

PREMIUM EDITION

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my children.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank **Yeshua** for everything.

Now when the *unclean spirit* goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*.

Matthew 12:43

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CHAPTER ONE

Romania | A Village of Popesti | St. Sophronius Catholic Church | Mid-October

Although small, the village church sanctuary is satisfactorily furnished, a clear sign that the Catholic reach knows no bounds. Numerous candles illuminate the dimly lit space, and stained-glass windows allow God's rays to flood the church. A huge crucifix is attached to the wall high in front of the church. Below the crucifix is a small, frail boy tied to the priest's chair.

The boy, a 7-year-old Romanian village native, is dehydrated, fatigued, and badly bruised. Standing 20 feet away is his depressed mother, holding a severely worn black rosary. Also present is a middle-aged Roma, a gypsy woman who is standing in the background out of the mother's view. The Priest,

Father Andrei Funar, is a middle-aged priest performing an unsanctioned exorcism. Despite having a full head of gray hair, Father Andrei exudes a certain youthfulness, which is evident in his relentless performance of this exorcism.

After several days, the boy is unresponsive to numerous exorcism attempts. During the most recent effort, the boy, in a moment of lucidity, tells Father Andrei Funar that he is hungry. Father Andrei gives the boy some crackers, but after eating one, he spits them back in Father Andrei's face. The child starts laughing in a sinister voice. Moments later, his laughter turns to violent convulsions, then his body comes to a rest, and he dies.

The exorcism attempts are a colossal failure. It's worth repeating that Father Andrei Funar has never performed an exorcism. Fr. Andrei is arrested by Romanian police and charged with the torture and murder of a minor. Murder by exorcism becomes the local news headline. This headline travels fast, and soon the Vatican gets word of it.

Rome | Vatican City | Palace of the Holy Office |
Days Later

Upon receiving this news, the Vatican convened its governing commission, the Holy See. The Holy See is responsible for all things 'Diplomatic' regarding the Vatican. The commission agrees to send Jesuit Father Leon Lucas (Fr. Andrei's mentee) to talk to Father

Andrei and investigate the failed exorcism in Romania. Father Leon Lucas departs Vatican City for Popești, Romania.

Romania | Popești | Popești Police Department Jail

Upon arriving at the small, rundown police station in Popești, Father Leon talks briefly to the Chief Inspector. The tall, grumpy Inspector lets Father Leon in on everything involved in the investigation of Father Andrei Funar. The Inspector tells Leon that Father Andrei is facing charges of murder and torture of a minor by way of a ritualistic ceremony. Father Leon knows this archaic ceremony as an attempted exorcism. Despite Leon's pleading for his mentor, the Inspector will not budge on lowering the charges. However, the Chief Inspector promised to conduct a fair and proper inspection. In addition to his promise, the Inspector grants Father Leon a visit to Father Andrei Funar.

Sitting on his rack against the wall with his head down, Father Andrei looks dejected and defeated. Father Leon pulls up a chair and sits in front of the bars dividing the two priests. Father Leon establishes contact.

Father Leon: "Hello, my friend. Real mess you got yourself into this time, huh?"

Father Andrei raises his head, "My dear friend, I see

they sent you, and I am happy they did.”

They both cast a brotherly smile at each other.

Father Andrei shifts his weight in his seat. “Yeah, it’s strange. I’m not sure what happened. I thought for sure the Lord was with me.” He closed his eyes. “It was so strong. That poor boy.”

Father Andrei lowers his head in deep sadness.

Realizing his sadness, Father Leon acknowledges his struggle. They both take a minute of silence.

Father Leon: “Brother, it’s important to realize that they have you down for murder, which is a capital offense. If convicted, you face the death sentence.”

Fr. Leon, showing frustration, continues, “What on earth were you thinking? An exorcism? That boy is dead, and they are holding you solely responsible.”

Fr. Andrei raised his head from his hands, snapping: “Don’t you think I know that? I was there, I saw it, I held his lifeless body in my hands. His mother let out a sound that I have never heard before and will never forget.”

Fr. Leon scoots up the chair closer to the bars. “Then tell me, why an exorcism? I mean, you know

that's not how we deal with people who have mental health issues. If you knew the boy was having mental episodes, why didn't you—" Father Andrei interrupts, "No, Leon! It was an unclean spirit. That much I'm sure of."

Fr. Leon: "I can't believe what I'm hearing. Weren't you the one for years telling me that there was no such thing as demons and that any reference to them in the Bible was just an allegory? What happened to you? You and I both know there is no such thing as literal demons."

Fr. Andrei: "My friend, my learning has evolved since we last spoke at length. There is no way we can believe in angels without also believing in fallen angels. Otherwise, too much is left unexplained if it's just an allegory. There is more at work in our lives than just our rebellious nature."

Fr. Andrei stands up and grabs the bars. "Go to my office in Saint Sophronius and gather my materials. Study them, for one day it might save someone's life."

Fr. Leon: "Like it saved that boy's life?"

Fr. Andrei: "Go, Leon, and come back once you've reviewed my materials." Then we will talk some more. Father Andrei goes back to his rack. "I'm sorry that I lost the boy. And I'm sorry I've let you down. But

please, go now to St. Sophronius.”

Father Leon gets up from his chair. “Guard!”

Romania | A Village in Popesti | St. Sophronius
Catholic Church

Father Leon arrives at Father Andrei’s church. Fr. Leon goes in and stares at the police tape strewn throughout the altar in the sanctuary. As he draws closer, he sees the urine stains on the hardwood floor. The blood-soaked chair is adorned with an evidence tag. Below is a copy of the Roman Rituals, which has been drenched in urine. Finally, Fr. Leon comes upon a chalk outline marking the spot where the boy died. He pauses for a second, then pulls out his St. Christopher necklace and kisses it. Fr. Leon then continues straight to Andrei’s office.

Fr. Andrei’s office is messy, with papers and books everywhere. Occult and other religious materials decorate his desk. Fr. Leon sits down and begins examining the various occult papers and books on magic, attempting to make sense of them. After a bit, the noise of doors opening startles Fr. Leon, who had drifted into a brief nap. Fr. Leon takes that as a cue to pack up everything. He sloppily fills his backpack and heads to the exit. When Leon reaches the sanctuary, a policeman yells that it’s a crime scene and escorts Fr. Leon outside. Fr. Leon heads for his hotel.

Romania | Popesti | Local Hotel Nova Residence

Father Leon was finally able to take a shower. It felt good to feel the hot water soak and massage the body. A shower like that is more about relaxing than washing. Maybe that's why he was barely out of the shower in time to answer the door for the Glovo food delivery service. And a good thing, too, Fr. Leon is starving.

Fr. Leon visited Romania with Fr. Andrei years ago. He had forgotten just how good the food was here. He devoured the *Sarmale cu mamaliga* as if he hadn't eaten in weeks. Fr. Leon is always a sucker for a good Bucharest dish. Full of food, Fr. Leon falls asleep while watching television.

The next morning, Father Leon wakes to the ring of his Satellite phone on the nightstand. Sleepily, Leon grabs the phone. Across the display reads: *Popesti Police Department*.

A raspy-voiced Leon reluctantly answers, "Hello? It is. What can I do for you, Inspector? Alright, I'm on my way." Fr. Leon sits on the bed and ponders for a moment, wondering what the Chief Inspector wants to discuss with him.

Romania | Popesti | Popesti Police Department Jail

Fr. Leon enters the police department and finds the

Chief Inspector waiting for him. The Inspector invites Fr. Leon to join him in the interview room. There, the Chief Inspector reveals that Fr. Andrei Funar was found dead at around 6 am this morning. Currently, there is no evidence of foul play. However, a full investigation will be forthcoming. The Chief Inspector offers his condolences and leaves Fr. Leon alone to absorb this significant blow. The rollercoaster of emotions that swirls within Leon is almost indescribable. Anger, sadness, and distrust all mix to produce a stoic Fr. Leon. It's not lost on Fr. Leon where he's at. The land of Dracula and werewolves is a mere couple of hours away. So, his confidence in a rigorous and thorough forensic investigation for Fr. Andrei and the boy is minuscule at best. Fr. Leon wipes his tears, gets up, and leaves the interview room. One of the Inspector's men jogs up to him and hands Fr. Leon a manila envelope.

Guard: "Fr. Leon, the Inspector wanted you to have this so you can take it back to your superiors. He also said that we would contact you after the investigation."

Fr. Leon: "Thank you."

Leon accepts the package. The front of the envelope reads, *FUNAR*. Fr. Leon elects not to open it now. Instead, he leaves the station and heads for his rented Dacia Duster. Upon reaching the vehicle, he hears a loud, raspy woman's voice from behind. The sound of the voice is coming closer. Fr. Leon turns around.

And sees a mid-aged gypsy running up to him. Fr. Leon knows who gypsies are based on his previous visits to Romania. Those multi-colored dresses and peculiar headdresses force them to stand out as a distinct group.

Gypsy: “Priest! Priest!”

Fr. Leon: “Yes, can I help you?”

Finally catching up to Leon, “What did they tell you about the boy?” the Gypsy asks in that old raspy voice.

Fr. Leon, curious about her questioning, responds, “It’s under investigation; why are you asking?”

Gypsy: “I was there.”

Fr. Leon: “Wait, you were there? Why were you there?” Fr. Leon’s tone increases in volume. “Did you just watch the boy die? You need to tell me what happened.” Fr. Leon’s tall frame towered over the stout five-foot woman.

The calm gypsy woman answers: “I tried to help the Priest seize the unclean spirit.”

Fr. Leon: “Spirit, or do you mean demon? Listen, there is no such thing as demons. That boy was sick and needed a doctor. You Gypsies, always jumping to

the supernatural angle. And because of that, my friend and the boy are dead.” Leon, struggling to hold back tears, said, “Take your questions and please leave. Your services are no longer needed here.”

The Gypsy reaches into her breast pocket and pulls something out in a clenched fist. She draws close and hugs him. Not knowing how to react, Leon hugs her back. He can’t help but notice that her grey hair smells like herbs. She breaks away, then grabs his hand and inserts a small object into it. Without saying a word, she walks away. Fr. Leon watches her walk away and then looks down at his hand. He opens his hand, and a small black bag appears. Fr. Leon looks up, the gypsy is gone. He looks back down at the black bag. Puzzled, Leon puts the bag in his pocket and drives to the hotel.

Romania | Popesti | Local Hotel Nova Residence

Back at the hotel, Father Leon sits down and tosses the black vinyl bag that the gypsy gave him onto the desk. After staring at it for a few minutes, he dumps the contents of the vinyl bag onto the desk. A small bone and a ring fall out. Father Leon looks intently at the two items on the desk. Grossed out, he swipes the bone into a trash can. Immediately, Leon’s attention is back to the ring. The large silver ring is ordained with the letters *IHS*. Each letter represents the first three letters of the name of Jesus in Greek. This is a Jesuit Ring. Upon further inspection, Leon notices a name

engraved on the inside of the band. The name reads “Father Andrei Funar.” Comparing the ring to his, many questions flood Fr. Leon’s brain. The one obvious question hits first: “Where did she get this from?” Leon whispers. Thinking, Leon leans back in the cheap hotel chair. “We never take these off, so why was his?” Hitting a wall for answers, Leon determines that it’s good that she returned it, no matter how she got it. He puts it back in the black vinyl bag. Next, Fr. Leon opens the envelope that the guard gave him. He dumps the contents onto the desk. It’s all Father Andrei Funar’s belongings. His collar, glasses, wallet, and silver pectoral Jesuit cross necklace all lay on the desk as if they were looking for their owner. Leon picks up the cross necklace. He has always loved this piece, but he could never get one like it. He reaches down for his...wait! Oh no, where did his necklace go? Leon’s necklace is missing. What the heck? Leon stands up and looks around. He checks everywhere: his bag, the bathroom, the bed, the dresser, and nothing. Although it’s just a material thing, it has significant value. It was passed down to him by a deceased Cardinal at the Vatican. And now it appears lost. Leon immediately calls the jail and asks the Chief Inspector about it, and nothing has turned up. The clasp must have broken and fallen off. You would think Leon would have heard it fall, but who knows? The hotel people may have taken it. Leon can’t think about it now because he has to board a plane for the Vatican tomorrow.

Later that night, Fr. Leon finds it hard to sleep. He's been staring at the ceiling, reminiscing about his friend and mentor, Fr. Andrei Funar. He pivots to spending time talking to Andrei, even though he's dead. After a while, Fr. Leon eventually falls asleep. The next day, Leon Lucas gathers all Funar's belongings and heads back to Rome.

Rome | Vatican City | Palace of the Holy Office

The Holy See holds a meeting with Father Leon Lucas. Fr. Leon Lucas shares with them everything he discovered during his time in Romania. However, Fr. Leon does not mention the occult materials that he uncovered at St. Sophronius Catholic Church in an attempt to preserve his mentor's reputation.

The Holy See informs Fr. Leon Lucas that the committee initially placed Fr. Andrei Funar at the Romanian Parish due to his Romanian heritage and that it was his last chance to redeem himself. Father Funar was wavering in his faith and had recently engaged in questionable activities, which warranted a venue change.

Father Leon Lucas doesn't know what to make of this news. He doesn't want to believe any of it because Fr. Andrei Funar was Leon's mentor and his best friend.

To compound matters, the council also informs Lucas that his mentor may not be buried as a Catholic,

pending the outcome of the investigation. Now, the world in which Leon believes everyone around him is firmly committed to the Catholic faith has started to show cracks.

The Holy See Council has granted Fr. Leon Lucas a leave of absence to attend to his personal affairs. Fr. Leon doesn't want to but ultimately agrees and decides to go to the States (Maine) so he can inform Sadie in person that her brother has died. This is better than some formal letter from the Vatican.

Rome | Casa Santa Maria | Fr. Leon's Home

Fr. Leon Lucas goes home and falls on the couch from exhaustion. He falls asleep. Later that night, Fr. Leon wakes up to the sound of his phone ringing. The caller ID displays 'St. Sophronius Catholic Church.' Leon is very much surprised, yet he answers it.

Fr. Leon Lucas: "Hello, who is this? How did you get this number?"

Gypsy Woman: "Shut up and listen to what he has to say."

Gypsy/Male dark voice: "Foolish Funar finally found fun. But I was hungry and needed to eat. Now I'm ready to play again, at least until dinner. Carry on, Father Leon Lucas."

The phone hangs up. Leon tries to call back, but the line is dead. He slams down his phone in confusion, almost breaking it. Fr. Leon is upset about the prank call. He's not amused. "How dare someone mock his friend's death?" Leon asks himself. "The callousness of some people." Leon blocks the call on his phone and is also out of his mind.

The next day, Leon decides to board a plane for Maine, USA.

CHAPTER TWO

USA | Maine | Eagle River | Sadie's loft

Sadie Funar wakes up to the alarm in her loft. Her beautiful loft hovers above the bookstore in the small New England town of Eagle River, Maine. Sadie grabs her phone and browses her missed messages. There were messages from her dear friend Ethan Moore inquiring about his package. Sadie swipes that one away. She's feeling slightly depressed today. As a recovering addict, Sadie has learned that she cannot go back to the substances that she used to abuse anymore. Sadie is learning to turn to God now, but she occasionally falls short in this endeavor; sanctification is a gradual process. She stares at the picture of her family—her parents, her brother, and herself—on the nightstand. She starts to tear up. It's so hard for her to move on from that fateful day one year ago this October when she and her

parents were in a boating accident on Eagle River. Sadie stands up, rubs the scar on her back, and heads to the shower.

USA | Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New & Rare Books

Later, Sadie goes downstairs to Pages: New & Rare Books. Sadie inherited this store from her parents after the boating accident last year. It is a medium-sized old-brick building that also houses Sadie's loft. Sadie moved here after the previous tenant moved out at the beginning of the New Year. Its prime location downtown suits the store's needs perfectly, from convenient deliveries to customers who walk the main strip. Sadie loves the location and the responsibility of running the bookstore. Unofficially, her friend Ethan occasionally assists in running the store. *Pages* also serves as a meeting spot occasionally for her and her friends. *Pages*, as far as Sadie is concerned, have been an absolute blessing.

Sadie opened packages from the deliveries late yesterday. A new set of rare books coming in always sells well in her store. Sadie prides herself on finding the choicest rare books. Oh, and look, there is a package for Ethan as well. His rare book must be here; it came from overseas. I'm sure that's why he has been texting me nearly every day this week. Sadie continues to open and scan the mountain of book

packages that have arrived.

Later that day, Ethan Moore busts through the door of Sadie's shop. Ethan asks Sadie if she checked her social feed earlier. Sadie said no and asked why. Ethan tells her that the Pastor of their church is in trouble. Ethan takes over her computer and plays a brief local news clip. The news clip shows Pastor Jon Sykes being arrested for having sexual content involving minors on computers at the church office. The clip broadcast headline: "Lead Pastor Jon Sykes of Eagle River Community Church, has been arrested for having inappropriate sexual content involving minors on his office computers at the church. The indictment has not yet been issued, but rest assured that the charges are forthcoming.

Sadie and Ethan look at each other in disbelief. Sadie asks Ethan about what happens next. Ethan shakes his head slowly and says the church is closed until further notice. Sadie, inflamed, barks at Ethan and says, "This is so typical of church pastors." Ethan tries to stabilize Sadie by replying, "Sadie, this is not every pastor. I had no idea Jon was doing this." Sadie barks back, "Isn't Jon your friend?" Ethan replies, "Maybe he didn't do it." Sadie shakes her head. "I was just beginning to like him. You know it's hard for me to open up and trust people, Ethan!" "Sadie, watch your mouth. God is listening," Ethan replies. Sadie tells Ethan, "God has more to worry about with Jon than

my mouth.” Sadie shakes it off. Looking to change the subject. “Oh, your package came in today.” Sadie hands Ethan his package. Ethan, excited, receives the package from Sadie like a kid on Christmas.

Maine | Eagle River

Later that night at home, Ethan opens the package. He received the authentic facsimile edition of the Black Raven grimoire written on vellum. Ethan had been waiting for this book for weeks. He is starting to accumulate a substantial collection of occult books and materials. His collection spans works on ancient mysteries, Kabbalistic writings, and grimoire works on witchcraft. Ethan is seeking to collect works closer to the occult side of things. For now, this grimoire will do. He sits back in his recliner and examines the book. After a bit, he puts the book down and prays for his friend Pastor Jon.

As Sadie gets ready for bed, she has time to think about the day. Pastor Jon and her parents are all overwhelming to her. She contemplates taking an oxy. However, she promised Ethan and the church that she would not go back to prescription drugs. Still, I need one to take the edge off, she figures. She struggles with this for about a minute and then decides to go to bed. Her back doesn't hurt that much anyway, just her emotions.

USA | Maine

Father Leon arrives at Portland International Airport in Portland, Maine. He collects his bags and heads to his hotel up north. After an hour and a half drive, Leon finds that he's exhausted. He sits on the bed at the hotel, takes out Father Funar's Bible, looks at it, and starts sobbing. The death of Father Funar is beginning to take its toll on him. There is much to digest. Questions start to arise. He asks himself: "Was Funar somehow losing his mind? Why didn't he seek medical attention for the boy?" Leon Lucas is so freaking sad and tired. "My Lord, what happened to my dear friend?" Leon lies back on the bed and thinks, "At least I get to see Sadie. It's been a while, and it will be good for us to catch up with each other." Leon closes his eyes and falls asleep.

Romania | Hoia Forest | Rumored to be Haunted

The Gypsy woman is at her residence in the Hoia Forest. Hoia is a dense forest with a few areas suffering from severe fog patches. Humidity in the forest is thick and smothering. At times, it can feel like the Amazon Rainforest. There is a clearing in the middle where only the insane venture. It is this very clearing that provides acreage for the hut of the gypsy

woman. To the eye, the hut is nothing special. Grass, hay, and branches outline the roof. The rest of the structure is made from wood. The inside is just as sparse. The interior features dark walls and floors. A small table, covered with herbs, books, and lit candles, is set in the corner. On the floor, the naked gypsy woman is on her hands and knees; her head facing downward. Across from her is something or someone standing in the dark part of the room.

The gypsy woman says to the thing across the room, “Do you think that is wise... it seems that...”

The thing in the corner interrupts her with an indiscernible whisper.

The gypsy retorts: “I’m very sorry, I didn’t... Yes, I will see it done right away.”

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick’s Catholic Church

The next day, Father Leon Lucas goes to St. Patrick’s Catholic Church to tell his friend that Father Andrei has died. St. Patrick’s is a medium-sized local Catholic Church in the small town of Eagle River, perhaps overkill for the small population of Eagle River. However, many buildings in New England lend themselves to overkill in the area of size and scope. The priest at St. Patrick’s has been in this position for Decades. He has been a role model and, to some

extent, a mentor to Father Andrei and Leon. It was Father Antoni who convinced Leon to go into the priesthood. If nothing else, Fr. Antoni deserved to know about Fr. Andrei Funar's demise. Not to mention, telling Father Antoni Bendetti would be a practice run before going to Sadie.

Father Leon goes inside the local parish. The sound of the large doors opening catches the attention of Father Antoni, who is at the front of the church talking to another church member. Father Antoni greets Fr. Leon with a massive smile on his face. He holds up his index finger, signaling for a minute to wrap up his current conversation. Father Leon responds with two head nods as if to declare, "No problem, take your time." Leon then sits in a pew, searching for a way to tell Fr. Antoni that Fr. Andrei Funar is dead. Sitting in the pew reminds Leon how they all used to cut up together, laughing and joking. Fr. Leon tears up. The weight of all of this is taking its toll. Fr. Leon mumbles to himself, "This will break his heart." Father Leon realizes that he doesn't have the heart to tell Fr. Antoni about Andrei, at least not yet. Instead, Fr. Leon looks for a way out of the church without having to speak to Fr. Antoni. Almost instinctively, Father Leon fakes a phone call and leaves the church.

In the parking lot, sitting in his rental, Fr. Lucas leans back, closes his eyes, and prays to St. Dymphna, the patron saint of comfort during stressful and anxious times. After 30 minutes of begging and crying,

no comfort came.

This is not the first time that peace has not come from Leon's prayers to St. Dymphna or any saint, for that matter. He begins to wonder if he has lost favor with the Saints. Well, for now, Leon didn't have time to worry about it. Leon pulls out his phone to call Sadie but decides against it and instead goes straight to her store.

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New and Rare Books
| Afternoon

Sadie is scanning books into the inventory while Ethan stacks them in separate piles. They are discussing Ethan's new book, a grimoire spell book. Ethan tells her it's okay, but that's not enough for Sadie.

Sadie: "Ethan, does your mom know about the books you've been acquiring lately?"

Ethan: "Well, it's not like I'm practicing the things contained in the books; I'm just collecting them. And as for my mom, she is far too wrapped up in her new boyfriend."

Sadie: "Your mom has a boyfriend, not a boy toy, and I think it's great. She's been alone for so long. I

think it's long overdue.”

Ethan: “Yeah, I know; it's good for her.” I am happy for her. I wish she hadn't gone away for so long. How long do people typically spend on vacation in Alaska?

Sadie: “Didn't she go to meet his family and spend time alone?”

Ethan: “I think it was to meet his family and to tour the Alaskan coast.”

Sadie: “That sounds fun; I bet I would enjoy that.”

Ethan quickly responded, “Speaking of a boyfriend, Sadie, when are you going to give us a chance?”

Sadie, caught off guard, slightly smiles, but then her reality sets back in. She replies, “I'm damaged goods, Ethan. You know this. I'm not yet what you or your mom can seriously consider to be a good mate for you. I'm still broken, and I would only disappoint you.”

Sadie says this, looking down with deep sadness, almost as if she didn't want to have to say it.

Ethan approaches her and tries to reassure her: “You are not damaged goods, and while you may consider yourself broken, the Lord doesn't. You are a child of the Lord, and he has given you His Holy Spirit to put you on the path of holiness. And that's why I

think you are good to be my Eve. However, you must believe this and trust the work the Lord has done and will do in you, and when you do, I will be waiting. Because you are worth waiting for.”

Sadie loves Ethan’s optimism but doesn’t believe Ethan. “Ethan, you are a very nice person, and you have a beautiful heart; I do hope you find a good woman with a similar heart. Now help me put these boxes in the back.”

Ethan nods and grabs boxes.

While Ethan is in the back, the shop door chime sounds. It’s Father Leon Lucas. Sadie looks up and is happy to see him. Leon Lucas comes in and gives Sadie a big hug. She hugs him tight. Sadie comments on how long it’s been since she last saw him. Leon agrees, locks the front door, and turns the sign to *Closed*. Leon then tells Sadie, “I have bad news concerning your brother.”

Leon tells Sadie everything he knows, including the occult materials found in Funar’s office. Sadie is devastated. Ethan is back up front, and everyone is crying. Sadie is sobbing so much that her nose is dripping. After the crying subsides, a moment of silence follows.

Sadie, blowing her nose, says to Leon, “I want to

know the minute anything happens regarding the investigation.” Leon nods and says, “Of course.” Sadie continues, “You know you should let Ethan look at that stuff you got from Andrei’s office. He knows that kind of stuff.”

Father Leon Lucas turns sour at the idea of Ethan being mentioned. Leon sharply replies, “Absolutely not! I’m not even supposed to have it. Besides, I’m not here for that; I’m here to be with you at this challenging time for us both.” He asks Sadie to go upstairs to talk alone. Sadie tells Ethan to mind the store.

Sadie and Leon discussed the logistics of Andrei Funar, among other topics. Sadie, while angry that Leon had been gone for so long, had forgiven him when he first walked in; she hadn’t realized it. She cares for Leon. Those buried feelings she had for Leon a few years ago have resurfaced. Sadie sits on the couch with her arms folded. Leon stands in front of her and puts her head on his abdomen while he rubs her back. It is somewhat sensual. They both cried.

3

CHAPTER THREE

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New and Rare Books
| Later Afternoon

Ethan is still downstairs minding the store while Sadie and Fr. Leon are in Sadie's loft. Suddenly, the shop door opens slowly. Ethan is thrown off by this because he is sure that Fr. Leon locked it. Regardless, in walked an elderly-looking lady with a raincoat and its hood on.

She comes in and closes the door. Ethan speaks to her.

Ethan: "Excuse me, ma'am, we are closed until tomorrow."

Elderly woman: "Good afternoon to you." She starts walking around the shop. "I'm interested in a certain book. Does this place have any good grimoires?"

Ethan: “Sometimes. What are you looking for?”
The older woman doesn’t answer. “Um, how did you hear about Pages?”

Elderly woman: “Some friends on the other side, those over there, told me about it.”

Ethan: “Oh, you’re from across the river? Do they know about us over there?”

Elderly woman smiling: “Your name has come up.”

Ethan, confused, watches the woman walk around the store.

Meanwhile, upstairs, Sadie hears Ethan talking to someone. She gets up from the couch and turns on the store’s camera feed. Sadie and Leon both look at the monitor and see Ethan talking, but there is a lot of static on the screen, so they can’t quite make out who else might be there.

Sadie asks Leon, “Can you make out who else is there?”

Leon retorts, “Maybe he’s on the phone. I can’t see much; you need to have this fixed.”

Sadie, looking closer at the monitor, responds, “I know, it’s never been this bad before. Ethan is supposedly working on it.” After a few seconds of looking. “He is looking at something. What is he doing? Come on, let’s head down.”

Leon and Sadie both head back downstairs.

Ethan tells the elderly lady that although they are closed today, she can come back another day, and the owner can help her more thoroughly.

The elderly woman looks at Ethan, heads for the door, and says, “Perhaps I’ll see you again soon.” She leaves the store.

Sadie, entering the shop from the back, confronts Ethan. “Ethan, who are you talking to?”

Ethan counters: “There was an elderly woman here in rain gear.”

Sadie asks: “Did she say what she wanted?”

Ethan retorts, “She was just asking about books.”

Both Sadie and Father Leon Lucas shake their heads in unison.

Sadie declares that she’s tired and wants to be alone

for the rest of the day.

Ethan argues against it, pushing that it's not a good idea. Sadie shuts him down, expressing she's okay, even though everyone knows she's not.

Ethan: "Can we at least pray?"

Father Leon: "I will do it."

Ethan snipes, "Mary cannot help Sadie in her grief."

Fr. Leon remarks, "Intercession of the Saints is exactly what is needed, not undisciplined self-righteousness."

Sadie chimes in, "I'm exhausted. I need you two to stop. Ethan, will you please shut down the store? I'm going up. Talk to you guys later."

Both Ethan and Fr. Lucas say bye to her. Sadie heads upstairs.

Father Leon sternly warns Ethan, "Listen to me carefully; your lack of a disciplined religion is a detriment, better yet, a danger to Sadie. She's vulnerable right now, and what she needs is the power and might of the Catholic Church and its resources, including intercession."

Ethan counters by saying, “Aren’t you tired of not having your prayers answered? Remember Isaiah 1:13-15? The Lord no longer listens to your prayers; He has hidden His eyes and will not respond.”

Ethan continues, “Jesus is the only intercessor between God and Humanity.”

Father Leon starts to say more, but his phone rings. He looks at Ethan and then walks out while answering the phone. Ethan says a brief prayer and then starts shutting down the store.

Father Leon checks his caller ID. It’s the Holy See. Leon answers.

Fr. Leon Lucas: “Hello, this is Father Leon?”

Holy See Member: “Ah, Father Leon, are you well?”

Fr. Leon Lucas: “I am your eminence. Thank you for asking. What can I help you with?”

Holy See Member: “Some files from the investigation, primarily the autopsy report, are available in your email. My summary is on the last page of the PDF. When you’re done, use the file shredder app. Is any of this not clear, Fr. Leon Lucas?”

Fr. Leon Lucas: “Everything is crystal clear, your eminence. Thank you.”

Holy See Member: “Good. Please extend our best wishes to Fr. Antoni and Ms. Funar. We will be in touch, Fr. Leon.”

The Holy See member hangs up.

Father Lucas drives away from Pages, heading back to his hotel.

Sadie is devastated. She begins to think. There is so much going on, first Pastor Sykes and now this. Sadie doesn’t know how much more she can take. She isn’t built for this season of ongoing trauma; she’s not built for losing people. Now, her entire family is dead within a year. What did she do to deserve this torment? What does she do now, with her brother and her parents dead?

Sadie reasons that tonight, of all nights, warrants a pill. She can’t help it—she needs it. She tried to pray, but she couldn’t focus on her thoughts. Sadie takes her oxy while sipping a glass of wine. Eventually, Sadie falls asleep on the couch, wine glass on the floor.

Ethan makes it home in time for his mother’s phone

call. He doesn't go into anything specific because he doesn't want to ruin his mother's trip. He tells her he is tired and that work has been hectic. Mom tells her son to get rest, and she loves him. Ethan hangs up, teary-eyed. He brings out the Black Raven Grimoire and begins researching it.

Back at the hotel, Fr. Leon opens the file sent to him from the Vatican. The autopsy report reveals that Father Funar died from a sudden heart attack as a result of stress. The summary of the report suggests that overwhelming stress and low magnesium levels were the mitigating factors resulting in cardiac arrest. Guard did not hear him when he died, and there was no suspicious activity resulting in death. There is a symbol that seems to be branded on Father Funar's chest. However, this symbol did not contribute to his death.

The report summary continues: This symbol or seal seems to have been freshly burned into his chest. It has a language or alphabet that encircles it, followed by four Hebrew letters: YHWH. It seems to resemble some occult symbol.

Father Leon pauses to think, "How did that symbol get there? Who would brand a priest? Better yet, why did Fr. Andrei allow it?" Fr. Leon retrieves the papers and books he had taken from Father Andrei Funar's office. He sorts through the many papers and symbols

until he finds one that resembles it. To his dismay, Leon doesn't understand the seals and the writing.

Leon folds up all the paperwork and lays it on the table next to him. He doesn't allow himself to delve too deep into the loss of Father Funar. He can't; he refuses to be depressed. Instead, Fr. Leon chooses to focus on figuring out what happened to Funar. Now, although it's evening, Fr. Leon needs to get out of the hotel. Clear air to have a clear head is what Leon supposes. He decides to head to the Java Mill for some good old-fashioned hometown coffee while reviewing Funar's papers. He grabs his keys, packs the documents in a backpack, and heads to the Java Mill.

Maine | Eagle River | Sadie's Loft | Evening

Sadie wakes up after what turns out to be just a nap. She goes to take another pill to dull her emotions before they take hold of her again. She takes the bottle off the nightstand and pours out a pill into her hand. While holding the pill, Sadie closes her eyes, tears rolling down her face. She turns her hand over, letting the pill fall onto her rug. With her eyes closed, she whispers, "God, please, please, I'm so sorry. I need help, Lord, please help me." Sadie falls to her knees, sobbing, "God, where were you there when my brother died?" She took a deep breath. "What's to become of me, Lord?" Sadie climbs back onto the

couch and pulls her legs up to her. She pulls out her phone and goes through pictures of her brother and her when he visited last spring.

Maine | Eagle River | Java Mill | Evening Still

Father Leon Lucas arrives at the Java Mill. The Java Mill is a local coffee shop that specializes in Maine's coffee. The building is long and brick-built, sitting next to Eagle River. The Java Mill is a modern standout, considering it sits in the historic town of Maine. The Mill can serve you nearly any type of coffee you can dream of. Today, Fr. Leon ordered his house favorite: a white chocolate mocha Frappuccino without whipped cream, with a double pump of raspberry syrup. And if he wants another one, he has a few hours left to order because Java Mill closes at 11 pm today.

Leon sits at one of the big tables inside, near the window on the left overlooking the river. Several people come into the Mill. Fr. Leon begins pouring over a few of Fr. Andrei Funar's papers that are spread out over the table. After a few minutes, an older woman comes in and sits at the table behind Fr. Lucas. She has long, all-white hair, covered with a vintage fedora. She sits at the table behind Lucas, also with her left side next to the window overlooking the river. She takes sips of her hot drink.

Leon notices her but then goes right back to work,

trying to decode the mysteries of the papers in front of him. Shortly after, the woman with white hair begins to speak in a quiet yet firm voice, between sips of her drink. She says, “Have you ever realized just how much someone can hate something?” Father Lucas, while still looking down at the papers cocks his head to the right to gain a better hearing vantage. After listening for a second, he then looks back down to his work.

Later, the woman continues, “Just take me and my family, for instance; we hate you. You’re nothing to us.” Father Leon stops what he is doing, turns around, and looks at the woman. She stares at Fr. Leon Lucas and shoots him a chilling grin, and then takes a sip of her beverage. Leon turns around. Leon tries to get back to work. Suddenly, the woman’s voice grows louder: “Your stench is repulsive!” Father Leon raises his head, drops his pen, and turns around. Right then, she gets up and walks out of the Mill, leaving the drink behind. Father Lucas is paralyzed with confusion. He grabs his rosary from his pocket and says a Hail Mary prayer.

Maine | Eagle River | Ethan’s Home

Ethan is in his bedroom. The room is mostly dark except for the small light on his desk. Ethan is sleeping in bed. On the bed with him is the Black Raven that he has been reading for the last few hours. Ethan starts to dream about Sadie. In the dream, they are

both on the couch, sitting up and watching a movie, and suddenly, Sadie bursts into tears. Ethan rubs her back to provide comfort. Sadie lays her head in Ethan's lap. Ethan then rubs Sadie's side. Sadie stops crying and instead enjoys the feel of Ethan's hand. She rubs up and down his thigh—Ethan's heart rate increases. Ethan continues to rub her side while massaging her chest. Sadie's body is feeling excited. Sadie's hand has moved up to his private parts. Sadie's hand plays the same sensual tune that he's playing with her.

A loud sound emits, resembling a cap-gun shot. Ethan suddenly awakes from his dream to find that the desk light bulb has burst. Ethan sighs with relief but realizes he has been masturbating. Upon realizing this, he jumps up and goes straight to the shower. He returns from the shower to clean up the busted bulb. While cleaning up, his friend Dave comes over. Dave has been Ethan's very good friend ever since he moved to Maine with his mother. They both grab cold drinks out of the fridge and talk about everything: Sadie, Funar, Leon, and finally, his new grimoire.

Maine | Eagle River | Mid-Morning

A few days later, Ethan and Sadie head out to visit Pastor Jon Sykes at the Eagle River Detention Center, which is located at Eagle River's city limits. While en route, Sadie and Ethan have a conversation on the way to the detention center.

Sadie: “Ethan, I have to tell you something, so please let me finish and don’t interrupt me. I have fallen off and have done the drugs again. I’m convinced that my faith is at its lowest that it has ever been. God doesn’t seem to be on my side these days. Especially since He has taken my parents, brother, and now Pastor Jon.” She pauses for a second. “And now I fear that you will forsake me as well because I cannot live up to your expectations. I feel that I will be alone. No, I think that I AM alone.”

Ethan feels Sadie’s pain. He’s driving, but it doesn’t prevent him from leaning closer to her. He glances at her and begins to reassure her, saying, “Sadie, first of all, God has not abandoned you.”

Sadie responds, “What do you know about it, Ethan? You have an easy life, no worries whatsoever. There is no way you can know what it feels like to be abandoned by God. You seem to be adored by Him while I’m being punished.”

Ethan retorts, “Sadie, everyone has issues. While we haven’t all suffered the same as you, it doesn’t mean we don’t have our issues at other times.

Ethan realizes that he needs to stop being defensive and point her back to God. “Sadie, you remember the story of Job. I know things are rough right now, but

trust me, Jesus— ” “Ethan, stop!” A frantic Sadie yells. Ethan slams on the brakes; he almost runs the red light at an intersection that serves a ton of traffic. The car comes to a screeching halt. Things in the back seat come flying forward. Both Sadie and Ethan breathe sighs of relief.

Ethan grabs Sadie’s hand. “Sadie, I’m so sorry. Are you alright?”

Sadie checked herself out. “I think so.”

He then looks down and starts to toss things back into the back seat. Sadie looks up to see a homeless person in a black hoodie pushing a shopping cart in front of Ethan’s car. The homeless man stops, looks at Sadie, and reveals himself to be a black male with pale albinism and red freckles. The toothless one smiles and points at Sadie; hairless eyebrows top his light blue eyes. Sadie taps Ethan on his right leg, telling him to look while her eyes never leave the albino’s face. The whole thing seems like slow-motion to Sadie. By the time Ethan looks, the albino has completed his walk across the street.

Sadie asks Ethan, “Did you see that? Tell me you saw that.”

Ethan says, “Yeah, I saw the homeless person pushing the cart. What about it?”

Sadie: “He, he had...never mind.”

Sadie draws both her legs up on her seat. She’s disturbed. The light turns green, and they continue their drive to the detention center in silence.

CHAPTER FOUR

Maine | Eagle River | Eagle River Detention Center

ETHAN and Sadie reach the detention center. Pastor Jon Sykes comes out into the visiting room. He looks rough: thinner, a little bearded, and frail. Despite his condition, he still greets the pair with a smile. Sadie starts crying. Pastor Jon moves to comfort Sadie.

Jon: “Sadie, don’t cry.”

Sadie: “I wish I could help, but I hate to see you go through this.”

Jon returns with, “Sadie, I’m fine. You don’t have to worry about me. Honestly, I’m fine. The Lord has been good to me throughout this process.”

Sadie, wiping away tears, replies, “But Jon, this isn’t

good. Jail Pastor? It's jail. And what's going to happen to you?"

Jon takes a few seconds to gather his thoughts. Ethan and Sadie look on, waiting for the pastor's answer.

Jon speaks in a very low voice: "Listen to me, both of you. First, let me say yes, you're right, this is not good. Before you ask me anything else, let me clarify the record. I did not put that stuff on the computers at the church. However, I still cannot deny that when I discovered it, I meant to take it off, but I was tempted, and I did look at some stuff. Honestly, I didn't know that the girls were minors, but I still looked. I'm not happy about it; I'm disgusted with my behavior. I let everyone down. Worst of all, I disappointed the Lord. So, I am no different than the one who put it on the computers. I am willing to accept any chastisement that the Lord has in store for me."

Ethan tries to interrupt, but Jon continues, "I am grateful to report to you that I have repented and have been forgiven for my sins." "The Lord has been great to me through all of this. As for what's next, I must wait and see what the Lord has in store for me. Hopefully, because it's my first offense, they will be more lenient with me."

Ethan interrupts, “What about you and the church? What’s going to happen?”

Jon takes a deep breath. “Ethan, the church will vote on that pending the outcome of my case, which shouldn’t take too long. In the meantime, the church will be led by Rick, the Youth Pastor, for the time being. That should be enough to keep us afloat for a minute. The Worship Pastor, Steven, will step in when Rick has to do youth work. Believe me, the Lord has it all figured out. The Church is standing behind me and has forgiven me. I just have to endure to the end. So don’t worry, I’m fine. But enough about me; what about you? Talk to me.”

Ethan and Sadie tell all that has been happening recently, especially about Father Andrei. However, certain details of their lives are withheld from Pastor Jon. Sadie withheld her going back on drugs, and Ethan didn’t mention his growing lust for Sadie and occult materials. Ethan is enjoying his lust for occult materials and Sadie. Meanwhile, Sadie is embarrassed about her struggle with her depression, drugs, and lack of faith. From Ethan and Sadie’s point of view, Jon has enough to worry about without their issues being added to the mix. They wrap up the visit with prayer and smiles. Ethan and Sadie head back to Eagle River.

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick Catholic Church |
Noon

While Sadie and Ethan were visiting Pastor Jon, Father Leon visited Father Antoni again. Upon arriving at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Father Leon walks in, calling out to Father Antoni. Father Antoni comes from the back and says hi to his friend. Both men sit in a pew. Fr. Leon tells Antoni everything about Fr. Andrei, the boy, all of it. Fr. Antoni, while expressing sympathy, also expresses concern. He mentions that things do not seem right and asks about the progress of the investigation. Fr. Leon tells Antoni that the investigation of Funar's death is closed, but his involvement in the boy's death is still ongoing.

However, Father Leon assures Fr. Antoni that he is conducting his own investigation and that he has some items he took from Father Funar's office. Fr. Leon shows Fr. Antoni the occult materials, and Antoni is shocked. Fr. Antoni would never have dreamed of a world where Fr. Andrei Funar and the occult would be linked together.

Fr. Leon and Antoni review the information for a few hours but still cannot understand what is going on. They then shift their focus to the attempted exorcism. Again, they can't make heads or tails of it, and they still draw a blank.

Fr. Antoni: "Isn't there anyone you know at the Vatican who can review this material?"

Leon belts out an emphatic "No, because it might

hurt Andrei Funar's chances of burial."

Father Leon knows in the back of his head that Ethan can probably help figure this mess out, but he doesn't like or trust Ethan. Father Antoni offers his office for Leon to study in since the Internet is better than the hotel's. Leon agrees. Fr. Antoni returns to the rectory. Fr. Leon visits Father Antoni's office to conduct some research.

Maine | Eagle River | Ethan's Place | Late Afternoon

Ethan has just finished a grueling day at work, compiling code for the software he has been developing. Ethan decides to spend the rest of his day talking to an Only Fans girl. Ethan's friend Dave texts him during this time, looking to play some Call of Duty. Ethan declines Dave's offer and digs in to watch OnlyFans videos. Ethan ends up masturbating while thinking about Sadie and then falls asleep. Although Ethan knows this is wrong, he doesn't repent.

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick's Catholic Church

Father Leon has come to the conclusion that Fr. Andrei Funar's materials are directly related to witchcraft. Leon frustratingly rubs his face; he doesn't realize that he's been pouring over the materials for

literally hours. He's tired. Fr. Leon puts his head in his hands and calls out for St. Anselm to help him understand. He looks back down at the paperwork pile that he continuously shuffles until he discovers a page written in Latin that he can read. He reads the page out loud. Immediately, he hears a door open and then whispering in the barely lit hallway. Puzzled, Fr. Leon gets up to check it out. A slight chill permeates the air. When he gets to the sanctuary, he pauses, listens, and then calls out: "Is there anyone there?" No response. Nervously, he calls out again: "Hello? Father Antoni, is that you?" Father Leon listens again, and nothing. He notices that the chill in the hallway has now dispersed. Fr. Leon Lucas dismisses the entire sequence as insignificant and returns to Fr. Antoni's office to close it down for the day.

Maine | Eagle River | Babes Bistro | Morning

The next morning, Sadie calls Father Leon to meet for breakfast at *Babe's Bistro*, a relatively new diner that serves good food at any time of day. The diner's logo features a curvy brunette woman wearing a black apron and a headscarf. The breakfast menu is the talk of the town in Eagle River.

Leon and Sadie grab a medium-sized table in the back corner, away from most of the crowd. Sadie orders Babe's signature omelet, while Leon finally decides on Babe's famous sausage, egg, and hash

browns toasted sandwich. Orders go in, and conversation ensues.

Sadie declares to Leon that she has been so caught up with herself that she hasn't been concerned with how Leon is doing. Leon admits to being saddened and explains that her brother was his mentor and best friend. Sadie nods, saying she knows and that it will take time for them to get over this.

Leon holds Sadie's hand and assures her that they will get through it. Also, he is still working on what happened at the "so-called" exorcism.

Sadie repeats to Leon, "So-called exorcism?"

Leon lets Sadie in on the fact that the exorcism should never have taken place, primarily because the Church doesn't believe in actual demons. Demons are symbols used to help maintain a sense of morality, such as the distinction between good and evil.

Leon continues, "I'm afraid Andrei may have been experiencing some sort of breakdown. Sadie, the Vatican told me that Romania was a stressful station for him."

Sadie was confused: "Why was it stressful?"

Leon: "The stress of being stationed in such a

remote region where Transylvania exists can be taxing. Also, the village boy died in his care. And then, finally, the murder charges. I think when you add it all up, it's enough to make anyone's heart stop."

Sadie doesn't know what to believe but accepts this explanation for now. They continue to eat their meals and chat about this and that. After their meal, Leon walks Sadie to her car. There they exchange goodbyes. Sadie extends an offer for Fr. Leon to come over later so they can continue reconnecting. Leon agrees. Meanwhile, Ethan pulls up to Babe's Bistro's curbside parking just in time to see Sadie kissing Leon on the cheek. This makes Ethan upset, and he turns around, leaving Babe's Bistro in a hurry. He drives off, leaving his order behind.

Maine | Eagle River | Mid-day

Ethan calls his friend Dave to vent on his way back home. Dave offers slight sympathy. Dave is not the one to call for total sympathy; that's usually Sadie. Dave knows this. To help Ethan, Dave gathers Yancy and some food, and they both go over to Ethan's place. Yancy has known Dave longer than Ethan, but their friendship is gathering steam. Yancy and Sadie don't like each other, and no one is quite sure why. Perhaps it's a woman thing.

The all-black wearing Yancy loves to hear how Sadie has pissed off Ethan, because it means Ethan's eyes

divert to her. Today, Yancy plans to take advantage of that opportunity.

Ethan continues to complain to Dave about Leon, even going so far as to accuse Leon of not truly wanting to solve the mystery of Andrei Funar. Ethan's evidence and Leon's withholding of Fr. Andrei's occult materials require examination. All Dave can do is keep agreeing, while Yancy continues to question Sadie's thinking.

Ethan still fumed about the kiss, let it be known to Dave and Yancy that he is done being there for her, only to find himself crapped on by her. Yancy continued to console Ethan by rubbing his hand, hugging him, and stoking the fire, saying, "Sadie doesn't really care about him." Combine that with the fact that Yancy came over half-dressed. Being a thick white woman with curves in all the right places, her attire plays a role in helping Ethan not think about Sadie. Dave finally closes the conversation by saying, "Let's play some games." Yancy, Ethan, and Dave all play Call of Duty Warzone.

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New and Rare Books
| That Evening

Later that evening, Sadie called Leon and asked him to bring over Funar's papers when he came over to hang out. Leon greets Sadie with a hug. Sadie closed the store early so they could sit at the recliners with the tables. After having a few drinks, Sadie and Leon talk

about the old days and her brother. After a bit, Sadie asks Leon to show her brother's papers and materials, as well as the progress he has made thus far. Leon shows her what he has, and several items seem to Leon like a bunch of astrology and celestial mathematics. The languages are also a barrier to the young Leon Lucas. While he can recognize Hebrew and Latin, there is another language as well. Lastly, there is still the issue with the seal on the Funar chest; Leon can't make heads or tails of it. Sadie suggests that he bring Ethan in on it. Leon resists. Sadie tells Leon not to worry about Ethan. They all have the same goal, and Ethan can be a big help. Leon assures Sadie that he will consider it.

CHAPTER FIVE

Romania | Hoia Forest | The Clearing | Six Hours Earlier: Night

The gypsy witch woman is naked, kneeling inside a 9-foot diameter pentagram drawn in the dirt by blood. Five candles light the seal, a candle at each point of the star.

The gypsy's right hand is bloody from drawing each of the seven Phoenician letters between the seal in the dirt. She's listening to the large looming shadow in front of her.

Shadow: "Roma, you're moving too slowly. It's time to enable the next phase; proceed."

Gypsy/Witch: "Are you sure? I feel he is not yet ready."

The Shadow, getting slightly louder: "You forget yourself, Roma. You were set apart by my grace to be a servant unto me. Do not ever question me! Remember your position!"

Gypsy/Witch: “My apologies, my lord, I appreciate the gift that has been given me; I didn’t mean to offend.”

Shadow: “Start the next phase now. We are tired of waiting.”

Witch: “Yes, my lord.”

USA | Maine | Eagle River | Eagle River Detention Center

It is 3 am in the Eagle River Detention Center. Pastor Jon Sykes is sleeping in his cell when he has a dream. In this dream, a wonderful brown-eyed, porcelain-skinned woman with long black hair seduces Jon. Jon initially resists, but then slowly starts to succumb to it. The seduction picks up, and the lust is nearly overwhelming. Jon tosses and turns in his cell, struggling to resist the temptation.

Soon, the seductress is about to strong-arm Jon into intercourse. However, Jon starts to resist more strongly, and then the dream ends, leaving him dazed and confused. It’s dark and quiet in the cell except for the light coming in through the cell window. Jon feels the wetness of his pants. It is then that he realizes that God had delivered him from such a strong lust-fest of

a dream. He then hears a deep, masculine voice from the corner of his cell.

Jon sits up enough to rest on his elbows, getting a better vantage.

The voice in the dark says, “You would have done well to enjoy the treat I gave you. Why do you resist what you want?”

Jon: “It was not right.”

Voice: “Was it right when your wife straddled your friend in your bed, doing things that she never would do for you? Don’t you deserve something for that? Where is the justice for your loss?”

Jon sadly reflects on what the voice just said to him. It was a moment in time that nearly broke him as a person and as a pastor. It took a monumental effort to survive it.

Jon: “Vengeance is the Lord’s. I am not to repay evil with evil.”

The Voice says: “What that book says and what you want are not the same. I know you still want it; you still very much desire that which was taken from you. I can give it to you. You can have a woman who will do anything you want sexually, no marrying, no love

needed. And you can continue to play pastor. All you have to do is ask.”

Jon replies, “I will not lie; I very much desire it, Lord knows I do.” But I desire the Lord more, and I repent of my actions here thus far.”

The light that was shining into the cell has faded. The room’s temperature rapidly increases. Suddenly, the rack that Jon is laying on dents in as if a bunch of people are standing on it. Jon swallows hard, his heart beating immensely. The voice is mere inches from Jon’s face. He can feel the breath of the Voice.

The Voice: “You are a fool, Jon, and your self-righteousness will be their undoing. Do you read?”

Jon: “What, what are you talking about?”

Voice: “Never mind. We’ll see you again.” The heat dissipates, and the light reappears. Jon wipes the sweat off his face with his t-shirt and looks at the dented bed. Jon falls to his knees and begins to cry to the Lord.

Maine | Eagle River | The Next Morning

Early the next day, Ethan is out running errands. While driving, he sees a bunch of fire trucks and police cars at Eagle Community Church, his church. To his surprise, the Church has mostly burned down. He

pulls over to take pictures and then takes off. Ethan calls Sadie and tells her. Sadie tells Ethan she knows about it because it's all over the news. According to early news reports, a disgruntled member of the church is accused of arson. The arsonist burned down the church because of Pastor Jon's charges of porn with minors on church computers. A full investigation is underway. Sadie asks Ethan if he's all right, but he's not. Ethan is shaken up by it all. Sadie asks Ethan if he wants to meet up later, mentioning that Leon is also coming over. Ethan reluctantly agrees.

Father Leon Lucas has a Zoom meeting with a couple of members of the Holy See. They tell him that they would like him to return to the Vatican immediately to meet with them in person. Leon tells them he will be on the first flight the next day. He calls Sadie to ask if they are still on for tonight. Sadie confirms.

Maine | Eagle River | Ethan's Place | Early Afternoon

Yancy shows up at Ethan's place. He lets her in while on the phone with his mother. All is well with his mom, but a snowstorm is coming that may delay her and her boyfriend's trip home this weekend. Ethan is relatively short with his mother, and she detects it. She asks if he's good, and he reassures her that everything is fine. Ethan hangs up with his mother and

chats with Yancy, starting by asking her why she's there because lately, she never comes over without Dave. Yancy states she was concerned and wanted to see Ethan. Plus, Yancy stresses that it has been a while since she's seen Ethan; selfishly, he buys her story.

Ethan admits to Yancy that he has been feeling overwhelmed, sad, and lost.

Ethan: "Sadie doesn't seem to be interested in me, as I first thought. Leon is back, causing a rift. Then there's the death of Sadie's brother, the jailing of Pastor Jon, and the burning down of our church. There appears to be very little light left. God seems to be absent, Yancee."

Yancy looks on. She knows that he's just venting. Yancy slowly moves closer to him. Her tight black yoga pants catch Ethan's eye. He tries to throw it off as if he wasn't looking. Yancy joins Ethan on the couch. He turns on the TV. Yancy lays down in Ethan's lap. Ethan doesn't resist her. Yancy slides her hand into Ethan's pants. Ethan slides his hands under her shirt. For some reason, Ethan feels a sense of déjà vu, and this is fine by him. For today, Yancy and Ethan slip into an afternoon of sexual ecstasy.

Later that evening, Ethan gets out of bed, gets some water, and checks his phone. Several missed calls from Sadie dominate his call log. Ethan forgot about going to Sadie's. So now Ethan rapidly gets ready and heads to [PAGES: New & Rare Books](#).

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New & Rare Books |
Evening

When Ethan arrives at Pages, as he makes his way to the front door, he sees a short red fox standing to the left of the store's entrance. Ethan stops and stares; the fox stares back at him. Unable to win the staring contest, Ethan breaks off and goes inside. Upon entering Pages, the first thing Ethan notices is that Leon and Sadie are at the table, smiling at each other. Ethan sits down. Sadie touches the side of Ethan's face and asks, "Are you alright?" Ethan slightly leans away and then sits down.

Leon, for once wearing regular clothes, reaches into his bag, pulls out Andrei Funar's books and paperwork, and lays them out on the table. Ethan scans the paperwork and then empties his bag of conjuring encyclopedias, occult dictionaries, and his ThinkPad. Ethan, sensing this might take a while, tells Sadie to put on a pot of coffee. Sadie smiles. She has already prepared the coffee. After nearly an hour of quietness from Ethan, he finally speaks. He motions for them to listen. Sadie and Lucas get up from the couch and sit around the table.

Ethan tells them what he has uncovered.

Ethan: "Let's start with the paperwork that was in

Father Funar's office. It's all occult material; in particular, its pages are taken from grimoires. There are notes annotated next to the conjuration seals.

Leon: "So what are you getting at?"

Ethan: "Is that Funar's handwriting annotating the seals?"

Leon: "I'm not entirely sure, but it sure does look like it."

Ethan: "It appears that he was studying these notes on conjuration."

Leon: "Ethan, how do you know that those are conjuration seals?"

Ethan tells him that they are in his Black Raven grimoire. Sadie, now interested, tells Ethan to continue. Ethan tells the group that the conjuration seals are almost identical to banishing seals except for the angelic script. The Angelic writings are ceremonial. Leon beseeches Ethan to summarize using plain talk.

Ethan tells them it seems that Father Funar was trying to learn banishing spells but might have accidentally used a conjuration spell instead. Leon, hating the revelation, becomes standoffish.

Leon: "How can you know this?"

Ethan tells them to look at the photo of Andrei Funar's chest.

Ethan: "You see, that's a conjuration spell." You would not put that on you unless you were meaning to conjure a demon or more." Ethan pulls out another book. "That same seal is the one Jon Faust used to conjure Mephistopheles. However, in this case, I don't think it was intentional."

Sadie perks up with hope: "What do you mean, not intentional?"

Ethan: "Well, the way the seal is on him, he couldn't have done this without help." There is a written spell that parallels the Angelic script, but I don't recognize this language.

Leon: "I have listened to you come up with this insane reasoning for these papers. Are you saying that Father Andrei Funar, a Jesuit Priest, was trying to use spells and witchcraft to do what exactly?"

Ethan: "That's exactly what I'm saying."

Leon: Getting loud. "He is a Jesuit Priest, Ethan! How many times do I have to tell you people that there are no literal demons? Your rebellious religion has brainwashed you, Ethan. You are entertaining the absurd thought that humans could possess the knowledge to conjure supernatural evil beings, and to what end, huh?"

Ethan: “Brainwashing? You are the ambassador of indoctrination. How do you go about acting as a priest if there is no literal evil being to be a cleric against? If there is no tempter, why do you say a repetitive prayer that includes *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*? No, friend, I’m not the one that’s been brainwashed.”

Leon: “Listen, Brother Andrei was my best friend, and there’s no way he was learning witchcraft; it’s just idiotic even to suggest such a thing.”

Ethan, enraged: “Are you so blind to what’s plainly in front of you that you can’t even see it?” The evidence is right here, right in front of us. But no, instead, you choose a dying fake religion that believes Mary deserves equal or more glory than Jesus. No, you are the brainwashed one.” Ethan continues: “Only a brainwashed priest could think that praying someone out of limbo would buy them a seat in heaven. Worshiping idols is not a path to heaven.”

Leon erupts, “You are poison, and you poison those around you, including my Sadie. This is all born-again BS. You have no rules, no tradition, and no priests. You don’t even recognize the office of our Vica the Pope.”

Sadie steps in. “Stop it, both of you! First of all, I

am no one's Sadie. Second, we are here to work together regarding my brother's death and not have a pissing contest."

Leon stands up and tells Sadie he's sorry. He tells her he is leaving anyway because he has a plane to catch in the morning. He gathers his stuff, kisses Sadie on the cheek, and leaves her store.

Ethan, still fuming, tells Sadie he's sorry as well, gathers his stuff, and bids Sadie a good night. Sadie asks if Ethan wants to stay, and Ethan shakes his head no and walks out, closing the door behind him.

6

CHAPTER SIX

Maine | Eagle River | Eagle River Detention Center
| Next Morning

Sadie visits Pastor Jon Sykes at the Detention Center the next day. Sadie tells him that the church burned down. Jon said he knew about it because the youth pastor told him. Jon tells her to stay firm in the faith; the church is just a building.

Jon: “Go ahead and ask me.”

Sadie: “How have you been?”

Jon: “I’m coping, but that wasn’t the question that I was talking about.”

Sadie: “I know. I don’t want to talk about it, okay? I’m not here for that.”

Jon: “Understood.”

Jon: “On to something different. Sadie, the Holy Spirit has told me that you and your friends are in danger. Satan is a roaring lion right now, seeking to destroy.”

Sadie: “What makes you say that?”

Jon: “Because I had a dream that showed you and your crew were all in danger.”

Sadie looks around the jail and then back at the frail Jon Sykes. She’s worried that this place is getting to him. Pastor Jon’s words may or may not be accurate, but she cannot be concerned with that right now. She is worried that Jon is falling off the edge. Sadie has never seen him like this. He needs to be released from jail soon.

Sadie: “I think you’re the one who is in immediate danger.” Let’s pray.”

Sadie prays with Jon briefly before the visitation is over. Right after they prayed, he asked Sadie to bring him a Bible next time. He mentioned that another inmate stole his bible. Sadie promises that she will see it done. She leaves the detention center. Sadie goes home, defeated and depressed. Her mentor and friend is in that horrible place. The conditions are horrid.

This time, she doesn't even take time to think about it. She pops a pill and grabs a glass of wine. Sadie then puts on a movie, sits on the couch, and drifts off for the rest of the day.

Rome | The Vatican | Palace of the Holy Office

The next day, Fr. Leon arrives at the Vatican, the Seat of the Holy Office. Sitting in a seat at the large round table, Fr. Leon Lucas sits anxiously, awaiting the arrival of members of the Holy See. He's wondering what this meeting could be about. After a brief wait, all seven members file in. They sit in the seats in front of the young Fr. Leon. Father Leon stands, greets them, and then sits back down. The Council is composed of mighty Cardinals who wield absolute power in Rome, and in some ways, more power than the Pope. cardinal Pietro Parolin, the chairman, addresses Fr. Leon, "Fr. Leon Lucas, do you have anything from Father Funar's possessions that might shed more light on Father Andrei Funar's recent behavior?"

Fr. Leon: "No, I wish I had. Why do you ask, Your Eminence?"

Cardinal Parolin continues: "We appreciate your honesty, Father Lucas. We thought perhaps that you

might have one last piece of merchandise that would shed some light. Since that is not the case, I will now inform you of the decision that has been made.” Fr. Leon Lucas looks on with nervous anticipation.

Cardinal Parolin: “We have determined that Father Andrei Funar actively contributed to the death of the 7-year-old boy. We have also decided that Father Funar has engaged in behavior not befitting of a Jesuit. Father Andrei Funar is now laicized and thus will not be buried as a Catholic, for his Catholic rights have been revoked. I’m sorry to have to tell you this.”

Fr. Leon puts his head in his hands. Fr. Leon cannot believe that all those years that Father served faithfully have led to this. The Church has disowned his mentor, his friend, and his family. This is devastating news to receive. Unfortunately, Cardinal Parolin isn’t done.

Cardinal Parolin remarks, “Father Lucas, I’m sorry you have to hear this. However, one last thing: we need you to return to Romania and shut down the parish, then arrange for all the belongings to be either sent back here or to a parish of your choice.”

Fr. Leon looks up, tears in his eyes: “I have a parish in Maine where I would like to have it sent.”

Cardinal Parolin: “Very well, Father Lucas, see it done. If there is nothing else...”

Fr. Leon stands up. “There is one more thing. I request that Fr. Andrei Funar’s body be sent to his sister in Maine, seeing as the Vatican is too good for a man who has served faithfully for decades—DECADES!”

Cardinal Parolin: “Calm down, Fr. Leon Lucas. We can see this is an emotional thing for you.” The Cardinal confers with the other Cardinals for a bit. Five minutes later, Cardinal Parolin spoke: “Very well, Father Leon, see to it that it is done. That is all, Father Leon.” Fr. Leon gets up and leaves the council. Lucas is now bound for Romania.

Romania | Village of Popesti | St. Sophronius Church | Three Days Later | Morning

A few days later, Father Leon arrives in Romania. He heads straight for St. Sophronius Catholic Church. He sits in a pew, looking defeated and lost. As he sits with his eyes closed, a voice breaks the silence in the church.

Roma/Gypsy: “I’ve been waiting for you. Do you remember me?” Fr. Leon opens his eyes and sees Roma sitting in the pew ahead but turns around to face him.

Fr. Leon: “What do you want?”

Roma: “Do you want to hear the truth about your priest friend?”

Fr. Leon, not in the mood, says, “What do you know about it? What do you think you can shed light on?”

Roma/Gypsy: “Let’s go to his office.” Leon agrees.

In St. Sophronius’s office, the gypsy woman tells Leon how Fr. Andrei was studying the occult materials that she provided to help the possessed boy. But Fr. Leon senses that she is holding something back.

Roma: “You see, priest, Funar was trying out some things because he had a curious nature. But that boy ended up with the demon. I tried to help Funar with the boy. We were close, but it was too late.”

Fr. Lucas gets upset, “So you’re telling me Fr. Andrei Funar’s interests in the occult caused the boy to have mental health issues and then die from physical ailments? What fool do you take me for? Demons are not even real; they are allegorical, mythological, or symbolic.”

Roma: “Priest, this is your chance to start believing in something besides the lies of your church. Even your Catholic friend knew this much.”

Fr. Leon: “You who deals in the manipulation of nature, what do you know of angels and demons?”

Roma: “It seems a great deal more than you, Jesuit Lucas. You better get your head around this fact. That is the help I give; this wisdom.”

Father Lucas: “This doesn’t help anything. I’m no more informed now than I was before I got here. You gave me nothing.”

Roma: “If you will not believe, then perhaps Sadie will.”

Fr. Leon Lucas, getting angry, said, “What did you just say? How do you know about her? Did Andrei tell you about her? Stay away from her; I’m warning you, witch!”

The gypsy smiles, gets up, and heads for the office’s exit. Before she leaves, she turns back and says, “What is your faithlessness playing at? Be warned, priest, get your head out of the sand before it’s too late.” The gypsy leaves the church.

Fr. Leon is left scratching his head. Admitting confusion, he finishes shutting down the church. From there, Leon heads to the Popesti Police station to finish final things.

Romania | Popesti | Local Hotel Nova Residence |
Evening

Later, in his hotel room, Leon is sitting in a chair, thinking. “Why am I down here doing this shutdown? Why am I doing any of this? Certainly, the Vatican has many other individuals who engage in similar activities. Is it because Fr. Andrei was my friend, and they are letting me do this to work through my grief? Or is there something else going on?” He takes a sip of wine, pondering. “It almost seems as if the meeting between the witch and me were not by chance, but rather an expectation.” Lucas takes another sip of wine. “Well,” looking at the glass, “at least the wine is good.” Leon pours up another glass.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New & Rare Books |
Next Morning

Sadie has spent two days in the wake of oxy and alcohol. This morning, she's finally coming out of her stupor. She feels drained, defeated, and guilty. She feels so far from God. Usually, when Sadie has these episodes with pills, Pastor Jon or Ethan would be around to help her through these dark moments. But Pastor Jon is gone, and Ethan isn't acting like he could handle it right now.

Sadie speaks out loud: "I do need Ethan. Unfortunately, things are strained between us. Yes, I need him, even if it's just a fraction of the former Ethan. I do care about him. Oh, I don't know. Everything is just so cloudy in my head."

Sadie gets up and heads to the shower, then goes

downstairs to open the bookstore.

It's 9 am, and Sadie, freshly showered, is downstairs sorting books near the register. At 9:30 am, there is a knock at the door. Sadie goes to answer the door, thinking to herself, *It's early for deliveries*. She opened the door, and it was the same homeless black male albino, pale with red freckles, that she had seen with Ethan on the way to the detention center. The toothless one again smiles at Sadie. Sadie is instantly freaked out, but she quickly overcomes it enough to find out what the albino wants.

Sadie asks nicely: "Who are you and what do u want?" The albino takes his hand, which is wrapped in a fingerless glove, and reaches into his pocket, pulling out a piece of paper that has been folded very neatly. The albino holds out his hand as if to give it to Sadie. Sadie is expectantly reluctant to accept. However, Sadie holds out her hand, and the Albino places the paper into her hand. He then flashes that creepy smile again. Sadie notices a tattoo on the man's left side of his neck that resembles some writing; the same symbol is also written on the crown of his hood. She was sure she had seen this before, but couldn't remember where. Sadie thanks the albino. The albino, still silent, motions for her to open the paper. Sadie complies. When she opens it, it appears to be a page ripped out of a book, but its words are written in a language she doesn't recognize. Sadie studies the page,

looking for anything that might give a clue as to what it might be. A slight wind blows, and Sadie glances up. When she does, she no longer sees the albino. She can hear his shopping cart moving in the distance but does not see it. Sadie closes the door and calls Ethan.

Ethan comes over at Sadie's behest. Sadie tells Ethan what happened with the albino and then shows him the page that he gave her. Ethan examines the page and then retrieves a book from Sadie's shelf. The book he pulls off the shelf is an old interlinear bible that has English and Latin translation. The book reveals that the page contains Psalm 23, verses 1-6. Ethan notices that verse 4 is lightly underlined. Sadie and Ethan are amazed but left with many unanswered questions. Sadie tells Ethan about the writing on the albino's neck and hood. Ethan asks Sadie to recreate it, and she does her best. Ethan recognizes the language behind the symbol. It's Celestial Language, the alphabet of Spirits. Ethan informs Sadie that he doesn't know what it says, but he will find out when he goes home and does some research. Ethan starts to leave.

Sadie asks, "Are you leaving already?"

Ethan says he has to go because he parked in the fire lane. Ethan walks out and jogs to his car. Sadie walks to the door to see Ethan parked in the fire lane. She opens the door to wave goodbye and sees Ethan driving off with Yancy in the passenger seat. Sadie becomes angered. A streak of jealousy ran up her

spine. She whispers to herself, “What is he still doing with her?” Sadie doesn’t like her because of how Yancy never really accepted her. They are just two different people. Yancy and her just never clicked. Sadie closes the door and starts to mull over what just transpired between the albino and her.

Maine | Eagle River | Ethan’s Place | Mid-day

Ethan gets home after dropping off Yancy. He immediately begins working on the drawing that Sadie had done for him. Ethan pulls out a book by Henry Cornelius Agrippa called *The Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. He flips to book three, page 439, and there it is: The Celestial Writings, also known as Angelic Script. This script is given to angels by God and passed down to humans, according to this text. These symbols are often used as language and identity. Ethan sits down and grabs a pen to take notes. He scans the Alphabet, looking for similarities to the drawing by Sadie. He doesn’t find any that match; many resemble them, but there are no exact matches. Ethan isn’t deterred; he keeps looking. Sadie deserves as much.

Sadie, still holding the paper the albino gave her, has her King James Bible out as well. She’s going over Psalm 23, especially verse 4. She struggles to pray for clarity, just as Ethan taught her. *Father God, please show me this meaning.* Sadie is feeling the lack of understanding of the albino event. The questions still

won't go away: *Who was that, and how did it find me?* And lastly, *what does it want from me?* As Sadie thinks about this, a couple of customers come in and disrupt her train of thought. Sadie the curious turns back into Sadie the book seller.

Romania | Hoia Forest | The Clearing | Night

A lying-down Leon Lucas awakens on the ground in the Hoia forest. He looks around and sees nothing but a thick mist. It's very humid, and although trees surround the area, he finds himself in a small clearing. The trees have a peculiar nature; they are bent over and strangely shaped. There is a silence in this area that is downright deafening. It's very dark. Leon goes to his knees. He doesn't know where he is. Suddenly, he feels pain in his chest. He opens his shirt to see the source of the pain. He discovers that a seal has been carved into his chest. It's painful and bleeding. Leon stands up to look for a way out. In the distance, Leon sees a cloaked figure on the ground, reading from a book, the words barely audible and indiscernible. Father Lucas approaches it. When he comes upon the figure, he reaches out to touch it, but then a huge bat-like bird flies at Leon's face, going for his eyes. He stumbles back and raises his hands to block it, but he falls out of bed. Father Lucas is at the hotel in Popesti. He looks at the clock; it's 3:30 am. He gets off the floor and sits on the edge of the bed, rubbing his chest. It bothers him, but there is nothing there. Father

Leon lies back on the bed, relieved that it was all just a dream.

US | Maine | Eagle River | Ethan's Place | Next Morning

Ethan had fallen asleep scouring the 'Three Books of Occult Philosophy'. The next day, Ethan wakes early, feeling the need to check another source to identify the Angelic script. He remembers that a few weeks ago, he had Sadie order a book on Jewish Kabbalistic Magic. That book has a page that shows a ritual process featuring a portion of Angelic Script. Ethan scours the crypt-ed document. After a few minutes, bingo! Ethan finds the symbol. The symbol that Sadie drew is directly linked to a Kabbalistic lettering system. Ethan surmises that the emblem on the albino's neck and hood is an Angelic Identification mark. Unfortunately, the mark or symbol does not reveal a name, but it does reference angels. Ethan concludes that the albino man is wearing a mark or tattoo of something angelic.

Ethan texts Sadie that he's on his way over. Sadie replies with a thumbs-up emoji. At the same time, Ethan packs books into his bag, and his phone rings. Ethan looks at it. Yancy is calling. He ignores it and finishes packing up. He grabs a cold Starbucks coffee out the fridge and heads to Sadie's shop.

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New & Rare Books |
Mid-day

Sometime later, Ethan arrives at Sadie's shop. He comes in with his backpack and tells Sadie that she must see this. Sadie, who is still in her pj's with a cup of coffee, slowly moves toward the table, toward the side of the store. Ethan asks Sadie if she's all right; she remarks that she had a rough night. He looks at her face intently, and she tells him not to worry, she's just a little tired. Once she gets this coffee in her, she will be fine. Ethan nods and tells her she's going to want to sit down for this.

Sadie sits, and Ethan goes on about how the albino is wearing an angel tattoo. He shows her how he arrived at his conclusion. She doesn't know what to make of it.

Sadie asks Ethan, "So, what does that mean? He has an angel tattoo?" I have a butterfly tattoo. Am I supposed to be a butterfly? What are you saying, Ethan?"

Ethan: "I'm not sure. I mean, nothing about him seems angelic, and he doesn't even speak."

Sadie, in disbelief, says, "Ethan, he has no teeth, and he smells." I mean, come on."

Ethan goes back in: “I agree with you, nothing about him screams angel. However, he did give you a message, didn’t he? Psalm 23, right?”

Sadie retorts, “I guess, but what does that even mean, Ethan? Who doesn’t know about Psalm 23? I just see him as a religious stalker, and I hope I don’t see him again; he frightens me.”

Ethan: “I think he means more than the credit we’re giving him.” I think he is playing a part, to what end I can’t tell.”

Sadie, sounding frustrated, says, “At this point, I just don’t care. Earlier, I was just a little spooked.”

Ethan is packing things up. “I don’t know, Sadie. Something is going on, that much I’m sure.” He pulls out his phone, looks at it, and then says, “I have to go.”

Sadie says, “Are you going to Yancy’s?”

Ethan ignores her question and then walks out the door. Sadie slams the door, makes sure the sign is flipped to ‘Closed,’ and goes upstairs.

Maine | Eagle River | Ethan’s Place

After Ethan hangs with Yancy for a while, he goes home to research the tattooed albino. It's bothering him that he cannot figure out why the symbol name is not in any of his Angelic books. He checks every reference about angels at his disposal—and finds nothing. Then, an idea popped up. Ethan grabs his old 1920s copy of the grimoire of Armadel and slams it on his desk. He grabs another cold coffee, sits down with a yellow legal pad, and spends the rest of the night studying the book.

Maine | Eagle River | Eagle River Detention Center

A few days later, Pastor Jon Sykes is reading the Bible that Sadie and Ethan mailed to him. This raises his spirits a little. It's a lovely calfskin NASB Bible, Black, thin, with medium font and red under gold gilding. It's a very premium Bible. He's reading Psalm 23. After reading it for spell, he sits back, closes his eyes, and prays that God would protect him. Jon uses this time to also pray for Sadie and her emotional and mental state and that God would provide a hedge of protection around her. He then prays for Ethan. He had just started his prayer and was interrupted. A guard opens his cell and informs him that he has a visitor. Pastor Jon, puzzled, goes to the visitation room.

Jon sits at the booth, waiting for his guest. Soon

after, A nicely dressed older woman with long white hair comes in, sits down at the table, pulls the phone from the wall, and sets her briefcase on the floor. Jon pulls the phone receiver from the wall.

The woman says, “Hi, Jon. My name is Regina Popescu.” I’m the co-attorney for your case; your primary attorney has asked me to meet with you today. I want to inform you about a specific motion that the State is proposing.

Jon perks up with interest. She pulls a paper from the briefcase and holds the paper facing her. Jon is trying to get a look, but Regina doesn’t show him.

Regina says, “Jon, the state believes that someone else may have put the illegal files on those computers. But because the weight of the child porn falls on you, the state would like to offer you a plea deal.” Jon shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

Regina continued, “If you plead guilty to the fact that Ethan Moore is guilty of this offense, then we will let you out as soon as today.” All you have to do is sign here, and you can go home.” Jon shakes his head as if he can’t believe what he’s hearing.

Regina starts in again: “Mr. Sykes, the state has Ethan on campus working on some of those video timestamps, and he had access to those computers. This will give you a chance to go home. Additionally,

you will have the opportunity to address your congregation, who are likely to be riddled with concern; some are even scattered. I'm sure you care about all of those who look to you for guidance. Sign the paper, get out of this crap hole and gather your flock. And don't worry about Ethan; he would only get probation. He's a first-timer."

Jon adjusts himself in his seat, still shaking his head no.

Regina continued, "However, you are not a first-timer; we both know that." Remember the violation of the restraining order your ex-wife had on you?"

Jon interrupts, "I was just trying to get her to talk to me."

Regina continues, "Because of this, you will go down hard; you're facing over 15 years in prison for this. Your church and congregation will never rebound, and you will be in prison for at least a decade. Take the deal, Mr. Sykes; it works out for everyone. Otherwise, they will put you under and still find a way to charge Ethan. Please help me help you. Save your congregation, save your church, and help Ethan get probation only."

Jon struggles with this. He is wrestling with the offer; it's evident on his face. He doesn't say anything;

he looks around and bites his lips. Regina smiles slightly and slides the tiny pencil through the rectangular opening in the window. “Sign it Jon so that I can get you home by 6.” Jon, looking down, holds the pencil. He slides it back to her and says, “I will not. Whatever the Lord wants to do to me, so be it.”

Regina gets up, puts the folder back in the bag, and says, “You are a fool, Jon!” You think you’re doing the honorable thing, but you’re not.

The paper with the plea deal is folded up and put on the table, then slid to him. She starts to walk away and turns back to say. “Oh, don’t worry about Ethan; we’ll take care of him.” She produces a sinister smile and then walks away. John opens the paper to look over the deal again. The paper reads, “We’ll get Ethan Moore.” Over and over. Jon rips up the paper and starts crying. The guard tells him to get up; the visitation is over.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Maine | Eagle River | Downtown | Noonish

Sadie and her friend Deb do a girls' day out. It's a nice day, and the pair hang out downtown on the main strip. Sadie comments how she's sorry that they haven't hung out in a while. Deb remarks that she is sad about her brother's death. Sadie tells Deb that a lot is going on in her life besides her brother. She and Ethan are not close, even though she wants him, but Ethan will probably end up hating her because of her addiction and constant depression. Deb hugs her with her usual sideways hug. Deb remarks that Sadie is being ridiculous, and that Ethan isn't like that as far as she can tell. Deb comments that Ethan is the best person for Sadie. Sadie mentions that she's scared of losing him and would at least want to keep their friendship.

Deb observes her concern and then retorts: “Aren’t you losing Ethan to Yancy by denying him you? Sadie, are you not pushing Ethan into Yancy’s arms?”

Sadie: “Yes, I know that I am. But I still don’t want Ethan with her.”

Sadie also attests to the fact that she still has low self-esteem and doesn’t believe her character will meet Ethan’s standards of her. She’s scared to let him down.

Deb: “Sadie, I get it, but you still shouldn’t let it ruin a good thing. What can I do to help you?”

Sadie replies, “I guess I’m hopeless.” She chuckles. Trying to change the subject, “Let’s go into the bakery.” They dip into the bakery to buy some bagels and other treats.

Maine | Eagle River | Ethan’s Place

That same day, Ethan gets a jail call from a distressed Pastor Jon Sykes. Ethan tries to get Jon to tell him what’s going on, but Jon won’t budge. Ethan is now distressed and lets Jon know it. Jon tells Ethan to be on guard because the enemy is after him.

Ethan: “What makes you say that, Pastor?”

Jon, not wanting to scare Ethan, said, “Ethan, please be on guard, and I will continue to pray for you.”

Ethan, not wanting Jon to know about his lust issues, tells Jon that he’s good and that there is no reason to worry. Jon concedes and listens to Ethan’s claim on his state of affairs.

Jon: “So how’s Sadie? I tried to call her the other day, but she didn’t answer.”

Ethan: “She’s alright. She has a lot on her plate with her brother and this being the year anniversary of her parents’ death.”

Both men move on to other conversation topics. Ethan asks Jon about instructions with the church and the congregation. Jon instructs Ethan on what is to come next with the church. He tells Ethan that the youth pastor is in the process of getting a new building for the church. However, Ethan is responsible for ensuring that people conduct D-groups in their homes. Jon emphasizes that Ethan needs to be doing D-Groups at his home as well.

Ethan: “I will make sure the others are doing it, and I will try to fit it into my schedule, even though mine has been hectic lately due to work.”

Jon: “Ethan, these things must continue so that the enemy doesn’t get a foothold in the church.”

Ethan: “I understand and will do my best to ensure the church stays afloat.”

Jon finishes with a quote from Psalm 23, verse 4. Both men say Amen. The call is ended. Ethan calls some members of the church, relays Jon’s orders, and then grabs his Bible to read Psalm 23. It’s been a while since he’s read anything from the Word.

As he reads it, he begins to think about it but gets sidetracked. All he can think about is the albino’s symbol. Ethan puts the Bible down and goes back to the grimoire of Armadel and the Black Raven.

Rome | Vatican | Palace of the Holy Office |
Council of the Holy See

A few days have passed. Father Leon Lucas has returned to the Vatican for another meeting with the Holy See. The council discusses what Lucas did with Fr. Funar’s body. Leon tells them that he will accompany his remains to Maine. The council all confirm this arrangement. The council then informs Father Funar that, due to the service he has rendered to the church and for the sake of Lucas, they have decided to compile a package of his achievements throughout his ministry to be sent to the location of

Lucas's choice. Lucas nods in agreement. The last item to be discussed is Lucas's final review of Funar in Romania and the boy. The council is aware of the police reports and the statements made by witnesses, but it appears to be very curious of Fr. Leon Lucas's take on the matter. Fr. Leon Lucas does reveal that being in the land of many mystical stories has worn on him, and he was anxious to get out. The place played with his head with dreams and depression, while the occult lore weighed on him like a virus. Romania can be a place where its mythos perpetuates a pessimistic world-view that has a lingering effect. He can see how it would affect Father Funar, who lived and dwelt amongst the people constantly. Father Leon Lucas believes that the village lifestyle of Popesti infected a man who was already weak in his faith. His decisions seem to reflect this.

The council asks Father Lucas to step out while they discuss a few things. This is common because Fr. Leon Lucas is a low-level member. After a dozen or so minutes, they call Fr. Lucas back in. Cardinal Pietro Parolin addresses Jesuit Lucas.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin: "In this world, we have explanations for the medieval mindset that still plagues much of the European world. It would seem that some pockets of the world have not caught up to civilized logic. We know that there are no literal demons, dragons, vampires, conjurations, or curses. To

acknowledge this would be to reverse all the gains that the Catholic Church has made in its ever-upward climb toward wisdom. We give credence to your report about Father Funar. It is our opinion that because of his weakness in faith, he suffered a spiritual crisis, which led to a mental health episode causing a breakdown. Upon experiencing this breakdown, Father Funar employed the methods of the natives around him to rescue a boy who was also suffering a mental episode.”

Fr. Leon Lucas: “Agreed, your eminence.”

Cardinal Pietro Parolin: “While we cannot excuse his ill-fated behavior and lack of faith in the church by not asking for help, we do understand that the mental health crisis in humans has increased due to the ever presence of sin.

Besides, that place is a feigned crap hole, excuse my Romanian.” The Council laughs. “And because of this unofficial medical condition, which we can refer to as a loophole, we can reverse Father Funar’s status. Father Andrei Funar will be cremated as a Catholic and placed in a Columbarium at St. Peter’s Cemetery in Maine of the United States.”

Cardinal Pietro continues: “Because a child has died in the care of Fr. Funar himself, we cannot reinstate his honors, give him an honorable Jesuit Funeral, nor have him buried as a Catholic. Does this satisfy you, Jesuit Lucas?”

Leon affirmed, “Yes, your Eminence, it does.”

The Cardinal responds, “Good! One more thing, Father Lucas. Since we have done this for you, we kindly request that you reciprocate in the best interest of the church. We help each other, you see.”

Father Leon Lucas nods, saying, “Of course, Your Eminence, anything at all.”

The Cardinal smiles: “Good, Fr. Lucas. We need you to head up St. Patrick Catholic Church for a while to give Father Antoni a break. It seems that he has gotten a taste of the mental health bug and needs time away. This will be good as you are from there. Not to mention that the protestant church, which was mired in sin, recently has finally burned down. The congregation will need a new home as well as a new belief. Take advantage of this opportunity that God has provided to make more Catholics. God knows that we need it. Our numbers are dwindling.”

Cardinal continues: “Father Lucas, can you do this for us?”

Father Lucas responds, “Yes, Your Eminence.”

Cardinal: “Excellent, Father Lucas. We knew we could count on you. Your first potential convert

should be Fr. Andrei's sister. See it done. We will be anxiously awaiting your first report. God speed. Fr. Leon Lucas"

Father Lucas nods and says, "Yes, Cardinal Pietro."

Romania | Hoia Forest | The Clearing | 3 am

The Gypsy witch is in the clearing of the Hoia Forest, she is on her knees on a 9-foot diameter pentagram seal with five candles, one on each point of the pentagram star. She is naked, covered only by her long gray mane and a silver Jesuit cross necklace. The front of her is covered with blood. The Gypsy witch is reading a conjuring spell off a piece of vellum that is made from skin of a still-born child. Something resembling a giant bat is flying around as if surveying the perimeter of the clearing.

After the witch finishes reading the spell in Romanian, a mist appears before her, and she bows down, her face to the ground. The mist addresses the Roma Witch.

The Mist speaks: "You are born-again by my grace to serve only me."

The Witch: "What does my lord command?"

Mist: "The final phase begins now."

Roma Witch: “I will initiate immediately.”

The Mist: “The hour is late, and the church is almost at an end. Soon, the wrath of the master will be satisfied.”

The Witch: “It will be as you say, my lord.”

The Mist: “The pastor will be your last mistake, correct?”

The Witch: “Yes, my lord.”

The Mist: “Do not fail me again.”

The Witch: “I will not.”

The Mist: “Agrate will assist you.”

The mist dissipates, and the candles’ flames rise high before burning out. The witch brings her head up to view the giant bat; it flies out of the clearing. The witch takes the vellum page and eats it.

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New & Rare Books

Today, Sadie calls Ethan over because the store is closed. Ethan agrees and says he will be over in a bit;

he has to ship a few items at FedEx first. Sadie goes upstairs to put on better clothes. Once dressed, she decides to get the mail that she did not get yesterday. Sadie goes outside while texting Deb simultaneously. She heads down the steps and down the walkway that leads to the mailbox. Sadie looks up and sees a car approaching from the left at a very slow speed. It appears to be a dark-colored, old Crown Victoria with the windows down. Its driver is the same toothless albino. He is looking at Sadie, smiling.

In the back seat is a horror of a person, seemingly staring at Sadie with eyes and mouth sewn shut. This disturbing sight freezes Sadie in her tracks. Visibly shaken, Sadie barely manages to snap a picture of the car, capturing only the rear of the vehicle. Fearful, Sadie forgoes the mail, runs back inside, and slams and locks the door. Bewildered, Sadie is unsure what she just saw. She pulls up the camera photo, and yes, she did get the car, but the tinted windows of the back made it impossible to make out anything but a shadow in the vehicle.

Sadie paces around the shop a few times and then calls Ethan, but no answer. Sadie keeps looking out the window of the store to make sure the car isn't coming back. Sadie goes upstairs to take some Xanax to calm down and then comes back downstairs with a glass of wine. Still freaked out, she rechecks the windows, and there's still nothing. She sits down to

text a long message to Deb about what just happened. Sadie knows Deb is at work, but maybe she will check her messages. Sadie takes a few sips of wine, then starts to type. Before Sadie can finish the text, Ethan unlocks the shop and comes in. Sadie, at that moment, is so glad she gave Ethan a key; this ensures that the door can stay locked when she wants it to be. Right behind Ethan comes Yancy. Sadie looks Ethan dead in the eyes and points at Yancy.

Ethan whispers, “Sorry, Sadie. She was already with me when you called. Anyway, what’s going on?”

Sadie takes another sip of wine and continues to pace around the shop. Yancy takes a seat on the couch next to the rare books section. Ethan follows Sadie to the chairs next to the sofa. Yancy picks up a rare book and examines it. Sadie snaps at Yancy to not touch the rare books. Ethan notices that Sadie is on edge and also her drink. Sadie sees Ethan staring down at the drink, and she tells him that’s the first drink of the day. Ethan nods, and they sit down together. Sadie tells Ethan that she saw the Albino again. Ethan’s curiosity instantly skyrockets. He asks, “Where?” Sadie tells him, “Here, outside the shop.”

Sadie attempts to let Ethan in on what happened but seems to have trouble telling the story. She’s confused on some parts and forgetful on others. Ethan now knows Sadie is on something more than wine. He’s seen it before but doesn’t say anything about it. Instead, he continues listening to what Sadie has to say.

Eventually, Sadie arrives at the end of the story. Yancy and Ethan are disturbed at what they heard. Ethan realizes why the symbol is not showing up amongst Angelic writings; the Albino was not an angel. Sadie shows Ethan the picture of the car. It's a decent photo, but the tinted windows only show a figure and not much else. However, she did get the license plate.

The license plate is PSA234A. Ethan stares at it for a good minute. Out of nowhere, he yells with excitement, "Sadie, the plate reads Psalm 23:44a!"

After Ethan reads it, he looks at Sadie and says, "The albino is trying to tell you something about the shadow of death."

Yancy, listening, asks, "What does that mean for Sadie?"

Ethan: "I'm not exactly sure. It may be a threat or a warning."

All three sit in silence for a while, absorbing it. Yancy nudges Ethan to signal it's time for her to go. Ethan tells Sadie he will holler at her later.

Sadie grabs Ethan's hand. "What are you doing with her!"

Ethan replied, "She enjoys being with me." Sadie nods slightly. She locks the door behind him and then

heads upstairs.”

That same night, Pastor Jon calls Sadie, but Sadie missed the call because she had gone to sleep earlier in the evening and wouldn't wake up until the very next morning.

CHAPTER NINE

Maine | Eagle River | Next Morning

That next morning. Ethan is home working. He's fixing a bug in a particular program he wrote. The fix is complicated, so Ethan decides to take a temporary break and surf social media. He watches a little bit of girls doing various TikTok challenges when Yancy messages him. She's bringing lunch in a couple of hours. Ethan replies with the thumbs-up emoji and then returns to work on the code until Yancy comes over.

Yancy comes over with corn-beef sandwiches from Babe's Bistro. Ethan and Yancy eat while laughing at Yancy's story about the Karen she was behind at the Bistro earlier. Laughing, Ethan realizes for the first time in forever that he's having fun spending time with Yancy. She's got nice curves, she has a certain sexiness, and she is into him. What more could he

want? He thinks maybe this could make him forget about Sadie. Later, Ethan and Yancy go to his bedroom to have dessert.

Sadie wakes up to several missed calls from Jon and Fr. Leon Lucas. Also, she has missed messages from Deb. Sadie feels lethargic, depressed, and hopeless. She headed straight to the shower, hoping that some hot water would do her some good. She sits down in the shower, brings her knees to her chest, and begins to weep. After her shower, she feels slightly better. She messages Deb back, apologizing for not responding sooner. She lets Deb know that she was out of it. Deb accepts her apology, and the two talk for a spell. After Sadie wraps with Deb, she figures it's time to move to Jon. The problem is Sadie can't call Jon back, so she has to wait until Jon calls her back, hopefully at some point today.

Today, Sadie figures it will be a more productive day. Even though it's a bit late, she opens the store anyway and begins taking inventory, as it has been long overdue.

Maine | Portland | St. Peter's Cemetery

The Next day, Father Lucas arrives in Maine. Father Andrei Funar's body had arrived the day before, and the good people at St. Peters in Portland, Maine, already entombed Father Funar's cremated remains in the Columbarium. Fr. Leon recites some traditional

prayers while following up with the sign of the cross. Then Father Leon Lucas takes a second and directs his words directly to Fr. Andrei. “I’m so sorry all of this happened to you, my brother.” He touches the burial chamber, takes a deep breath, and says: “Take care, my friend. I will see you again.” After that, Fr. Leon Lucas gets into his car and heads to Eagle River.

Maine | Eagle River | Same Day

Ethan is driving to meet a guy from the marketplace to buy a monitor dock for his ThinkPad computer. The drive is about 20 minutes, so Ethan is passing the time by listening to a podcast called *Christian Capsules*. The Capsule or episode for the day discusses knowing your enemy. Ethan likes what he hears and then decides to buy the promotional book that is advertised at the end. Since he is about 10 minutes early, Ethan pulls over at a gas station and orders the book from Amazon on his phone.

After he had placed the order, something that resembled a giant bat flew up and landed on his right passenger-side mirror. Ethan gazes at the bat-like creature, which looks back at him. After a brief stare-down, it flies over the car to the driver’s side. Ethan tries to track it but loses sight of it as it flies over the car’s roof. However, Ethan is startled by the gypsy dressed woman standing at his drivers-side window. She knocks on his window as if to have Ethan lower

it. Ethan cracks it enough to speak through. She stares into his eyes.

Ethan asks, “Yes, can I help you?”

The woman replies, “You cannot help her. Leave her for us; we know what to do.”

Ethan replies, “I’m sorry, what? Help who? What are you talking about?”

She forcefully hits his window to get him to stop talking.

Woman: “Dasvidaniya Ethan!”

She leaves his window and heads to another car on the other side of the gas pumps. She gets in the back seat, and the Crown Victoria speeds away. Ethan, perplexed, sits back and tries to slow his heartbeat.

Maine | Eagle River Outskirts | Eagle River Detention Center

Ethan completes his Facebook deal. From there, Ethan goes to the Detention Center for a quick visit with his friend, Pastor Jon. Ethan is unsettled and needs to talk out what happened. He arrives at the detention center and has to wait for 30 minutes before they bring Jon in. Pastor Jon comes in, picks up the

phone, and speaks:

Jon: “Hi Ethan, I’m glad to see you, but today is not our usual visit day, is it?”

Ethan: “Hi. No, it’s not, but I needed to talk to you as soon as possible.”

Jon: “Ok, shoot.”

Ethan: “I saw something today that still has me a little shaken.”

Jon: “What did you see?”

Ethan: “I think some woman threatened me, but it was weird. And there was a bat.”

Ethan tells Jon the whole story, mentioning that Sadie had also seen the same car. He also tells Jon about the Albino. Jon doesn’t seem too surprised. It appears as if he was expecting Ethan to tell him something like this. Jon discusses his episodes of darkness with Ethan. Afterwards, Jon admonishes Ethan, telling him that if there were ever a time to draw near to the Lord, it is now. Jon warns Ethan to continue to resist sin. Ethan knows he hasn’t been keeping himself from sin, and he shrugs it off when Jon mentions it. Jon’s face and voice express his seriousness. Jon tells Ethan more stuff.

Jon: “Ethan, you must be careful. We, but especially you, are under attack. The enemy is out to get you, and you must persevere until the end. I’ll be praying for you. Right now, you are walking through the valley of the shadow of death. But God will extend his arms to protect you if you seek him. Remember that, Ethan. Also, tell Sadie I will be praying for her as well. It seems that we have all been targeted.”

Ethan interrupts: “Thank you for not giving me up to that woman.”

Jon responds, “Of course, we all have to stick together. Remember Ephesians 6 and ‘armor up,’ Ethan.” Officers tell Jon that the visitation is over. Jon puts his hand on the glass, and Ethan puts his hand on the glass where Jon’s is. Ethan tells Jon that he will see him soon. Jon gets up and leaves with the officers, and Ethan leaves the detention center.

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick’s Catholic Church

Father Leon Lucas arrives in Eagle River. He heads to St. Patrick’s Catholic Church and meets up with Father Antoni. They both talk for over two hours. Fr. Antoni gives Lucas the keys to the rectory and the church. Father Lucas has been there many times and is familiar with almost everything there. Father Antoni doesn’t reveal in detail why he’s leaving, but Fr. Leon can tell

that something is amiss, yet he doesn't press to know. Antoni has already informed his congregation of the change, and everything has been turned over to Lucas. Father Antoni and Leon walk to the door together. The two hug and say goodbye. Antoni notifies Fr. Leon Lucas that he should get out because something doesn't feel right. Father Leon stares at Antoni, looking puzzled, while Antoni gets in his car and quickly leaves.

Father Leon now believes what the Holy See told him. Father Antoni needed to get away because he was having a mental episode. Father Lucas goes to his car, grabs a few things, and heads back inside.

Maine | Eagle River | Pages: New & Rare Books

Sadie had a productive day at the store. The inventory is nearly complete, and she had several customers stop by this afternoon. She still feels down and out, but the day is far better than she thought it would be when she woke up. She closes the store and sits down to look at a few books she received today, texting Deb at the same time.

A few minutes later, Ethan and Dave arrived at Pages.

Sadie stands up and says, "I was about to text you, Ethan."

Ethan responds, "You have to hear this."

Dave chimes in, “It’s crazy, Sadie. Your boy was threatened today by a person with a mental health condition.”

He laughs. Now Sadie is interested. Ethan explains everything from the gas station to the visit with Jon at the detention center. Ethan even tells Sadie of Jon’s warnings of the enemy. Sadie is now freaked out, not by what Jon said, but by Ethan’s encounter with the passenger in the Crown Vic.

By this time, all three are sitting together, going over these strange happenings. Dave, not to be outdone by Ethan, adds that he has also encountered a weird thing.

Dave: “Guys, it’s been strange ever since last week. I’ve had a strange rash under my armpit that has been nagging me since I stopped wearing deodorant.”

All three laughed loudly. It was the first time in a while that things seemed normal between them. Sadie tells Dave he’s nuts and throws a piece of cheese at him. Dave picks it off his hairy chest and eats it. Sadie and Ethan both go “Ewe!” Dave makes funny chewing sounds, and they all laugh.

Right then, there is a knock at the store door. Dave gets up to check it out. He opens the door, and it’s Father Leon Lucas. He bids everyone hello, and Sadie gives Leon a big hug. Dave and Ethan say, “Hey!”

Leon then sits down with everyone else.

Father Leon fills everyone in on Father Funar's status. Information about visiting Father Funar is given to Sadie. Sadie is very pleased that at least her brother is receiving the Catholic treatment she feels he deserves. Sadie decides to tell Father Leon about the albino and the Crown Victoria. Father Leon doesn't pay too much attention to it. Father Leon tells them the story he heard in the news while driving back up to Eagle River. Father Leon Lucas tells them that he heard about people with mental health conditions escaping from Dix Psychiatric Center. Dave's statement earlier echoes this fact. It is then that Ethan decides not to tell Lucas about his encounter with the woman, for fear that Leon will try to explain it away, thus influencing Sadie.

Father Leon gets up because it's getting late. He tries to say a Hail Mary prayer, but Ethan stops him. An argument ensues. Ethan argues that praying to Mary doesn't do anything, while Leon counters that she's the mother of Jesus, so, of course, it's relevant. Dave and Sadie step in and calm everything down. Father Leon decides to excuse himself. He kisses Sadie on the cheek and walks to the door. He turns slightly back for one last word.

Fr. Leon stares Ethan in the face, "Ethan, listen to me. You better wake up soon, before it's too late." Leon then walks out the door.

Ethan and Dave bid Sadie goodbye. Sadie walks Ethan to the door and rubs his shoulder, saying, “Be careful.” Ethan nods and then opens the door. As he does, Deb is getting ready to knock on the door. Sadie greets Deb as Ethan and Dave walk out. Deb held up a bag and told Sadie she brought drinks. Sadie grabs glasses, and the two enjoy each other’s company.

Maine | Eagle River | Leon’s Rectory

Later that night, Father Leon gets out of the shower and wipes the mirror to clear the steam. He brushes his teeth and checks his face in the mirror, then leaves the bathroom. When Lucas turns out the bathroom light, this image in the mirror remains, and its eyes follow him out of the bathroom. Lucas doesn’t see it; he goes and sits on the couch to read.

Lucas sits down on the couch and sees that the crucifix, which was above the TV, has fallen to the floor. He picks it up a second time and places it back on the wall. He sits back and thinks to himself that he’s glad it’s a Saturday evening. Father Antoni was kind enough to have Mass earlier in the day. This gives him a week before he has to address the congregation. He gets up and pours himself a glass of wine. The mere smell of the wine makes Father Lucas want to vomit. He goes to the bathroom to wash his face and looks up to see his mirror shattered. He leaves the bathroom and decides to go to bed; he’s tired. Father Leon Lucas

calls it a night.

That night, Father Lucas wakes up to find himself in the Hoia forest. He realizes that his arms and legs are strapped to the ground. A naked woman with long hair takes a knife, straddles him, and carves a large circle into his chest. He starts to scream in pain, but no sound comes out of his mouth. The woman finishes her carving. She then takes a strand of her hair and a needle and starts sewing Leon's mouth closed. He closes his eyes and frantically prays to St. Joseph. After his prayer, Father Leon wakes up drenched in sweat in his bed at the rectory. He gets up, relieved that he is actually in bed. He sits up, rubs his sore chest, and feels his mouth. He looks down, and there appears to be something that resembles the beginning of a rash on his chest. He takes a moment to gather himself and then goes back to bed for a few more hours of sleep.

10

CHAPTER TEN

Maine | Eagle River | Morning

The next day, Dave and Ethan discuss the Dix Center escapees while playing Call of Duty. Dave is quite sure that it's been those mental patients that Ethan and Sadie have been seeing. Ethan is starting to see Dave's logic. Dave also mentions that the news advised against having contact with them, but to call 911 immediately. Ethan takes note of this. Ethan's thoughts gravitate to the idea that he and Sadie must have been trippin and that maybe this is all just a big misunderstanding. However, the conversation is broken when Dave hollers, "Got 'em all for a triple kill." Ethan yells back, "Yes! Now we are back in this thing. Good job, D!" They both continue playing Call of Duty.

On the same day, Deb and Sadie are on the phone, also discussing the people with mental health conditions who have been escaping all over the news.

They both have the local news on at their respective homes. The Local News shows pictures of the escapees, and one of them resembles the albino that Sadie's been seeing around. It is hard to tell because the person in the image is not smiling, and the lighting is very dim. Sadie looks intently, but the pictures are shown so quickly that it's hard to tell. Sadie is now starting to come to terms with the fact that maybe she's losing her grip on reality. Deb makes a joke and says if you end up in a mental institution, she will visit as often as they would let her. They both laugh. Sadie ends the call, grabs the box of rare books that she needs to deliver to a customer, and heads out the door for the hour-long drive.

Maine | Masardis | Customer Home

Eventually, Sadie arrives at the customer's home. She knocks on the door. The customer yells from deep inside the house, "Come in!" Sadie starts to think that Ethan was right; what biz does she have delivering books by herself in the middle of nowhere? Sadie goes in the front door. "Ms. Sachul, are you there? Hello, Ms. Sachul?" Sadie calls again as she turns left and walks to the kitchen. Sadie, not finding Ms. Sachul, puts the box on the table and yells out, "I'm leaving the box on the kitchen table." Sadie turns to leave when Ms. Sachul, wearing an oxygen mask, rolls up in her wheelchair.

Ms. Sachul eerily belts out, “I have Lucas!”

Sadie, creeped out by the statement, asks, “What did you say?”

Mrs. Sachul pulls down her oxygen mask and says, “Sorry I didn’t greet you. I have Lupus.”

Visibly breathing a sigh of relief, Sadie says, “Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. Well, take care.”

Sadie walks past the lady to head out. She grabs her hand and then puts a wad of money into it. Sadie thanks the lady and leaves the house. She hurries to her car and then drives away. Sadie thinks to herself, “I’m being silly; Ms. Sachul seems like a sweet old lady.”

Maine | Eagle River

When Sadie returns to Eagle River, she stops at the local grocery store and buys some deli-soft chocolate chip cookies for Father Leon Lucas. When she pulls up to the church rectory, she sees a red fox standing in the middle of the driveway. Sadie pauses and looks at it for a few seconds. The fox was staring right back at her. Sadie snaps out of the stare and blows the horn; the fox slowly trots into the bushes. She gets out of the car and grabs the cookies. She closes the door, and

Father Leon Lucas is standing right next to her. She's startled and comments on how she didn't see him there. He asks if the cookies are for him. Sadie tells him yes, but she notices he looks disheveled. Leon observes Sadie staring at him, and he quickly informs Sadie that he had a rough night.

Sadie asks, concerned. "Are you alright, Leon?"

Leon: "Yes Sadie, I'm just doing a lot of work getting ready.",

Sadie: "Getting ready? You mean you're prepared for your first Mass here?"

Leon: "Sure."

Usually, he likes to talk a lot to Sadie, but today, he's disinterested and distant, almost callous in his speech.

Sadie: "Do you need help with anything?"

Leon looked directly into Sadie's eyes. "Yes, if you want, you can come by the church later this evening."

Sadie smiled, "I just might."

Father Lucas smiles and hugs Sadie, saying, "Thank you so much for the cookies; it's greatly appreciated."

Sadie replies, “You’re welcome, and I’ll be over later to help you.”

A puzzled Father Lucas pauses then says, “Alright?”

Sadie gets in her car, waves, and heads home.

A few days later, Sadie returns to Father Lucas’s church rectory. She knocks on the door, and he doesn’t answer. She knocks again and again, and there is no answer. His car is in the driveway. Sadie decides to go in. Sadie calls out to Lucas, but there is no answer. She enters the living room, where she sees Father Lucas sitting on the couch. Father Lucas is sitting up, facing the wall. He’s worse than disheveled, and he stinks. Sadie calls out to Lucas as she approaches him on the couch. He doesn’t move. It’s as if he doesn’t even know she’s there. Sadie approaches him, shakes him, and waves her hand in front of his face. No response. She snaps her fingers in front of him. Nothing. She pulls out her phone to call emergency services, and his phone starts to ring on the table behind her. She turns around, and Father Lucas is staring at Sadie, smiling.

She puts her phone away and asks if he’s all right. He explains that sometimes he gets into a deep meditative state and apologizes if that scared her. Leon infers that he likes to do these from time to time.

Leon: "I'm glad you kept your promise and came back today."

Sadie: "Leon, do you realize that it's been a few days since we last spoke? I haven't been back here until now."

Leon looks at Sadie, stunned.

Sadie: "Are you hungry, Leon?"

Leon: "No."

Sadie: "Ok, well, let's get you showered." She moves to help him up, but he manages to get up on his own. He walks to the bedroom and closes the door. She goes to the door and knocks, "Leon, are you okay?" Leon replies, "I'm fine. I'm just fighting jet lag after traveling between countries. I'm good." Sadie leans on the door: "Do you want me to stay? I'm worried about you." Leon Lucas replies, "No, please no. I'm good. I appreciate you stopping by. We'll get up with each other another time. There's no need to worry about us."

Sadie pulls her head away, confused, but ignores it and allows him to spend some time alone. Sadie hears the shower running and then leaves the rectory. After Sadie gets in her car, she looks back at the rectory. She sees the curtains move in the bedroom window. Deep

down, Sadie knows there is something wrong. But she shakes it off and drives away.

Maine | Eagle River | Ethan's Place | Early Afternoon

Sadie arrives home and stays in her car for a second, recapping the visit with Leon. It was weird. Not sure what to make of it, she calls her friend Deb, but she doesn't answer. Sadie then drives directly to Ethan's place and sits in the car there for a second again, contemplating Leon's situation. She gets out of the car and approaches his door to knock on it. Ethan doesn't answer or come to the door. Sadie can hear him talking to someone inside, and she turns the doorknob and goes in. Ethan, who was on the phone, was headed toward the front door to open it. He waves at Sadie and continues to listen to whoever is on the phone with him. She sits on the couch and checks her hair with the compact in her purse while Ethan wraps up the phone call to his mother:

Ethan: "Yes, Mom, I know, I'm not. Ok, I understand. Thank you, and have a great time. Ttyl, I love you."

Ethan hangs up his cell phone and goes toward Sadie to acknowledge Sadie's presence. Sadie leans in for the front hug, but Ethan instead gives Sadie a

sideways hug. Ethan goes to the computer and tells Sadie, “Give me one minute. I need to check my account quickly to see how much money Mom just gave me to pay the bills with. What brings you over, Sadie?”

Sadie replies, “You never used to ask me why I came over; you were just happy I did.”

Ethan replies sadly, “Yeah, that was until you rejected me.” Ethan looks at the computer and then starts checking his accounts.

Sadie, looking down, feels Ethan’s hurt. For the first time in a while, she realizes that she is no longer the center of Ethan’s world. Her brother is dead, her parents are dead, and Leon is acting weird. Sadie is starting to feel the weight of everything around her.

Sadie talks to Ethan: “I know you think I rejected you, but the truth is I was...” Yancy comes through the door. Ethan gets up to greet Yancy.

Yancy asks, “Ethan, why is Sadie here?”

Sadie, feeling combative, immediately gets up and steps toward Yancy, saying, “Because I wanted to see Ethan.” Do you have a problem with that?

Yancy, who is shorter but stronger and more willing

to fight, steps to Sadie's face and says, "Yeah, I do. You don't want Ethan, so why are you here?"

Ethan finally steps in between the two women, "Ladies, ladies, please!"

Sadie, calming down, turns from Yancy and says, "Actually, I'm here for a particular reason. Ethan, I need you to listen. Something is going on with Father Leon."

Ethan jokingly replies, "Let me guess, he just found out that purgatory isn't real?" Ethan and Yancy both laugh at his joke.

Sadie angrily retorts, "Ethan, I'm serious. He's not himself." Sadie clues them in on everything that transpired earlier today. Ethan suggests that maybe it's jet lag, as he's been flying everywhere in a short period. All three of them sit in silence for a moment, thinking, when suddenly Dave bursts through the door. Sadie, not buying this angle, decides to go home and call Deb over. Maybe she will believe her.

Sadie says bye to Ethan and Dave. Dave shoots back: "What did I miss?" Ethan and Yancy fill him in.

Maine | Eagle River | Sadie's Place

Sadie goes home. As she gets out of her car, a woman emerges from a car behind her. She is a gypsy looking lady who says: “Excuse me miss!” with a raspy southern European tone.

Sadie responds to her as she approaches the store’s front door: “Oh, I’m sorry, ma’am, the store is closed for the day. Can you come back tomorrow?”

Gypsy: “No, there might not be a tomorrow for your priest friend Lucas.”

Sadie stops in her tracks, turns and looks at the woman who’s dressed like a gypsy wearing an apron.

The gypsy woman continues: “What I mean is, how do you say in English...Oh, he ate bad food that I made for him a few days ago. I was wondering how he was. Make sure you check on him. I don’t want him to get worse.”

Sadie: “Who are you to Fr. Leon? How do you know him?”

Gypsy: “No time, bad food, poison stomach, sat out all day, people get sick.”

Sadie thinks about how bad Leon was earlier and then determines not to go inside her shop. Instead, she decides to go back to Father Lucas. The gypsy lady

asks to ride with Sadie, Sadie tells her no but to just follow her there. Sadie has forgotten that she had told Deb to meet her at her place in an hour. Both the gypsy woman and Sadie head to Father Lucas rectory.

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick's Catholic Church Rectory

Sadie and the gypsy woman stop at the rectory. Sadie parks behind Fr. Leon's car and the gypsy woman parks behind Sadie. Sadie approaches Leon's door and begins knocking. She turns the handle and opens the door. Sadie tells the gypsy woman to wait outside. After about a minute, Sadie comes back out and shakes her head, indicating he's not there. The gypsy points across the street to the church. There are lights on and what appears to be movement inside the church. Sadie and the gypsy get back in their cars and drive over to the church.

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick's Catholic Church

They both pull up to the church and try the front doors, which are unlocked. Sadie and the Gypsy both go in, with Sadie calling out loud, "Hello, Fr. Leon?" She yells it again, but no one answers. Candles are lit throughout the front end of the church. Suddenly, there is a loud bang. The sound came from deeper in the church. Sadie and the gypsy woman push forward

with Sadie calling out as they go, “Father Leon?” Again, another sound, it’s louder this time, which means they are getting closer to its origin.

Sadie, unfamiliar with the church layout, looks confused about where to go next. The gypsy directs Sadie to come her way, which is the part of the church where the priest gets changed and things are stored. Sadie follows her while wondering who this lady is and how she knows where to go. The gypsy, sensing her thoughts, answers, “I’ve been this way before when I helped Father Antoni with some things before?”

Sadie doesn’t comprehend and realigns her focus to finding Leon. The pair reaches the church supply room, and there is yet another door. The gypsy opens it, and Sadie touches her on the shoulder. The gypsy nods her head as if to say follow me. They both go through the unlocked door and head down the stairs into the cellar.

There is no electricity down here. The room is lit by candles everywhere. Sadie calls out to Lucas again: “Father Lucas, you down here?” They both hear a faint voice. Sadie, thinking they are finally on track, follows the room around to the back of the stairs and into the rest of the cellar. The pair step through a narrow passage and emerge into the more significant part of the cellar. Finally, the gypsy woman and Sadie find Fr. Leon sitting shirtless at a desk with a few books staring at the wall. Sadie runs over to him and

kneels beside him.

Sadie: “Leon, what are you doing down here?”

Leon turns to her and responds, “I have been waiting for you, little Butter Bean.”

Sadie asked in amazement, “How do you know that name? Only Dad ever called me that. Did my brother tell you that?”

Leon tenderly rubs Sadie’s hair, almost as if he adores it, then he grabs it tightly, jerking her head toward him. She yells in discomfort, and Lucas responds in a sinister voice, “It was the last thing on your dying father’s lips.” Leon jerks her head again and slams it on the desk. Sadie falls to the floor, unconscious.

Leon then tells the gypsy witch “I’ll take care of her, finish what we started.” The witch leaves the cellar, gets in her car, and ultimately leaves the church.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Maine | Eagle River | Eagle River Detention Center

At the detention center, Jon is in his cell, holding his Bible to his chest as he prays. He says his prayers by quoting a portion of Psalm 23. While he's praying, he falls asleep sitting on his bed. He dreams of a Catholic Church and Sadie screaming in terror. A serpent bites her continuously on the legs but doesn't release any venom, as if toying with torture. The serpent pauses mid-strike and then turns around to see Jon staring and lunges at him. He wakes up yelling loudly and drops his Bible on the floor. A voice from another inmate breaks the silence. The inmate is standing at his cell door. The inmate informs Jon that the correctional officer at the desk needs to see him. Jon tells the inmate, waves at the inmate, and heads to the

guard's desk. The guard hands him a hall pass and warns Jon to stop the screaming. Lastly, the guard informs Jon that his lawyer wants to visit. Jon, distressed at the dream, still heads toward the visit.

Maine | Eagle River

Meanwhile, Deb shows up at Sadie's place, and she can't get in the shop. After knocking for what seems like forever, Deb tries to call Sadie, but the phone rings a couple of times and goes to voice mail. She notices that her car is also not there. Deb heads to Ethan's place to see if Sadie's car is there, but it's not. Deb tries Sadie's phone again, and no answer. Deb decides to check with Ethan to see what's going on. Ethan lets her in and communicates to Deb that Sadie was worried about Leon and perhaps she might have gone by Leon's first before heading home. Deb tells Ethan that she texted her to meet up at Sadie's place. Ethan and Dave suggest giving her time to get home.

Yancy asks out loud what Deb is trying to convey, "So, what, Deb? Do you think something happened to her or something?"

Deb nods with deep concern.

Dave asks Ethan, “Didn’t Sadie give you access to the Ring cameras there?” Check the camera in front of the store to see if Sadie ever made it home.”

Ethan shoots Dave with a colossal smile. Both Ethan and Sadie had forgotten about the outside cameras long ago when Ethan lost the code to one of them.

Ethan pulls up one of the camera’s recent recordings. He puts it up on the giant monitor on his computer. Unfortunately, it only shows the gypsy woman talking to Sadie and they both driving off together. The sounds of ambient noise muffle the volume, but they do hear Fr. Leon’s name mentioned. Deb determines that nothing hostile appears to be happening on the camera, so she decides to go back home and wait for Sadie’s call. After Deb leaves, Ethan and Dave ponder their next moves. It is then that Yancy chooses to leave and get some food from Babe’s Bistro to bring back to Ethan’s place. Ethan and Dave tell Yancy they will do a drive-by to check on Father Lucas to make sure all is okay. Plus, Ethan can’t explain it, but he figures he would regret not checking it out. Ethan, Dave, and Yancy all leave at the same time.

Maine | Eagle River | Back Roads to Babes Bistro

Yancy took all the back roads as a shortcut to get to Babe's Bistro. She comes to stop at a traffic light just a quarter mile from the restaurant, when suddenly she's hit from behind by a Crown Vic. Angrily, Yancy shuts off the car and gets out. Yancy rolls to the rear to inspect the damage to the bumper of her brand-new car. She turns and looks at the driver, and it appears to be the mental patient, the albino, who is driving the car with a passenger who has something wrong with his eyes. Yancy yells, "Hey asshole, what's wrong with you?" The albino floors the gas, sending the Crown Vic right into Yancy, pinning her against her car and the Crown Vic. Yancy starts throwing up blood. The Crown Vic backs up and then speeds away, running the light at the intersection. Yancy drops to the floor. Her eyes fade to close as her life starts to drift from her.

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick's Catholic
Church/Rectory

Ethan and Dave arrive at Father Leon's residence only to find Leon's car but no Sadie. Ethan knocks for what seems like forever while Dave cases the exterior of the joint. Dave suggests checking the church in case they may be over there. They drive over to the church, and Dave sees Sadie's car. They both debate what to do next. Ethan wants to go in, but Dave doesn't. After a minute, they both decide to go check it out real quick. They approach the church doors, pull the handles, and, to no one's surprise, they find the doors open, so they go in.

They slowly make their way through the church, yelling for Sadie and Leon. Dave is familiar with the church because he used to attend it years ago, and he has extensive knowledge about it. After some searching, they finally find the door that leads to the cellar.

Ethan asks Dave if he has ever been through that door, and Dave says, "Hell no," and remarks that probably where priests do little boys. They both chuckle, and then their laughter subsides quickly. Ethan and Dave go through the door and head down to the cellar. They are both a little spooked but continue to make their way behind the stairs, heading

back toward the back of the cellar. They see lights in a room that goes beyond a narrow passageway.

The duo squeezes through and come to Leon and Sadie in the room. Sadie is lying on a broken pew, unconscious and drooling at the mouth. She doesn't look good. A shirtless Leon sits at a desk, surrounded by books, mumbling to himself.

Ethan, upset with Sadie's status, starts yelling at Leon, "What did you do to her? What have you done?" Ethan tries to get Sadie's attention by calling out to her, but she's unresponsive. There is vomit on the floor next to her, and her forehead is bleeding.

Dave takes his turn at Leon, "Did you do this? Did you hurt Sadie? You better start talking, man." Dave runs over to Sadie to check her out. Dave yells back at Ethan, "She's alive!" Ethan breathes a sigh of relief.

Leon, speaking in a different and more resounding voice, said, "Young Ethan Moore, we have been waiting on you." Ethan and Dave scanned the room, looking for others who might be there, given that the room is quite spacious, approximately the size of a typical living room.

Ethan replies, "What did you give her? What have

you done to Sadie?” Leon stands up. Ethan steps back in fear. Leon looks at Ethan with a cold, steely gaze. Ethan stares back. Ethan notices a giant red mark on Leon’s chest that resembles something he’s seen in his books, but it’s still hard to tell – it may just be a severe rash.

Dave, looking for a peaceful way out of the cellar, comments on the rash. “That’s a nasty rash you got there. Why don’t you let us take you and Sadie to the ER to get checked out? You don’t want to get that infected.”

Leon smiles at Dave: “I’m fine; I’ve never been better. And Sadie, well, she’s in her element; after all, she is an addict.”

Ethan and Dave glance at each other, astonished; they are also silently contemplating their next move: rush Leon and take him down, or take Sadie and make a swift escape.

Dave says, “We need to get Sadie out of here; she needs medical attention now.”

Leon: “David, you may take Sadie and leave. No one will stop you.”

During this time the gypsy witch has entered the

room.

Dave responds, “What about Ethan? I mean, he has to come with me.”

Leon emphatic, “Ethan stays, Sadie, and you can go.”

Ethan: “You can’t stop me, Leon. Dave, quick, grab her.”

Dave picks her up, and Ethan gets in between Dave and Leon. Dave puts her on his shoulder and heads through the narrow passage. Ethan turns around and then heads toward the passage.

Leon: “Ethan, do you want to know what happened to Yancy when she left to get food a little while ago?”

Ethan slowly turns around. “What did you say?”

Leon retorts, “If you stay with me, I’ll tell you what happened. She didn’t arrive at the Bistro; she’s somewhere else.”

Ethan tries to call Yancy, but there is no signal in the cellar.

Dave hollers, “Ethan, let’s go!”

Leon: “Yancy is wearing black slutty tight pants and a

blue flannel with a black halter top on.”

Ethan: “How do you know this? What’s happened to her?”

Dave: “Ethan, please, we need to go!”

Leon: “Stay with me, Ethan, and I’ll tell you what’s happened to her.”

Ethan: “Dave, go. I’ll catch up later; let me find out what idiot knows.”

Dave: “Are you sure?”

Ethan: “Go, I’ll catch up.”

Dave leaves with Sadie.

Leon tells the witch, “I do not want to be disturbed. Ethan, grab a seat. We have things to discuss.”

Leon puts on his Priest shirt, and the two men get ready to talk. Ethan pulls up one of the chairs from the corner to the table where Leon is sitting.

Ethan: “Now, my friend, tell me what you think you know about Yancy.”

Maine | Eagle River | The Discussion | The Cellar

Leon: “Let’s address that straight away. You mistake in calling me your friend.”

Ethan: “First of all, you’re right; we’re not friends. ‘Regardless, I want to hear about Yancy. Have you been stalking her?’”

Leon: “Patience, Young Moore, you will get your answers, but a proper introduction is in order, no?”

Ethan shakes his head, visibly unamused, as he shifts in his seat.

Ethan starts, “You’re such an...”

Leon: “No, no, no need for that.”

Ethan: “Fine, I’ll bite. What would you like me to call you, Leon Lucas?”

Leon: “Call me the King of the East.”

Ethan thinks for a second, then responds.

Ethan: “You’re a priest who wants to be called the Prince of the East?”

Amaymon/Leon replies loudly: “No!!!! I AM. The King of the East.”

Ethan’s wheels are starting to turn. As if he’s trying to figure out a small riddle but then snaps back to reality.

Ethan: “You’re a Jesuit, Leon. What is wrong with you? I think you need help.”

Amaymon/Leon, in a serious tone, says, “Your deafness has left you vulnerable.”

Ethan, confused about that statement, said, “What? What am I supposed to hear?”

Amaymon/Leon: “Any of it. All of it. Your ability to overlook what is clearly in front of you is astonishing. (Shaking his head) You’re just coasting by, oblivious to everything around you.”

Ethan: “And what, because you’re a Priest, anyone who is not Catholic is an idiot? Is that what it is? Never mind, it doesn’t matter. What’s the deal with Yancy, or was that just a lie? And not only that, I

want to know what you did to Sadie. Did you drug her?”

Ethan is starting to run out of patience. He’s not getting any answers to his questions.

Amaymon: “Yancy, is home, so don’t worry about her. We’ll see her later.”

Ethan: “So you’re saying that this whole time you knew Yancy was at home? And how do you know, your Highness? Did you follow her?”

Amaymon: “My associate assures me she went home.”

Ethan: “Is that old lady your associate? That had better be the case, Leon, because I’m not fond of beating down priests.”

Amaymon: “You don’t have power over me, Ethan. You’re a little boy playing prodigal.”

Ethan: “I don’t even know what that means. However, since I know about Yancy now, I’m on my way to the hospital to see my friend, whom you hurt. You better pray that she lives through whatever you

did to her, or I'll forget that I'm a Christian."

(Ethan starts to get up out of the chair)

Amaymon: "Oh Ethan, you're no Christian. Does a Christian pay to jerk off to Only Fans minors? What was it, twice last week? Or does a Christian let the love of their life slip away by letting her dive back into drugs? Or maybe you mean, a Christian tortures Sadie by forcing her to watch you screw that whore who's a atheist? Did Yancy ever get a divorce from that pimp she was a slave to?"

(Ethan angrily sits back down.)

Ethan: "What do you know about my relationships? They're complicated. I'm not proud of what I have done. I regret my lust, but the Lord will forgive me."

Amaymon: "You have to ask for forgiveness to get it. Am I right, Ethan? The last I checked...You haven't asked, nor do you intend to. Listen, I get it; you want what you want. I understand it. I even encourage it. But don't sit there pretending to be something you're not. The Old One does not forgive those who

willfully play in the field of habitual sin. Am I correct pretender?”

Ethan (Standing up): “I don’t know what you think you know, but I don’t have lust issues. And as for Sadie, I do love her. I would never do anything to hurt her; you did. The Father and I are good. And don’t worry about my forgiveness; it’s none of your business.”

Amaymon: (Smiling) “And now add lying to the list of your sins. While you didn’t physically hurt Sadie, you emotionally scarred her. You were the one constant in her life, and you let her down with that married slut. Again, I don’t blame you. Why settle for chicken when you can have steak, right, Ethan?”

Ethan is starting to consider what Leon is saying to him. Until now, Ethan hadn’t given much thought to his behavior. Is he as heartless as Leon says he is? Did he ruin his and Sadie’s chances of being together? Was he as callous as Leon makes him out to be?

No, no, he can’t be.

Ethan starts to think and rationalize. He messes up, sure, who doesn’t? But he generally loves God and Sadie. Leon doesn’t know what he’s talking about.

However, what's disturbing is how Leon knew exactly about his sex life.

Whispering, "I'm not sure how Leon is doing it. Has he been following me? I better further investigate what Leon knows."

Maine | Eagle River | Hospital ER

Sadie has been admitted to the ER for a drug overdose. Dave is in the waiting room, being questioned by the police. Dave is letting them know that Father Leon has done something to Sadie, but he has no evidence to support this claim. The Detective tells Dave he doesn't believe a decorated Jesuit Priest, employed by the Vatican, acquired drugs, kidnapped Sadie, drugged and assaulted her, and only let Dave take her to the hospital. Not to mention that Sadie is his long-time friend, and he was a disciple of her brothers. Combine that with the fact that the police know that Sadie recently used to be a chronic addict.

The Detective took Dave's report anyway and said they would be in touch. Dave knew the police didn't believe him. He guessed that he would probably

never hear anything from this investigation again.

Dave called Deb and explained everything to her. Even Deb didn't believe Dave. Dave has been known to tell big tales, and Deb is aware of this. But despite her disbelief of Dave, Deb elects to at least go to the hospital and see Sadie. Deb at least believes Dave on Sadie being at the hospital. So Debora goes to the ER to see Sadie. Once Deb arrives, Dave gets ready to leave. He planned to go home and change his shirt because it had drool and vomit from carrying Sadie out of the Church. He will then go back to see what Ethan is doing with Leon. Once Dave pulls up to his house, he sees the Crown Vic parked directly across the street. Dave approaches the Crown Vic on foot, and the car speeds away. Dave goes back to his car, grabs his phone and keys, and goes inside to change clothes.

As soon as Dave changes his clothes, he grabs his keys and heads to the door to go out. He sees a syringe lying on the coffee table. He picks it up and looks at it. At the same time, the detective from earlier walks in through the door that Dave had left open, accompanied by two uniformed police officers. Dave turns around, startled with the syringe in tow. The detective sees the syringe, pulls out an evidence

bag, and instructs Dave to place it inside.

Dave: “Detective, are you here because of the Crown Vic?”

The Det. Replies, “Crown Vic? Um, no.”

The Detective tells Dave that they just talked to Fr. Leon.

Dave replies happily, “Good!”

The Detective continues, “No, not good. Father Leon is in Portland at a Catholic Conference, which is over 4 hrs. away – by Uber. The conference confirmed his attendance.

However, Father Lucas did mention that you had been with Sadie quite a bit, even coming to his Rectory looking for her. Sadie’s friend Deborah just confirmed on the way over that Sadie had been here recently.”

Dave cannot believe what he is hearing.

“Thats fucking impossible!” Dave roars.

The detective tells Dave to calm down and that he’s being temporarily detained until they can sort it all out. Dave asks the detective if he can please call his friend Yancy first so she can come down to the

station. The Detective looks at his officers and then back to Dave.

Detective: “How do you know, Yancy?”

Dave: “We are very good friends. She was with us earlier this evening. Why, what about her?”

Detective: “Don’t worry, we’ll discuss this further at the station.”

The officers place Dave in a squad car and drive off to the Eagle River Police Department.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Eagle River | St. Patrick's Catholic Church | Cellar

Ethan asked, “What do you think you know about me?” You and I were never close in any manner. We just knew about each other. But somehow now you can tell me about my sins. You act as if you’re not interested in Sadie yourself. I’ve seen how you look at her. You want her, and you’re a priest. How do you square that with your beliefs?”

Amaymon: “Actually, it works quite nicely. Yes, at first, I was trying to push up on Sadie, but then one of my subjects, those ones, thought I should keep her away from you. It drives you into sin and further into depravity. I wasn’t sure if it would work, but you ran right into another woman’s arms, just like they said you would. Stacking sin upon sin.”

Ethan: “Who are these subjects? I would love to meet them; they don’t know Sadie or me. Regardless, they are wrong. I didn’t run to another woman’s arms. I wasn’t with Sadie to begin with. So, I started dating a woman. That’s all that happened.”

Leon, in an urgent voice, says, “Ethan, please, help me. I’m trapped.”

Ethan, thrown off by the comment, looks at Leon, confused and with a bit of pity.

Ethan: “Leon, what’s wrong? What do you mean that you’re trapped?”

Amaymon in a darker voice, “He means what he says.” He IS trapped, and he will die trapped just like you’re trapped as well. Your God has forsaken you, Ethan, and you are now ours.”

Ethan feels like they are going around in circles. He’s starting to get annoyed and tired of Leon’s third-person talk.

Ethan: “Ethan’s God has not left him, and he is not trapped. I will show you Leon.”

Ethan starts to get up. “So much for me being trapped.”

Amaymon: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Isn’t that what the Shepherd said? Yet, you have heard nothing of what has been presented to you.”

Ethan: “I have heard nothing but gibberish. You know nothing, and so I’m done.”

Amaymon: “Remember how happy you were when you found out Sadie’s father died in that boating accident; is that the nothing you refer to?”

Ethan nervously sits back down. “What did you say? Who told you that? I would never...”

Amaymon: “Oh, you did. And I don’t judge you for it. He was a racist. He hated you and your light-skinned mother. Adrian Funar did not want you around his daughter. It’s only natural to want him dead. And make no mistake, Ethan.... You wanted him dead.”

Ethan is frozen, paralyzed in disbelief. His most inner thoughts were exposed, laid bare like this. How does he know about his insidious thoughts?

Ethan, shaking, said, “Who told you that? How do you know?”

Amaymon: “You’re finally starting to hear.”

Ethan: “Are you a demon?”

Amaymon: “I am the King of the East. And don’t worry about our secret. Rest assured we are not racists, if anyone want to join us, we will not resist them.”

Ethan: “So, are you the one that killed Father Funar and that boy?”

Amaymon: “I did not. That was the beautiful work of my servant Gaap. But he was operating under my orders. And I must admit, that was a masterful stroke of genius. You see, Funar, may he rest in torment, was a small thorn in our side. But like all of you, he loved things that were forbidden to him, and we needed to eat.”

Ethan: “And the boy?”

Amaymon: “The boy was a casualty of war. No different than when the adversary killed our offspring, our sons and daughters.”

Ethan: “You’re referring to the Nephilim.”

Amaymon: “Finally, you’re thinking. Anyway, the boy was instrumental in bringing you to me. You see,

Ethan, we are in the final inning, and we still have a lot of work to do.”

Ethan: “But why do all of these things to us here? Why do you hold Leon hostage? Why hurt Sadie? What does any of this have to do with God?”

Amaymon: “There you go again, showing how deaf you are—two steps forward and three steps back, Ethan. See if you have ears to hear this: It’s the end of the church age. Your time has passed. It’s our turn now. You see, Ethan, we do keep records of wrongs, and we do hold grudges; we will exact our revenge. And there have been many wrongs recorded. Our friend Leon is here to bear witness.”

Ethan: “Bear witness to what?”

Amaymon: “Bear witness to all the atrocities that I plan to do with his body before I send him to hell.”

Ethan: “You’re wasting your time. Leon isn’t even a Christian. He’s a Catholic.”

Leon crying, “Ethan, please, I was so wrong. Please help me, pleeeeeaaaaasssseee!”

Amaymon: “We never waste time. The world will see the unspeakable horrors committed with this body. You have been invited to watch and even join us.”

Ethan: “Not if I can help it.” Ethan stands up and raises his left hand. “In the name of Jesus, I compel you to come out of him!”

Nothing Happens.

Amaymon: “SIT DOWN!” The voice carries with it wind and echoes throughout the cellar.

Ethan sits down.

Amaymon (calmly): “The Shepard is not here; there is no power you can draw from. *Solus ES* (You are alone).”

Ethan (tries again): “In the name of the most holy God, I compel you to release Leon!”

Ethan, not having faith in his ability to cast out the demon, gives up on it.

He feels defeated and starts crying.

Ethan: “What do you want from me?”

Amaymon: “Right now, for you to listen. Why do you fight for a God that deserts everyone who hopes in Him? He even deserted the Shepherd on the cross. Did you know he deserted my kind as well?”

Ethan, with his hands on his head and a weary expression, asked, “What do you mean?”

Amaymon: “We all lost ones in this battlefield called life. Our offspring were left to die, deserted, while the ark saved animals. ANIMALS! There was room on the ark, wasn’t there?”

Ethan, still with head down and hands on head, asks, “Didn’t the Nephilim cause the problems? You did what wasn’t lawful and mated with human women.”

Amaymon, getting upset, responds, “Are you suggesting that the adversary’s harsh dealings with my people were their fault?” They suffered because they existed. I can still hear their screams during those days. Have you ever listened to the screams of thousands of people drowning?”

Ethan: “No, I have not.”

Amaymon appears behind Ethan in an instant. He violently grabs Ethan's head and covers both ears. "Here, have a listen!"

Ethan's ears fill with immense and loud sounds of people wailing and screaming; there is splashing and what sounds like people banging on something.

Amaymon: "Do you hear?"

Next comes the sounds of waves and many beings drowning. The sound is unbearable.

Ethan passes out from the sounds; his ears are bleeding. Then the sounds cease.

Eagle River | Police Precinct | Interview Room

The detectives who were interviewing Dave stepped out of the room. Dave, in the interview room alone, reaches out to God.

Dave: "Oh, Mighty God, I need your help. Please forgive me my sins, for they are many. I never meant for any of this to happen. Please help me, Lord!"

Minutes later, the detectives arrived and informed Dave that he was free to go home for now but to stay in the area. Their investigation continues. Dave immediately thanks the Lord and leaves the precinct with an officer who drives him home.

Maine | Eagle River |

Dave gets dropped off by the officer at this house, and the officer drives away. As Dave walks to his front door, he hears a voice call out to him. Dave turns around, and a surprised look graces his face.

Ethan comes to and finds himself duct taped to the chair. His shirt is off. When he looks down, he sees his chest has a seal cut into it. He looks up and sees the Witch in the corner, sitting on a freshly drawn seal and reading what looks to be a human-skinned book. Ethan looks directly ahead and sees the demon looking directly at him. Ethan is scared.

Amaymon: “You’ve failed, Ethan. You’ve failed Sadie. You have failed Dave and Leon.

And finally, you have failed Yancy.”

It is then that Ethan realizes that Yancy is probably dead. He starts sobbing.

Amaymon: “Stop, stop crying! It is far too late for that. You see, you never had his love. You were living for yourself. Everything was about you. And we love that. So why cry? You’re in our good graces. And, spoiler alert, you have been so good to know that I’m going to bring Gaap into you, so we can all be friends, deal?”

Ethan: “In the name of the most holy God, I...”
Immersed in tears, “I cast you out.”

Amaymon: “Are you done? You can’t cast me out, Ethan. You haven’t even confessed your sins to the adversary. You loved them all—lust, hatred, envy, adultery, and love of the forbidden sciences. Too much is on the books, Ethan. And that’s okay because we love you.”

The witch roughly covers his mouth with a big piece of duct tape.

Amaymon continued, “I have been around a long time, Ethan. Oh, and Eve was hot. Yancy reminded me of her. What a waste.”

Ethan groans.

Amaymon changes his focus. “Anyway, I’ve seen many things, and one thing I’ve noticed is that this generation is the worst. You guys believe in absolutely nothing. Especially here in America. Americans are only concerned with living the dream. Self-first. Did you know that this is the one generation for which we have done the least amount of work? I bet you didn’t know that. However, we are now in the final inning, and overtime’s a plenty.”

Amaymon walked over and whispered something to the witch, and she came over and stood next to Ethan. Amaymon sits on the edge of the table and continues with Ethan.

Amaymon: “Look at it this way, Moore: you’ll get a front-row seat to what’s coming next.” He slaps

Ethan on the knee. “Don’t worry about Sadie; we are not finished with her yet.”

Maine | Eagle River | St. Patrick’s Catholic Church |
The Cellar

Ethan: “Leon, listen to me. Please fight it. Be strong and fight. Fight him, Leon, for our sake.”

Amaymon laughed, “This is pathetic. Now, you are getting desperate. This is a teaching moment, Ethan. The possessed host cannot relieve himself of a spirit. Doesn’t your book teach you that? Let’s use what we know, Ethan. Leon is a Catholic. Leon hasn’t even given his life to the Shepherd. He and his faith believe in the worship of idols, as well as specific individuals revered as saints, such as Mary and the Pope. I assure you, very few people who identify as Catholics will reside in the realm of the adversary. That is one of the main reasons why we chose a Leon. Catholic priests are so easy to possess. Goodbye, Ethan. We will ensure that your mother is taken care of.”

Ethan moans and squirms in his seat, making no inroads toward his freedom.

Amaymon said to the witch, “Finish it!”

The witch slides Ethan in his chair over to the seal on the ground.

She injects Ethan with something. He passes out.

She stands over Ethan, reading from the book that she created from the skin of a baby.

Amaymon closes his eyes and starts to whisper words in Syriac-Aramaic.

The lights start flickering; darkness begins to dominate the room.

Without warning, Amaymon ceased the whispers. His concentration is broken. He opens his eyes, as if surprised, and speaks: “No, it can’t be.” The witch stopped reading, concerned about what Amaymon was focused on.

In walked Dave and Pastor Jon Sykes. Dave runs over and hits the witch with a crowbar. The witch falls to the floor, unconscious, head bleeding.

Amaymon growled and then twisted his head toward Dave, sending him flying into the wall. Dave falls unconscious on top of the witch.

Jon yelling: “UNCLEAN SPIRIT!”

Amaymon: “It’s Amaymon, Reverend Sykes. Did you come to die?”

During this time, Amaymon’s infestation of Leon has made Leon’s physical appearance change, as one who is suffering from some skin disease.

Amaymon: “Sit down, Reverend, and prepare to enter Gehenna.”

Rev. Sykes says a silent prayer.

Amaymon: “Go ahead and get it in, Reverend. You’re going to need it.”

Rev. Sykes pulls out the Bible Ethan and Sadie got him, “In the name of **Yeshua**, I command you to listen.”

Amaymon angrily interrupts, “You do not command me. You are feces, excrement to me.”

Rev. Sykes starts to read from Psalm 23 from the Bible.

Amaymon: “Ah, the go-to verse when people are doomed. And you ARE DOOMED, Sykes! We have Yancy, and we can get to Sadie anytime we want.”

Rev. Sykes appears undisturbed and finishes reading the chapter. He then reads from Psalm 3.

Amaymon: “Jon, can you hear me? The Shepherd is losing his flock. Ethan is already ours. Leon is already mine.”

Rev. Sykes: Shifting to selected passages from Psalm 28.

Amaymon mocks and swears at Jon.

Amaymon: “Are you suited to battle me? You couldn’t even battle your ex-wife. Remember, she ruined your life; she made you lonely. All those lonely days for you, while she’s getting it up the butt. Another man was spreading his essence in your wife while she was holding sex back from you. Jon, did

you know she never used a condom with him? In her mouth, Jon, she never did that with you. Remember she told you she doesn't like that."

Rev. Sykes tears up, and his heart rate increases; his tears are blocking his vision, preventing him from reading. Jon remembers finding his wife doing things that she would never do to him. Jon drops the Bible on the desk and begins to sob.

Amaymon: "Jon, that maggot of a wife deserves to die. You know this. Just say the word, and it's done. Jon, she did it on your bed, on the kitchen table. How many days did you eat at that table? Jon, where was the Shepherd during those times? Why did he allow this, Jon? How's your sex life now, Jon? I know where she lives. If we go now, we can catch them in bed together now. Let's get her, Jon."

Sykes weeps; he remembers everything. The pain is still there. It's raw, still hurts a lot.

Amaymon, sensing he almost has Sykes, pours it on more. "Jon, let me help you. Do you recall wanting children? You wanted two girls, but now she has a girl by that guy. Jon, what the hell? Where was the Shepherd? Say the word, and let us help you."

Rev. Sykes's sobbing has slowed. With a whisper, he asks for forgiveness for his weakness and small faith. He petitions the Lord for help, "My God, my Lord, please allow the Holy Spirit to provide me the strength to face the true adversary."

Dave regains consciousness. He can't move much because his back is messed up. He lets out a loud sound of pain. Amaymon smiles at Dave.

Rev. Jon Sykes stands up, raises both hands to heaven, and cries out. "Yeshua, it is by your glory and your authority that I do this."

Amaymon: "You have no authority over a King."

Jon Sykes: "Be silent, unclean spirit."

Amaymon is trying to continue.

"Silence, S-i-l-e-n-c-e!" Jon remarks. Amaymon is silent. "In the Name of Yeshua, I command you to desist and depart from this creature of God."

A stitched shut mouth protrudes out the wall behind Amaymon, and it starts to scream, resembling the

screams and wailing that Ethan heard earlier.

Rev. Sykes, closing his eyes and covering his ears, cried out, “Lord God, help me!” Immediately, the sounds stopped. Rev. Sykes opens his eyes and sees his wife sitting before him.

Amaymon/ Jon’s wife: “Jon, you were never a man in bed. You forced me into another man’s arms. You didn’t please me. You never thought about what I wanted. Don’t you feel guilty for giving up on us and pushing me away?”

Rev. Sykes: “Lies, all lies! Lord, please help your servant in my time of need and deliver me from the evil one. I need you, Lord!”

Rev. Sykes, showing fear, continues in a loud voice, “In the name of **Jesus**, Unclean Spirit, I CAST YOU OUT!”

Suddenly, a rush of wind came in with tremendous force, and Jon was forced to cover his face. When the wind subsided. Leon is lying on the floor, talking in a low voice.

Leon: “Thank you, **Jesus**, oh my Lord and Savior, oh, thank you, O God of mine!”

Dave crawls over and unties Ethan, who is still woozy from the cocktail the witch gave him. Speaking of witch, she is gone. Only her blood remains. The mouth on the wall is also gone.

Everyone cries and praises God.

Ethan asks Jon how he is there. Jon tells him his lawyer got the charges dismissed because there was not enough evidence to prosecute.

Ethan gives Jon a big hug.

Ethan and John help Dave and Leon out of the Cellar. Everyone rides with Jon to the hospital to get care. Everyone eventually visits Sadie, who has just been moved to recovery.

A year later...

Romania | The Abandoned St. Sophronius Catholic Church | November

A man in a long black hooded coat approaches the doors of the abandoned St. Sophronius Catholic Church. He wipes some snow off the church door handle. Using some force, the man pries open the door with a screwdriver. He enters the sanctuary. The hooded man heads toward the front of the candle-lit sanctuary. Coming from the back office is the Gypsy Witch inquiring of the noise. The Gypsy woman addresses the snow-covered man.

Gypsy Witch: “What do you want? There is nothing for you here.”

The hooded man continues walking until he is standing directly in front of the Gypsy Witch. He takes off his hood.

Gypsy Witch surprised, “Ah, Father Lucas, What are you doing here?”

Leon Lucas: “You almost succeeded, Gaap. You almost got me.”

Gypsy Witch: “Now that you’re here I can finish the job.”

Leon Lucas: “No, I came here to put an end to all of this. Did you think God would let you take me without his permission?”

The Gypsy Witch looking puzzled, “What is this? Leon the moron, did you finally find courage? Remember, your denomination can’t touch us. You have no power here. And soon your insolence will see you raped in hell. Look around you, you’re in my land now, Priest.”

Leon Lucas: “No, no. You have it wrong. I am no priest, and your time demon is done. I’m here to send you back to the abyss. In the power of **Yeshua**, I command you unclean spirit, come out and leave her now!”

Instantly, a scream permeates the air. A flock of crows bursts through the stained-glass windows of the sanctuary and surrounds the witch. Leon covers his face with his arm. The witch then falls to the floor and convulses, foaming at the mouth. Seconds later,

her convulsions stop, and the crows swiftly exit the sanctuary. The woman lying motionless on the floor starts to get up. Leon bends down and helps her to her feet. She looks at Leon for a second and then gives him a bear hug. Crying, she then runs out of the church, shouting, “I’m free, I’m free, thank you, **Jesus!**”

Leon heads out of the church and watches the woman dance in the snow. Walking up next to Leon is Ethan Moore.

Ethan clapping, “You see, you didn’t need me after all. But I was here just in case.”

Leon: “Oh boy, you’re never going to let me live this down, are you?”

Ethan: “Nope, I’m not.”

Both men erupt in laughter as they walk toward the running SUV.

The End...



APPENDIX



The Black Raven Grimoire:

**A Spell book used to correspond
with or summon demons.**



Romanian Jail/Prison
Father Andrei Funar died here.



Pages: New & Rare Books



Romanian Gypsy Woman

Also called a Roma.



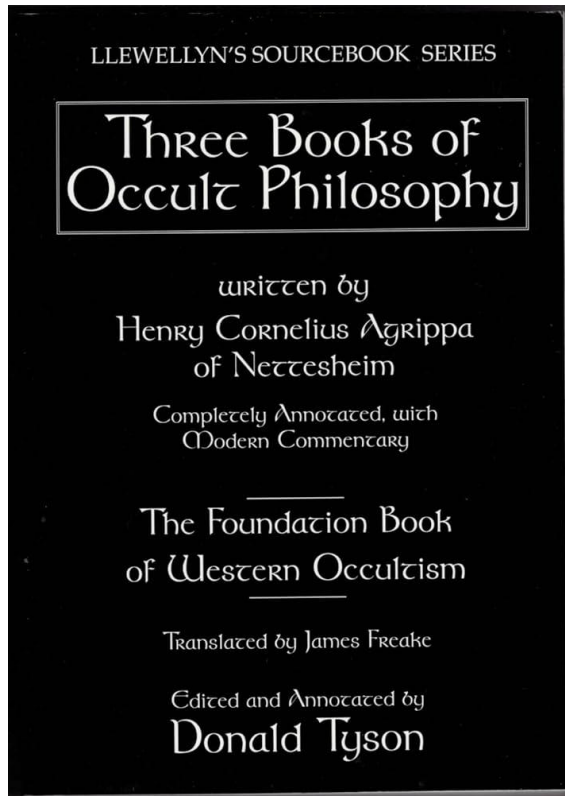
Seal of Amaymon:
Demon King of the East



VELLUM PARCHMENT

Used for writing spells and curses.

Made from animal or human skin.

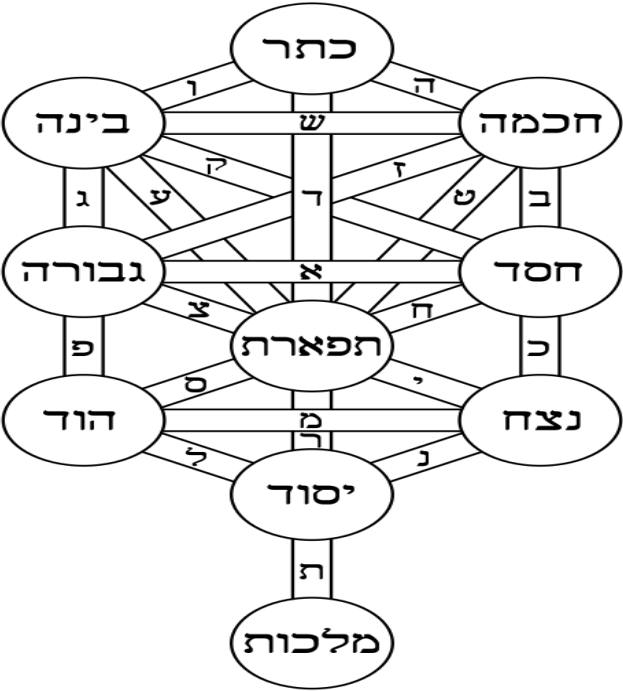


Three Books of Occult Philosophy

Contains sigils, seals, and writings concerning
Celestial Beings.



A Page from the **Three Books of Occult Philosophy**. Showing Angelic Symbols.



Kabbalistic Tree of Life: **Sephira**

Based on the writings of the
Kabbalah