestor c. 900s, karasutengu)
Kamo no Tadayuki (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Kamo no Yasunori (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Kuzunoha (ancestor c. 900s)
Abe no Yasuna (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Abe no Seimei (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Mary Ann Warren (ancestor c. 1600s, deceased)
Marianne Wharton (ancestor c. 1800s, deceased)

**Other**
Kolya (familiar)
Akatsuki (shikigami)
Mahiru (shikigami)
Yowa (shikigami)
Higure (shikigami)

**Personality:**
Anxious
Overthinks everything
Awkward
Very loyal to the people she loves
Likes to think of herself as rational and scientific but is ruled by her emotions more often than not
Very intelligent and prone to infodumping
Likes to feel in control even though she knows she’s never actually in control of any given situation
Strategic, hypervigilant, adaptable, decisive and ruthless when she feels threatened; she is the epitome of grace and coolheaded under pressure, but she’ll fall apart the instant the crisis she calmly dealt with is averted
Loves to learn and share her knowledge with other people
Strongly believes in the principles of intellectual freedom
Tired at all times; always wants to take a nap
Stubborn as hell
Tries to treat others with kindness and mostly succeeds

**Top 5 Character Tropes:**
(1) Handicapped Badass
(2) Magibabble
(3) In the Blood
(4) Faustian Rebellion
(5) Awakening the Sleeping Giant

**Powers:**

Thaumaturgy
Telekinesis
  - Telekinetic Combustion
  - Telekinetic Earthquake
  - Levitation

Concilium
  - Egocissor

Pyrokinesis
Divination
  - Psychometry
  - Scrying
  - Geomancy

Transmutation
Vitalum Vitalis
Astral Projection
  - Descensum

Spellcraft
  - Incantation
  - Kotodama
  - Theurgy
  - Invocation

Alchemy
  - Potioncraft
  - Elementalism
  - Hemomancy

Conjuration
Enerkinesis
Clairvoyance
Ergokinesis
Hallucinogenesis
Sensing
Aspidakinesis
Potentiprohiberis
Chlorokinesis
Summoning
Banishment
Disfactum

Nephilim Physiology

- Wings
- Quintessence
- Ultipotence
- Resurgence
- Immortality
- Infernokinesis
- Infernakinesis
- Regenerative Healing Factor
- Ergokinetic Absorption
- Soul Absorption
- Empathic Absorption
- Demonic Shapeshifting
- Projectile Feathers
- Omnilingualism

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*Micahel*

**Name:** Michael Tate Langdon

**Etymology:**

Michael is rooted in the biblical Hebrew mikhael (מְיָאֵל), meaning “who is like God?” It's also the name of the archangel Michael. Tate is rooted in the Old Norse teitr, meaning “cheerful.” Langdon is a topographic Anglo-Saxon surname rooted in the Old English “lang,” meaning “long,” and “dun,” meaning “hill.”

**Age:** b. 20 March 2012

**Zodiac:** Aries, Year of the Dragon

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral (The Anarchist)

**Height:** 5’11”

**Weight:** 172 pounds

**Hair:** Blond and silky, curly when shorter but mellows out after it grows past his shoulders

**Eyes:** Cornflower blue, but looks molten gray in certain slants of light

**Skin:** Golden and inhumanly flawless

**Body:** Looks deceptively muscular because of his wide shoulders, but he has a narrow waist and most of his lean muscles don’t have very much definition

**Place of Birth:** Los Angeles, CA

**Former Residence:** Poulsbo, WA
Current Residence: New Orleans, LA

Political Beliefs: Individualist anarchism with a pinch of political nihilism (i.e. rejection of the supposed necessity of fundamental social and political structures, e.g. government, laws, and family)

Motivations:
Self-gratification, preservation, and indulgence
Whatever makes Vee happy

Race: Nephilim (part-demon, part-witch, part-human)
Ethnicity: White
Bloodlines: Holt (European witch bloodline that predates the coven of Salem descendants)

Family:

Siblings
Agrat bat Mahlat (sister)
Eisheth Zenunim (sister)
Naamah (sister)
Azazel (brother-by-marriage)
Violet Harmon (half-sister)
Jeffrey Harmon (twin half-brother)

Parents
Satan (creator, spiritual father)
Lilith (stepmother)
Tate Langdon (biological father)
Vivien Harmon (biological mother)
Ben Harmon (stepfather)

Grandparents
God (spiritual paternal grandparent)
Hugo Langdon (paternal grandfather, deceased)
Constance DeLongpre Langdon (paternal grandmother, deceased)
Mary Womack (maternal grandmother)

Ancestors
Richard Mather (ancestor c. 1600s, deceased)
Katherine Holt Mather (ancestor c. 1600s, deceased)
Nathaniel Mather (ancestor c. 1600s, deceased)
Prudence Mather (ancestor c. 1600s, deceased)
Emilia “Mimi” DeLongpre (ancestor c. 1900s, deceased)
Michael Beauregard (paternal great-grandfather, deceased)
Titania DeLongpre (paternal great-grandmother, deceased)

Other
Adelaide “Addy” Langdon (paternal aunt, deceased)
Beauregard “Beau” Langdon (paternal uncle, deceased)
Rosaline “Rose” Langdon (paternal aunt)
Jo Womack (maternal aunt)
Stephen DeLongpre (first cousin, twice removed)
Malcolm DeLongpre (first cousin, twice removed)
Mallory DeLongpre (third cousin)
Zoe Benson (great-grandniece)
Rosier (stepuncle)
Tiamat (familiar)

**Personality:**
Perspicacious
Very intelligent but prone to keeping what he knows to himself until he can drop information on people like atomic bombs and watch the ensuing chaos unfold
Capricious
Was lowkey indoctrinated by his father into thinking of human emotions as weaknesses but is paradoxically a sensitive and emotional person who subsequently has trouble expressing himself in positive ways
Codependent upon and possessive of Vee
Manipulative
Has violent tendencies and struggles with his need to cause harm and instigate chaos, although that intrinsic need is somewhat met by feeding on human emotions and pre-existing chaos that he didn’t instigate himself
Attention whore; prone to theatricality and occasional histrionics; performs humanity in ways that most human beings perform gender
Definitely would’ve been a Theater Kid in high school if he’d had a normal childhood
Tends to seek validation from Vee in particular
Doesn’t particularly value human lives and believes that all people, given the right pressures or stimulus, are evil motherfuckers
Hasn’t destroyed the world yet because (1) Vee would miss her family, (2) Vee needs her immunosuppressants and SSRI medication to function, (3) Vee would miss things like piroshky and bad pop music and urban fantasy novels, and (4) he doesn’t want to destroy the fashion designers whose clothes and shoes and other accessories he covets

**Top 5 Character Tropes:**
(1) Magnificent Bastard
(2) Cry for the Devil
(3) Face of an Angel, Mind of a Demon
(4) Man of Wealth and Taste
(5) Anti-Antichrist

**Powers:**
Thaumaturgy
Telekinesis

- Telekinetic Combustion
- Telekinetic Earthquake
- Levitation

Concilium

- Egocissor

Pyrokinesis
Divination

- Psychometry
- Scrying
- Psychography
- Geomancy

Transmutation
Vitalum Vitalis
Astral Projection

- Descensum

Spellcraft

- Incantation
- Theurgy
- Invocation

Alchemy

- Potioncraft
- Elementalism
- Hemomancy
- Stiricidium

Conjuration
Enerkinesis
Clairvoyance

- Lectio Animo

Ergokinesis
Hallucinogenesis
Sensing
Potentiprohiberis
Summoning
Banishment
Nephilim Physiology

- Quintessence
- Ultipotence
- Superstrength
- Resurgence
- Immortality
- Infermokinesis
- Infernakinesis
- Regenerative Healing Factor
- Ergokinetic Absorption
- Soul Absorption
- Empathic Absorption
- Demonic Shapeshifting
- Omnilingualism

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**Kolya**

**Name:** Nikolai “Kolya” Feng 「鳳・凱的人」
Etymology:

Nikolai is the Romanization of Nikoláj (Николай), the Russian and Slavic form of Nicholas, the Anglicization of Nikólaos (Νικόλαος), the ancient Greek name meaning “victory of the people.” Feng is a Chinese surname that can mean “horse” 馮, but it can also be written as “phoenix” 凰. These characters 凱的人 mean “victory of the people” but are not read as Nikolai, they would phonetically be read as kai de ren in Mandarin.

Age: approximately 300,000 years old, but his age can’t be measured by human standards because time moves differently in Hell
Zodiac: Leo, Year of the Dog (pun intended)
Alignment: Neutral Evil (The Believer)
Height: 5’11”
Weight: 333 pounds (because his bone and muscle density are different than a human’s)

Hair: Black and variegated
Eyes: Gold and has the tapeta lucidum of a dog
Skin: Tan, but not too dark because everyone in the Pacific Northwest is Vitamin D deficient
Body: Looks deceptively skinny but is cut and has demonic bone and muscle density even in human form

Fancast: Joshua Lee Young

Place of Birth: Sheol
Former Residence: Chamas, the Seventh Circle of Hell
Current Residence: New Orleans, LA

Political Beliefs: Doesn’t give a fuck about petty human politics and is actually in favor of the nuclear apocalypse because it would open the way for demons to live on earth, where they’re stronger and more powerful

Motivations:
Protecting his pack
Making his spouses happy
Serving his creator

Race: Hellhound
Ethnicity: Biracial (the body of his host is Chinese and Russian)
Bloodlines: Barghest (hunters)

Family:

siblings
Hellhounds (from the same litter)

Parents
Abaddon (creator, spiritual father)

Cousins
Hellhounds (from different broods)
Erinyes
Spouses
Akatsuki (husband)
Mahiru (wife)
Yowa (wife)
Higure (wife)

Other
Vee (agathion bond)
Michael (considers him part of his pack)

Personality:
Very loyal to Vee (Abaddon is a god to his creations so Kolya sees protecting Vee, the only surviving child of his creator god, as his calling)
Has no patience for incompetence
Tech-savvy because of the knowledge he absorbed from the brain of his host
Works as a freelance exorcist for hire and eats psychic remnants that cling to haunted places
Laughs at inappropriate moments during horror movies
Falls down internet rabbit holes disturbingly often
Defaults to pack mentality with Vee as his alpha
Spent most of his past as a psychopomp who eradicated ghosts, but only if the ghosts were earthbound souls rather than soulless psychic remnants like poltergeists—he calls it “spectral troubleshooting”—and thus has encyclopedic knowledge of haunted locations on earth

Top 5 Character Tropes:
(1) Bond Creature
(2) Predator Turned Protector
(3) Beleaguered Assistant
(4) Techno-Wizard
(5) Genius Bruiser

Powers:
Telekinesis
  - Telekinetic Combustion
  - Telekinetic Earthquake
Divination
  - Scrying
  - Pyromancy
Transmutation
Astral Projection
  - Descensum
Sensing
Pyrokinesis
Fulgurkinesis
  - Technopathy
Summoning
Abaddon

Name: Abaddon, Penemue, Phanuel

Etymology:

All three of his names are rooted in Hebrew: Abaddon (אַבַּדָּן) means “destruction” or “devastation,” Penemue (פֶּנֶּיוּם) means “the inside,” and Phanuel (פַּנְאֻ֥ל) means “the face of God.”

Age: approximately 13.8 billion years old, but his age can’t be measured by human standards because time moves differently in Hell

Zodiac: Gemini, Year of the Dragon

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral (The Hedonist)

Height: 6’0”

Weight: 143 pounds

Hair: Auburn with the same thick wavy texture as his daughter

Eyes: Light gray, but they can look metallic in certain slants of light

Skin: Glow-in-the-dark shade of pale, with freckles

Body: Thin and gangly, his wings only appear when he gets emotional

Fancast: Caleb Landry Jones

Place of Birth: Yetzirah

Former Residence: Beriah

Current Residence: Chamas, the Seventh Circle of Hell
**Political Beliefs:** Centrist by infernal standards, in that he doesn’t think humankind should be annihilated; believes in God, but totally lapsed in his faith because God is asleep at the wheel and he resents his creator for ruining his relationships with his children

**Motivations:**
Self-interest
Love
Curiosity
Family obligation
Prophecy

**Race:** Angel
**Ethnicity:** Irin
**Bloodlines:** Benei Elohim

**Family:**

*Parents*
God (creator)

*Siblings*
Azriel (twin sister)
Angels
Archdemons

*Children*
Xii (son, deceased and destroyed)
Anna the Prophetess (daughter, deceased)
Veronica Enid “Vee” Roscoe (daughter)

*Spouse*
Ern (first wife, deceased and destroyed)
Ava of the lost Tribe of Asher (second wife, deceased)
Gwendolyn “Lyn” Hoozuki (third wife, deceased)

**Personality:**

**Top 5 Character Tropes:**
(1) Fallen Angel
(2) The Paragon Always Rebels
(3) Demon Lords and Archdevils
(4) For Your Own Good
(5) Daddy Had a Good Reason for Abandoning You

**Powers:**

Thaumaturgy
Telekinesis

- Telekinetic Combustion
- Telekinetic Earthquake
- Levitation

Concilium
- Egocissor

Pyrokinesis
Divination
- Psychometry
- Scrying
- Geomancy

Transmutation
Vitalum Vitalis
Descensum
Spellcraft
- Incantation
- Kotodama
- Theurgy
- Invocation

Alchemy
- Potioncraft
- Elementalism
- Hemomancy

Conjuration
Enerkinesis
Clairvoyance
- Claircognizance

Ergokinesis
Hallucinogenesis
Photokinesis
Sensing
Aspídakinesis
Potentiprohiberis
Atmokinesis
Chlorokinesis
Xylokinesis
Summoning
Banishment
Empathy
Disfactum
Somnipathy
Obtenebration
Fallen Angel Physiology
- Wings
- Quintessence
- Ultipotence
- Omniscience
- Immortality
- Intangibility
- Invulnerability
- Infernokinesis
- Infernakinesis
- Possession
- Omnifarious
- Malevorous
- Regenerative Healing Factor
- Enhanced Strength
- Enhanced Durability
- Enhanced Speed
- Enhanced Senses
- Enhanced Stamina
- Ergokinetic Absorption
- Soul Absorption
- Empathic Absorption
- Projectile Feathers
- Omnilingualism

Lyn

Name: Gwendolyn “Lyn” Hoozuki 「鬼灯・グウェンドリン」

Etymology:

Gwendolyn, rooted in the Welsh gwen (white, fair, blessed, holy) and dolen (loop, ring, link, bow) can be interpreted or translated in a myriad of ways. I choose to interpret the meaning of her name as “halo,” because irony. Hoozuki is written as “devil lantern” in kanji.

Age: 19 (b. 9 December 1971 – d. 12 July 1991)
Zodiac: Sagittarius, Year of the Rat
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral (The Rebel)

Height: 5’1”
Weight: 193 pounds

Hair: Black and thick, unruly
Eyes: Hazel, can look either brown or green with flecks of gray
Skin: Olive complexion
Body: Curvy, is experimenting with horns in the afterlife because apparently both horns and hair are made of keratin and she can shapeshift now

Fancast: Jolene Purdy

Place of Birth: Tokyo, Japan
Former Residence: New Orleans, LA
Current Residence: Chamas, the Seventh Circle of Hell

Political Beliefs: Left-wing; if she became the next Supreme, she planned to turn the coven into a democracy rather than a kratocracy

Motivations:

Love
Protecting her daughter
Knowledge
Fucking with her mother
Changing the world for good

**Race:** Witch (formerly), Archdemon (posthumously)

**Ethnicity:** Multiracial (Irish, Japanese, Italian)

**Bloodlines:**
Janara (Italian strega bloodline that originated in the 6th century)
Malone (Gaelic charmworker bloodline that originated in the 8th century)
Kamo (Japanese onmyouji bloodline that originated in the 10th century)
Abeno (Japanese onmyouji bloodline that originated in the 10th century)
Warren (American witch bloodline that originated in the 17th century)

**Family:**

*Parents*
Vincent Malone (father)
Hoozuki Sei (mother)

*Children*
Veronica Enid “Vee” Roscoe (daughter)

*Spouse*
Abaddon (husband)

*Ancestors*
Kamo no Tadayuki (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Kamo no Yasunori (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Kuzunoha (ancestor c. 900s)
Abe no Yasuna (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Abe no Seimei (ancestor c. 900s, deceased)
Mary Ann Warren (ancestor c. 1600s, deceased)
Marianne Wharton (ancestor c. 1800s, deceased)

**Personality:**
Tenacious
Stubborn
Rebellious
Very intelligent but lacking common sense, as teenagers do
Prone to solving her problems with violence
Went to kindergarten, elementary school, and junior high in Japan; in junior high she became a sukeban, the leader of a gang of female delinquents
Never met a rule she didn’t want to break
Sent to Robichaux at 15 to reform her behavior, ended up being impregnated by a fallen angel instead
Was able to cast six of the Seven Wonders as a teenager
Very serious about her magic studies, challenged Fiona constantly
Was best friends with Cordelia, who actually had a crush on her; but she was tragically heterosexual
Doesn’t have a middle name because Japanese people typically don’t

**Top 5 Character Tropes:**
(1) Death by Childbirth
(2) Posthumous Character
(3) Died Happily Ever After
(4) Hot Consort
(5) You Are Worth Hell

**Powers:**

Thaumaturgy
Telekinesis

- Telekinetic Combustion
- Telekinetic Earthquake
- Levitation

Concilium

- Egocissor

Pyrokinesis
Divination

- Psychometry
- Scrying
- Geomancy

Transmutation
Vitalum Vitalis
Descensum
Spellcraft

- Incantation
- Kotodama
- Theurgy
- Invocation

Alchemy

- Potioncraft
- Elementalism
- Hemomancy

Conjuration
Enerkinesis
Clairvoyance

- Claircognizance

Ergokinesis
Hallucinogenesis
Photokinesis
Sensing
Aspidakinesis
Potentiprohiberis
Atmokinesis
Chlorokinesis
Xylokinesis
Summoning
Banishment
Empathy
Disfactum
Somnipathy
Obtenebration
Archdemon Physiology

- Quintessence
- Ultipotence
- Omniscience
- Immortality
- Intangibility
- Invulnerability
- Infernokinesis
- Infernakinesis
- Possession
- Omnifarious
- Malevorous
- Regenerative Healing Factor
- Enhanced Strength
- Enhanced Durability
- Enhanced Speed
- Enhanced Senses
- Enhanced Stamina
- Ergokinetic Absorption
- Soul Absorption
- Empathic Absorption
- Omnilingualism

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