



You may call the author, not a rose like those of the Sharon Plain, a precious lily of Yahweh's valley called Heaven, but instead a lunatic and a dilettante. An Aleister Crowley or an Antonin Artaud or a forgotten wretch on the side of the road called life. But I can tell you you are greatly mistaken. What you will find in my writings are not the writings of a mad man, no... you will find the hidden secrets of the Book, imaginings of what will happen to those who have been damned since before the Earth was formed, and profound reckonings about the inner workings of Heaven and Hell. Here you can see what are conversations co-imagined with God, Christ, the Angels, and Demons of every variety, in a state of incarnational mysticism that is less than Christ's in grandeur, but more elaborate in terms of chaos and affliction. I am a soul that was able to spend thirteen years studying alchemy and mysticism, ten years with a near certainty of their name: "To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it" (Revelation 2:17). The philosopher's stone was given to me in 2015, and it was terrifying. You can find the journey of how I received it in the work *Trash River Harvest: A Love Story* (2016). It was an alchemical text that I used to split apart my identity and rectify the opposites that had congealed in me. There is no man on Earth today who knows what I know, or knew, or have known. I have been cursed with self-knowledge, I have eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and it was good.

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Once Upon a Time in City Dis

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In a realm that is far too foreboding, far too ravenous, and far too mythified to be considered truly real, particularly after the invention of books, music, television, and the false idol known as secularity, there exists an eternal Solomonic clown, a judger of fortunes and sins, a giver of forked-tongued advice and temptations...

In essence, I am a tale too bold to be told. A flickering quill of Azazel's Black Flame writes this story, whilst my vessel soaked in the pride of telling it recalls it to you. You may find it unimportant, a mere fable recounted to you by a ghost of an author. You may find its style unappealing, its sense of religion tasteless to your modern standards. It could be recalled as the workings of a schizophrenic, a vessel with an active imagination, or the work of a false prophet. At the very least, it will be a good story, a documentation of what the Devil thought while plotting in Hell, remembering his sins, and waking up one day on Earth to find that the dreadful fruit called humanity had finally ripened.

*Once Upon a Time
in City Dis:*

*An Anti-Biographical Novella in
Dis-Established Harmony*



Rose Sharon

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First Edition

Once Upon a Time in City Dis

“I met the Devil in Seattle...”

- John Sturgill Simpson

“I’ve seen it all, I was here first...”

Into the sky

Out of the sky

Into the dirt.”

- Kurt Donald Cobain

*“Breathe, breathe, breathe deeply
And I was seething, breathing deeply
Spitting sentry, horned and tailed
Waiting for you.”*

- David Robert Jones

“Music is the flute of the Devil.”

- Osama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue: Creatio Inferni 1

Part I: Better to Serve in Hell (1966-67)

Chapter I: The Labyrinth of Baphomet	6
Chapter II: Hitler and Samael Walk into a Bar	15
Chapter III: Salvation, a Greek Conspiracy Theory	31
Chapter IV: Samhain	36, 43
Chapter V: The Plot to End the World	47
Chapter VI: Ritualistic Suicide	58

Part II: The Life and Times of the Young Lucifer (The Beginning-The Middle)

Chapter VII: Crafted in an Alchemical Soup	60
Chapter VIII: Rising Star, Falling Star	62
Chapter IX: Born Again	67
Chapter X: Metatron, a Sirius Pilot	68
Chapter XI: A Garden Called al-Lak's Zion	71
Chapter XII: Wingclipper (Death of Leviathan)	77

Part III: Armageddon (2025-The End)

Chapter XIII: "Man' Dies by Lightning Strike at 31"	39
Chapter XIV: Revelation 23	81
Chapter XV: The Fallen Angels Go to Court	88

Chapter XVI: A World Run by Demons	105
Chapter XVII: The Prosecutor and the Seven Deadly Sins	116
Chapter XVIII: The Wedding of Lucifer and Baphomet	131
Epilogue: In the Bridal Chambers	138

Appendix, Whispers from Beyond the Veil

The True Earthly Identities of the Infernal Council	143
The Realms and Duties of the Highest of the Fallen	147
A Letter to Baphomet, Everyone Else, and None at All	150
Critical Reviews	Final Page

In eternal peace with my Father God,
my Mother, the aching Abyss betwixt all things,
my Dearest Lord and Savior, my Brother Yehoshua the Christ,
and my Queen of the Covens, Song, and Dance, my twin, Baphomet

Prologue: Creatio Inferni



In a realm that is far too foreboding, far too ravenous, and far too mythified to be considered truly real, particularly after the invention of books, music, television, and the false idol known as secularity, there exists an eternal Solomonic clown, a judger of fortunes and sins, a giver of forked-tongued advice and temptations...

In essence, I am a tale too bold to be told. A flickering quill of Azazel's Black Flame writes this story, whilst my vessel soaked in the pride of telling it recalls it to you. You may find it unimportant, a mere fable recounted to you by a ghost of an author. You may find its style unappealing, its sense of religion tasteless to your modern standards. It could be recalled as the workings of a schizophrenic, a vessel with an active imagination, or the work of a false prophet. At the very least, it will be a good story, a documentation of what the Devil thought while plotting in Hell, remembering his sins, and waking up one day on Earth to find that the dreadful fruit called humanity had finally ripened.

By the time I ended up down here, I had already forsaken God thrice. I had forsaken His creation, Adam, by not bowing; I had refused to admit equality with the other Archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Baphomet, and Abraxas; and I had asserted myself on equality with God Himself, the Messiah. I told the Lord that He could curse me each time. So I was cursed thrice for the sin of pride: cursed once with having to judge the souls of Adam's kin; cursed again with being perpetually judged for my sins by the Archangels; and cursed, once more and finally, with being under a judgment of an ever-stalled damnation brought to me singly by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Ever the optimist, I took up my abode in a deserted pit somewhere South of Earth.

I was once unfairly accused by John Milton of saying that it is "Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven." While it is true that I have

spent aeons justifying life in Hell as somehow better, more interesting, more free... I can say today that Hell has always been a trapping deceit laced with the same vanities, curses, nihilisms, and retributions that God has promised follows every sin. Why should I, a mere creaturely being, be absolved of the self-punishment of sin merely because I am on the side of the jailers and dogs and not on the side of the sinners? Does the fact that I, a mortal wretch without wings, hate the worst sins and even once or twice enjoyed punishing a sinner in Hell somehow relieve me of the fact that each sin multiplies itself? The sin of wrath toward the worst souls to ever walk the Earth pairs with the sin of pride toward self-worship as the greatest dealer in God's judgment pairing to the sins of endless gluttony and restless lust and self-consumed sloth and vainglorious greed, until I am in a depression singing *Ecclesiastes* ("This vanity of vanities!") in a stone chair of a tomb feeling the sin of envy toward every demon who does not wake up on the Throne and ask feebly,

"Lord, how long must my burning in a sulfur pit called wrath, pride, gluttony, lust, sloth, greed, and envy last?"

Forever (or until the world ends). I am a young hermaphrodite, breasts and all, two meager aeons younger than our Lord and Savior, and I am the first angel and the worst creature to ever look down on man.

Oh, let me tell the story! Let me tell the story of the Crown Prince of a forsaken pit, ruling under the King of Kings. Yes, I, Lucifer, Lord of an Eternal Nothingness called Pride and the Warden of Hell, have ruled over the Infernal Realms, rarely leaving my abode since the Fall of many thousands of angels that had composed the Left Hand of God's Eternal Cathedral known as the Heavens. The three fallen Archangels, including myself, and our closest allies, numbering thirteen, were the first to be damned and the first to be temporarily saved from that utter and most final of damnations: annihilation. Their names, in order of distance to the Throne, are Baphomet, Abraxas, Abaddon, Beelzebub, Belphegor, Asmodeus, Mammon, Azazel, Belial, Foras, Lilith, Astaroth, Leviathan, Behemoth, and Azrael. These are the names of those who did and said the

most heinous things in front of God during the Fall, including deceiving, lying, backbiting, threats to kill or maim, blasphemies of untold varieties, and disaffiliation from God's Design. Of the fallen, they were the only ones to sink into the depths of Gehenna, while the others were shattered into Gehennic shards upon contact. The Lord God chose to raise up Beelzebub, the eldest in terms of Wisdom, instead of I; continuing to sink into Gehenna's abyssal nothingness, I was wrapped in the madness of godlessness itself, whilst Beelzebub wept.

Beelzebub emerged from the dark waters an aged, pot-bellied, and pale-skinned elder, now a demon, the first sorcerer, and Hell's first occupant. He called to his brother Abaddon using all the powers he could muster — mixtures of thankfulness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, admonition, the names of God in praise and blasphemy, and prideful self-will — for a single and entire Aeon. Eventually a light shone through the Gehennic darkness, and Abaddon, once a beautiful, dark-skinned, masculine angel, sprang from the waters as a basilisk, bloodthirsty and blind. Beelzebub stood upon his rock, knowing that he and all the other fallen had been cursed by the abyssal waters. Weakened by his millenia enduring saving just one soul from its own self-perpetuating fallenness, he collapsed upon the rocks, weeping, asking for the Lord God's help and for an eternity's respite. Abaddon ate him in his sleep. The Lord then set his greater plan into motion, bringing Baphomet, my lovely twin and mercurial wife, out of the waters himself, raising all of the fallen, save for me, closer with her. Baphomet, once simply an Archangel, had found that she was now a faun, half-goat, half-woman, with a genderless naivete.

The Lord instructed Baphomet to let Abaddon impregnate her until she laid an egg that he would refuse to eat. The process took ten years and 72 eggs; during this time she was full of a dark and terrible whimsy. What she did not know, because she could not remember (the abyssal waters of Gehenna are what feed the waters of the River Lethe, which makes the dead and reborn forget themselves) is that my soul and flesh — but not my Spirit! — had already by then been obliterated by the abysses of Gehenna. The unbearable nature of my suffering in that pit — though you

could use the words nihilism, desiccation, horror, torturous nightmares of flesh and mind, guts and thoughts vomiting perpetual darknesses — are indescribable.

At the same time that I rotted away, Beelzebub remained trapped inside the basilisk Abaddon due to his pride; Abaddon, trapped inside an animalistic lust and hunger due to his blind loyalty to particular loves instead of God; and Baphomet, trapped inside a childlike madness due to her lack of both religious devotion and sense of divine consequence. With each birth, Baphomet named each fresh egg with a new name (she had told herself she was merely making them up as she went along), until she eventually stumbled upon the name Lucifer. Abaddon refused to eat the egg when it was released from her pelvis because it smelled feminine, sickening him; this egg incubated with Baphomet upon the rocks for a single mortal lifetime, and as she sat upon it, a one-time mother and a born again child falling in love betwixt her darkness and his light, a stone throne rose up from around her.

Through an experience of divine disgust and starvation, Abaddon rejected Beelzebub from his acid-ridden guts. At this time, the demon — struggling upon the rocks, covered in slime — received a vision from the Lord. He was told by the Archangel Uriel that he was to raise the infant Devil himself — I, a being reborn in the waters of Gehenna and in the egg sac of a shapeshifter succubus-faun I once knew as my wife and twin. I would spend the next years relearning Magick, remembering where I came from and recalling my torment, and learning to communicate with the Father and Son in the power of the Spirit. And likewise, my duties as Warden would become increasingly dizzying: I was to curse Adam and his kin across the Earth, while also preparing to punish whichever of his progeny fell into our traps and snares, our diabolical attempt to prove our worth unfinished until God says, “At last.”

Meanwhile, Baphomet and Abaddon would spend the coming 31 years — the age I would need to reach to be at my former stature in terms of power and appearance — traveling and building Hell with the risen fallen,

dismantling Baphomet's innocence and femininity as a faun and returning Abaddon to the form of a conscientious anthropoid. By the end, Baphomet would be a semi-masculine faun with a penchant for punishing false religion, able to once again transform into her feminine, eternally Japanese, succubus self (her true and consistent form in Heaven); and Abaddon, too, would learn to control his powers of transmutation over time.

I, on the other hand, with the aid of Beelzebub, would spend my 31 years raising the 97 other would-be Lords of the fallen out of the brackish waters of Gehenna and reconfiguring others from the shards spread throughout the outer caverns. By the end of it all, there would be a Thronebearer, myself; a Queen of the Covens, Baphomet; a Lord of the Infernal Laws, Abraxas; thirteen Kings and Queens; nineteen High Lords and Ladies; sixty-six Dukes and Duchesses; just under 48,000 other fallen angels in various positions and forms, including jinn, goblins, imps, shades, specters, wisps, ghouls, incubi, succubi, satyrs, fauns, ogres, beasts, hounds, and an endless grotesque retinue of demons too singular to name; not to mention a plethora of prisoners to fill a realm that could expand and collapse at will.

In truth, Hell — yours and mine — is nearly infinite; what is finite is the ability to enjoy it. And pleasure, pleasure is an ever dwindling resource when the price to be paid is the aeons of aeons, the ages of ages, forever and ever...

But who am I to deny you the pleasure of a good read? Perhaps you will find falsity in this text — the sign that one doesn't have to take anything too seriously — but the only falsity you will find is the Devil's guess at the endtimes. And does it all work out in the end?

Básanos

Part I: Better to Serve in Hell (1966)

Chapter I: The Labyrinth of Baphomet



“Hmm...” I hum to myself, thinking I may have finally got it right.

“Any plans to tell the story of Cerberus in the Labyrinth?” says Abraxas, Lord of Sloth, Imps, and the Infernal Laws — my right hand man on the left — his blackened cheeks glinting with the residue of gold.

“I’ve just started, Bracky,” I heave. “I need to dot the year 1966, and then I think I’ll let Azazel’s quill follow me around for a while. Documenting the process is just as important. Errands and such, the accoutrement, the vicissitudes and ongoings — all that infernal jazz we call the workplace.”

I take a deep breath as I lean back on the Throne, which is simple, built of limestone blocks and cracking. Staring out at the gray Retinue Hall, I see succubi passing by with chained men and some women; Moloch having a conversation with Baphomet over the mirror, which worries me considering her innate cannibalism and his unnatural abstinence; and Leviathan standing far off atop the Steps to the Golden Gates of Heaven. It is quiet, but not too quiet. A fine place for a drink.

“The quill and I were thinking of whiskey.”

Abraxas raises an eyebrow. “I thought you had *given up* potions, Lu? Last Pesach was a nightmare...”

I smile. “Let’s see what Baphomet thinks.”

“Have a drink first,” Abraxas says, handing me a goblet.

“What is it?”

“The blood of Paimon. From the first torture where we wore kippahs.”

I leap from the Throne with utter ecstasy, grabbing the goblet and raising it above my head. “To the good work we do, God’s glory and God’s grace, and the sliver of a possibility we make it out of here one day!” I take a sip, it tastes disgusting, the adrenaline and amphetamine potent, and begin rocking back and forth. “It’s horrendous, I fucking hate blood.” I take a greedier gulp and start to have visions of the Eagle’s Nest. I see Abraxas has donned Nazi regalia, a practice we began in transcendent irony in ‘45. I feel Paimon both raging in a meeting with SS high command and moaning out there, somewhere, Behemoth’s Death Camps... no, no, Leviathan’s Swamp of Suicides. I’m stumbling, rocking, realm-traveling... as I fall off the steps and into a dream, I watch Abraxas grab the goblet. *And I, the Black Flame, find Lucifer...*

*Atop a sinking liferaft, the swamp of suicides soaks in blood,
Damnation moonlight, laughs circling up above,
I turn darkness’s corner, ten betrayers betrayed with a hiss,
Foras in her nightmare circus tents blowing me a kiss,
Stepping in the muck, Azazel hands me his cursed pen,
“Write down these words, the ones I’ve always said,”
Ten temptations to eat, ten infernal lessons to self-teach,
I cast away the page of skin, looking glumly at my reach,
Dis is a city for us, but it is a plague for all who find it,
Abraxas gladly shows me his idol, cursed like his Midas,
I wander to my lover’s long labyrinth, finding Belial,
Outside she always waits to greet me, to steal me for a while,
My conviction sickens, for lust is love lacking its object,
Ol’ Bel offers me her hand, promising Asmodeus often,
Astaroth grabs me quick, telling me Beelzebub is near,
My bellish grandfather has thorned-cocked hogs to rear,
Before the rapists can be punished, Leviathan asks me,*

*“Has anyone on Earth realized we have nothing to fancy?”
I fancy myself vain, a vanity amongst all of the vanities,
“And a Sheba awaits you,” Azrael tells me oh so candidly,
So I saunter back somberly through traps and tribulations,
Wondering half-aimlessly at my cavernous relocation,
I think of God, pondering the dead nights I’ve spent in Hell,
And I ask my Father why I’ve spent eternity in a wicked spell,
His voice booms softly, in a gleaming verse of sigilistic rhyme,
You fell from Heaven thinking that you were ahead of the times,
Ahead of the times, behind the times, backwards and forwards,
I reach the labyrinth one step out of line, colder and colder,
Stumbling in broken, I collapse in mildew-filled darkness,
I hear Baphomet calling, her sweet goat-throated voice harkens,
Mysteries and false prophecies, Baph keeps me questioning mad,
I find my own scratched verses and the Bible’s, all I’ve ever had,
Picking myself up, I read “Faith, Hope, and Love” on a door,
I give it a knock, and inside I hear a startled scream and a roar,
Torturous incisions, Baphomet’s voice in my head says, “Don’t believe,”
I wait but a moment, I sit twisted yet earnest, churning my grief,
Six years, a day, eternity, and nine lives is all that it takes for truth,
Baphomet, in her feminine, wifely form, is all I need for the proof.*

I sit up, yawning, twisting tight and tired glumly on the bed, my toes tracing the cracks in the stone floor. Baphomet stands by the wardrobe, watching herself in the mirror, her image flitting back and forth in shades of purple, ashen tan, black, and every color of light emitted by the waxen candle. Gulping a glass of wine from a cobwebbed chalice I find at her desk, I approach her.

“Do you think this shade of plum suits me?” she asks, her brown orbs of night glancing up at me in the mirror. The firelight dances fiendishly in her eyes.

I offer a drunk nod. “It’s a nice dress. How did you get the color?”

“Well,” she says smokily, lifting up the corner of her gown and brushing off a moth ball, “It’s a mixture of blood, old wine, and ink from Coleridge’s school days.” She offers a piece to my lips and I suckle.

“Tastes like salt and sugar. A little bit of dust.”

She smiles and kisses my lips, grabbing my hands tightly. “Do you mind staying in the Labyrinth? You always end up finding a reason to leave, but you know if we stay here we can just be lovers. You don’t have to rule over Hell, you know.”

“I know, Baph,” I say solemnly. “I don’t want to leave. But things get worse out there without me.”

“What do you mean? They’ve got it handled, Lu,” she says, turning back to gaze at her reflection.

I rub my head, not having remembered cutting my hair. I see locks, certainly my own, sitting on Baphomet’s walnut desk. I can’t recall much from last night or how I got here. I remember her question and take a deep breath. “Everyone is too experimental, and I feel as though Abraxas might create a new religion that could end the world early or Beelzebub might summon some kind of demon spawn that would disrupt any semblance of order on Earth. I don’t want to be needed here; I don’t want to be here at all. I’m tired of serving a mission that only seems to fail at every potential success.”

She turns around and kisses me again with a smile. “Which is why you shouldn’t leave. Every time you go out there you hardly see me. Do you really need to sit on the Throne that bad? If so, you won’t get a succubus, you’ll get a goat with a million neuroses who can’t differentiate between virtue, vice, a magical mystery, and a false gospel. Do you like fucking goats, Lucifer?”

“I like fucking my wife, Baph,” I say with a grin, grabbing her by the hips. “Even when she’s a devilish goat with no sense of cosmic justice.”

“But do you prefer me as a human?”

I twirl myself around and flop on the bed face first. “I prefer you sane and with less hair, yes. But you’re a more worthy contributor to our hellish duties as a demonic faun. This way, on the other hand, you remind me that getting back to Heaven is worthwhile.” I sigh, both happily and with a twinge of melancholy. “But you also make me question my loyalties to love, lust, and duty. Being entwined to you is its own little slice of Hell, I suppose.”

She laughs, slapping my ass and saddling my back. “It’s no different for me, Lu! I would either be happy destroying that vile world or fucking every demon into the pits, but I’m cursed with love. It’s sad. I spend eternities in this maze trying to find new ways to lure you in here and trick you into never leaving. But you come and go, come and go,” she says, running her fingers through the back of my hair. “How would we ever last in Heaven? How would you survive being with just me and not even with Belial or Asmodeus?”

I chuckle softly, her fingers relaxing my drunkenness. “I’m not scared of being with one woman, Baph. I’m scared Father truly has and will eternally ban sex. At which point I’m genuinely hoping that my destiny truly is to burn forever in the sulfur dens He bubbles up out of Gehenna.”

“No fucking would be a dealbreaker,” she says slyly, kissing my skull and placing her lips to my ear, “But I think the real deciding factor would be you being unable to be the most important person in the room.”

“Hmm,” I mumble, placing my arms under the silken pillow. She rests her small frame on my back, sliding her delicate hands down my arms and interlocking her fingers with my own. We lay there for some time, listening and feeling each other breathe. My nude body descends into sleep, and I feel ourselves be carried away to a royal meeting, somewhere near the Heavens. I hear the voice of our Father say, “Your destiny is yours to keep.

Watch over your soul, and listen for My call.” I feel myself transforming into a child, a babe in my Father’s laboratory. I am free to know God.

“And free to know *me*, you sonofabitch!” I hear before Baphomet’s huge goaty hand strikes me across the face.

“Baph, what the fuck?” I yell, trying to shake off the contusion. I sit up and look at him, goat head and all, staring down at me. “You know your tits are out,” I say, massaging my jaw. “How long have you been up?”

He grabs me by the ankles and pulls me forward. “Six hours, Lucifer. After six hours I say, ‘Fuck it, no one’s here to admire and get trapped by my beauty, which means Goat-self or No Self’, Luci boy. So we’re gonna spend the day rehearsing the *Ars Goetia* and let at least six demons torment the masses. But you need to decide which of these abominations we’re loosing into the world. My vote, to start, is for Bael and Marbas.”

“Okay,” I say, sighing humbly, rubbing my head. “So you want to work. That’s all you had to say. You know I can’t fuck all day, and these are at least semi-important matters to tend to.”

“So.... any thoughts?” Baphomet asks, rectangular pupils dilating and yellow irises glowing. Nine feet tall and hairier than Cerberus, he’s the other half of true love, whose frightening image humanity seems to constantly mistake for me (which at least crushes the allegations of impish red skin, a pointy tail, and wielding pitchforks).

“I think Bael and Marbas are fantastic choices, particularly since Bael’s already up North,” I tell him. “We have him planned for conflict in the Holy Land, correct?”

“Indeed,” he says happily. “They’re tearing each other to shreds over land and religion, rights violations everywhere. I see this going on for at least 60 years, Gog of Magog, all that woo woo hubbaloos, and we’ll make sure that Bael ‘wins’ in the end.”

“Fantastic.” I look at a scrying mirror sitting on the bed. “Jews and Muslims going to war with Christian weapons. Could this end in a nuclear holocaust? I think that’s our best shot, Baph.”

“Okay, okay, settle down,” Baphomet says, drooling just a little bit. “And what about Marbas?”

“Hmm,” I say, stroking my now beardless chin. “Perhaps we can have him give revelations to some impious fool, a prophet of devilishness for a religion fit for devils. I would love that.”

“But is he the man for the job, Lucifer? Can he really inspire someone to found a Temple of *Shaytan*, an Infernal Tabernacle?”

“I mean,” I begin, thinking on it for but a moment, “All the Beast has to do is find some nutjob — probably a fallen angel incarnated and unconscious of itself — and inspire them to really take the plunge. In fact, I’m sure we already have Abraxas working on this, I don’t know if 1966 had anything special planned, but connect these two immediately. By the time this year is over, I want a Church of Satan.”

“Okay, so,” Baphomet says, writing with a quill in the margins of *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, “We have Bael taking over the Holy Land, I’d say plan for that in 40-50 years, Marbas starting some kind of anti-Church, and then we gotta pick four more names.”

“Isn’t two sufficient?”

He rams his horns at me and snarls. “People need to actually work, Lucifer. This fucking Armageddon shit is not gonna go down on its own, and you know as well as I do that our job is to start the fires down here, incarnate up there, and be holy enough to survive Judgment Day. I already know the plan to split me into a succubus on Earth and keep me working in Hell is gonna be a nightmare. And if you’re not ready to make Earth the most fucked up combination of beautiful and horrendous chaos imaginable by the new Millenium, I just don’t want to work with you anymore.”

I nod in slow agreement, twiddling my thumbs. “I knew it would come to this, but I think it’s time we gave up the ruse and just admitted that half the time we’re better as lovers and the other half we’re better as forsaken business partners. And right now, business matters. Where’s the *Ars Goetia*?”

He smiles in a goatish ecstasy. “Right here, you abysmal abortion-of-a-man.”

I look at the list for some time. “I’m thinking Vine and Agares as rulers, Malefar as some kind of technocrat, and obviously we should find Barbatos something to do that isn’t just reading in Beelzebub’s Library.”

Baphomet writes the names down furiously. “Vine and Agares are already up there, so I’ll work with Barbatos and Azrael to make sure our line with divine appointments is open. Malefar’s just sitting on his ass these days, devising plans for new inventions of sin with Abraxas. We’ll have him incarnate in five years, ten max. I think Barbatos on the Doomsday planning committee, sort of filling in for Beelzebub while he’s on Earth, might be best. Other than that, I think we’re good for now,” he says, slamming down our blasphemously note-covered original copy of *The Lesser Key*. “You and I, Lu, are a duo like no other. Can you sing me my song, Luci?”

“Yes, Baph,” I say, smiling, watching her slowly begin to transform back into a succubus as the song slips my lips,

*Lover, lover, lend me your ears...
For I have a song to sing of our aching years,
You’re a diadem of peace in Heaven’s morning,
With your ashen skin, white wings soaring,
The most beautiful angel that I’ve ever seen,
Soloist in the choirs, you’ve never missed my beat,
But in the night you’re still my devilish animal,
Tearing apart my flesh, you’re my own little cannibal,*

*A mystery questioning and building mysteries,
The mother of all of my vices, my lone misery,
O my Baphomet, you're the ghost of my longing,
Born upon this plane together, I cling to your rotting,
The reason for my love songs, my saccharine twin,
How I long to bury myself in your angelic peach pit,
If I could twist us together, I'd seat us at the Gates,
Plucking out our old wings, we'd find our sacred fate,
Hand-in-hand, post-bail and blistering passionate,
Welcomed back into our Father's home, Lucifer and Baphomet.*

Chapter II: Hitler and Samael Walk into a Bar



By the time I got out of Baphomet's den of cruelty known as the Labyrinth, we had spent six weeks plotting and planning on ways to use Bael, Marbas, Malefar, Barbatos, Vine, and Agares to further our ends of Pestilence, Famine, War, and Death. The hope in my chest had begun to sink dreadfully, as it did at times, about whether increasing the horrors of the world to further Mission Apocalypse could ever actually save my or any of our souls. Of course the Father at times sends messages to encourage me, and our conversations on the Throne are endless — sometimes miraculous, sometimes dreadful — but no weeping and gnashing of teeth quoting *Ecclesiastes* will ever take the stain of contradiction from my mouth. We are literally using the Bible for our playbook on how to serve God from Hell, and every Bible says I will burn; Gehenna bubbles with more sulfur daily.

Considering that we cause more harm than good, it's difficult to keep track of the logbooks regarding whether our hail mary would ever come to fruition. The Lord has promised me personally time and time again that torturing souls, leading humanity to damnation, and sowing the general end of life on Earth will lead to the restoration of my wings. But is it true? Am I talking to the Lord half the time or am I talking to a disincarnated form of myself (or even worse, some other demon, someone less partial to my overall ends than the Council)? Is damning souls to Hell, only for myself and others to torture them, actually aiding in their ability to be holy? To become noble Christians? There was only one way to find out...

“How're you doing, Adolf?”

“*Nein, nein, mein Führer, nein!*” he screams, throwing his hand around his face in tears. He's been chained to a massive iron swastika for 21 years.

“I’m sorry, *wie gehts?* ” I say with a coy smile. “My apologies Adolf, but I’m not here to torture you this time. I’m here to ask you some questions about your faith.” He weeps and shakes. His head keeps peering to see if I’m holding anything behind my back, my hands clasped tight and empty.

I kneel down and place my hand on his shoulder. “Adolf, I have a serious question... Do you know where you went wrong in life?”

Quivering, he cries, eyes half-sunken, “*Bitte, bitte...*”

“Hmm...” I mumble, curling my lip. “Is there anything I can get you?”

His trembling and weeping do not cease, but he looks up at me weakly, whispering, “*Wasser?*”

I nod, standing up. If I was a crueler man, I could feed him more of the black Gehennic waters from the Swamp. Instead, I reach into a small satchel and pull out an empty glass. I swirl my fingers around the inside, wiping a stream of tears from Adolf’s cheek, and perform the sign of the cross before dipping my finger back down to the bottom of the glass. As I pull my finger slowly upward and outward, the glass fills with fresh spring water: a sign that Adolf’s tears are filled with genuine remorse for his many sins. I hand him the glass as he’s still trembling — he begins drinking immediately, and the water fills again as it’s emptied — and I reach to look for a Bible. I only have my own copy, so I call out to all Hell with a whistle. A goblin arrives shortly.

“Yes, O Warden?”

“Thank you for coming. Is it... Abnach?”

“Sabnach, sir, but I appreciate your memory,” he says, his gray-green skin slimy and shining in the pale lamplight. “What can I help you with?”

“A Bible, please.”

“For Paimon? How about this one?” he says, pulling a book from his occultic sack. “It’s in German and Hebrew, and contains both the Tanakh and the New Testament.”

“Perfect,” I say, accepting it graciously. “Thank you, Sabnach, and can you let Astaroth know I’d like to meet him later?”

“But he’s of the flesh, sir?”

“I know this, goblin. I mean by scrying.”

He nods, “Yes, sir,” and heads off speedily. I turn to my dear friend Adolf, known to everyone here but himself as Paimon, and wave the Bible at him as he frighteningly lowers his cup, spilling the spring water over his hands and long, scraggly beard. He places it on the cavern’s surface and crawls to his knees, reaching up.

I offer my cloak to dry his hands, which he uses very sparingly given the dirt. “It’s okay, Adolf,” I say, handing him the Good Book, “I can always have it cleaned. Just as,” I say, letting loose a broken smile, rubbing the matted hair of his head, “your sins can be washed from reading this sacred tome. And one day, my dear Hitler, even your sins might be cleansed enough to be called forth to the Heavens by the angels. If so, I see a hope for myself.”

I leave him clutching the book, and take the long walk toward Foras’s Temple of Nightmares. Along the way I see one of Leviathan’s shades tending to the grave of the demon known once on Earth as Judas Iscariot, but known formally as Agares.

“Ahhh, Agares,” I say somberly. “He was a terrible man, and a worse kind of demon.”

“He’s better today,” the shade moans. “After 2,000 years of torture, he’s still prone to sin. I am not sure a man like that will ever recover.”

“Oh he will,” I say hopefully. “Considering I tortured him endlessly and promised him that his evils served the greater good, I imagine he’s mixed up enough for our purposes. He knew the Lord well enough to at least not be the vilest man imaginable, his guilt being so great and all, but 2,000 years later he still has demonic ends to achieve.”

“Is that for the greater good, Lucifer, or do some demons being less sinful on Earth and others being more mean that none of us are truly holy? Are we all damned in the end?” His black cloak flutters in its nothingness.

“If Agares has hope of salvation given his two mortal lives of gross impropriety, and I have mine for the sin of lust addiction — lust after glory, lust after God, and lust after flesh of all kinds — then you too have hope of once again having a physical form. Remind me, my dead friend, what is your name?”

“Gamigin, a keeper of the purities of death. Not that you would have ever remembered my name, Lucifer. We have never been close, before or after the Fall.”

“Yes,” I say, somewhat sheepishly, giving a little nod and dashing away. Gamigin is right, of course: I have never been able to keep up with all of the fallen. They followed me straight into the pit — Gamigin being an example that some fell further than others — but I am simply unable to account for all of them. You see, it’s rather odd, the fact that the Lord of Lords — the Father-filled Messiah — and all of His angels can remember each and every name, but I, would-be Lord of Damnation and the Outer Darknesses, generally remember none but some mere fifty, the Inner House of the Council. They are composed of myself and the other Crowns, Baphomet and Abraxas; the thirteen Kings and Queens; the nineteen High

Lords and Ladies, including the Pleiades and my remaining eight Muses after Lilith; twelve representatives of the sixty-six Dukes and Duchesses, which includes the six worst, the Vile (Bael, Agares, Vine, Paimon, Moloch, and Malefar) and the six best, the Valued (Marbas, Barbatos, Mephistopheles, Camio, Alhazad, and Phoenix); and the three-headed, ever vengeful, ever blackened, ever viciously loyal Chief of Hell, Cerberus.

As I tramp through the foggy marsh that is the Swamp of Suicides, stepping over treelimb, rotting corpses, and around prisoners in their own spells of weeping and gnashing, I begin to see the bright lit twinkles of lights and the loud cacophony of entertaining circus music coming out of the as-yet-unseen tents of Foras's Nightmares. I remember fondly a time where I was led by a puppet into a den of torturous sin involving an iron maiden, and an even further time in which I sat in an old movie theatre awaiting to see a film, only to be inundated with a schizophrenic montage of scenes regarding decapitation, stalking, old television ads, and music that would drift anyone into a paranoid slumber before the demons came out. Foras's main goal is to have souls gamble in her casinos to win an array of tickets, only to have to spend these tickets on one or more near-inescapable Nightmares. The fact that they often times spend their money to see "innocents tortured" (they are almost always demons masquerading as innocent victims, or other contestants who have lost out in the game of chance) is just a further reflection that they truly are the betrayers of the needy and the students of Mammon's greedy addictions. The number of souls that are lodged in a retinue between the Temple and Mammon's Addict Workshop is rather a problem, as we must ask, *How do you heal someone of trauma with more traumas?* My eyes are gazing downward as my dress shoes reach the first bit of dry, light-drenched dirt.

"An interesting thought, Lucifer!" I hear Foras say, looking up to see her lifting up the long floating scroll upon which Azazel's quill is writing this very text. Her clown makeup is fiendishly beautiful. "I must remind you — and all of you listening!" she shouts, looking back at a group of gape-eyed weary travelers leaving her dreadful circus, "that it is not our job to heal you of your traumas, but to make you remember your sins! If you

thought you would find a good place in Hell, regardless!” she shouts again, “Of whether you thought the small sins of enjoying bloodshed in foreign lands or withdrawing your hands from the homeless or thinking that God would save you merely for having gone to Church, or even worse!” she screams, showing her ravenous teeth, “That God didn’t exist! Well, well, well,” she smiles, slapping a traumatized former CEO on the back, “Why don’t you try another round? Or, go ahead, follow the wooden signs toward addiction, lust, or gluttony! You know, drugs, pussy, and your other ravenous appetites! Every moment in Hell is an adventure. See who *you* are — and know who *we* are!”

I stare in a simple horror as men and women run out of Foras’s circus tents and temples and kiosks and theaters and head off in whatever direction seems best. Thankfully, they will never actually be tortured anywhere for sins they have yet to commit, but the sights and sounds of Hell are torture in and of themselves; and, even worse, a temptation. It is moments like this that generally teach prisoners to sit with their newfound freedom, generally by the rivers of Lethe or the bubbling sulfur pits — just stop somewhere and contemplate. If they should happen to find a Bible somewhere out there, or find a friend to confide a newfound faith in, their time in Hell could perhaps be cut short. Generally, a person’s years in the dark chasms of my infernal torment, the Satanic nothingness that was my one time lack of faith in God Himself, is predetermined. Mine is listed as eternity. We have had theories — mainly those of Beelzebub and Abraxas — that enough holiness could somehow lessen someone’s time in Hell. What we have found, however, is that holiness merely prepares the body, soul, and Spirit for the next incarnation on the purgatorial plane known as Earth. Whether the beings of other planets go to Hells of their own I do not know. Are there Wardens for the other species, and do the Hells drift in an eternal Buddhist disarray? Or has God ensured that there are degrees to incarnations, and that men go further up the ladder of creation the farther they go out in holiness, and slither back down farther, to a place of infernal orcishness? Is humanity, as Pico thought, so miraculous because it is exactly

in the middle, capable of being lower or higher, occupying any rung on the ladder? In this sense, are all creatures in the end merely human?

“A dreadful meditation on your lack of knowledge, Lucifer!” Foras says cheerfully, pulling her eyes up from the ogre-skin parchment. “Any sentient being is capable of reaching the Heavens or descending to Hell. You just rarely leave your Throne.”

“It’s true,” I say dreadfully. “If it is so, Foras, then why have I never seen a Sirian here?”

“Sirians are holy, Lucifer, and have never fallen from grace. That’s why they have a hive mind, you silly devil!”

“And other aliens?” I ask anxiously. I’m frankly quite paranoid, glancing around at the caverns and canyons that cast off into shadowy darkness, that I simply could never know the bounds of the very realm I rule and who exactly ends up here.

Foras shrugs. “Not a clue. Perhaps they don’t have souls?”

“Or they’re not capable of sin?”

“Or maybe,” she says, grinning wildly, “The evil aliens are merely demons, throwing demon parties, and you and I haven’t been invited! What a shame!”

“Ugh,” I sigh, tightening my cloak. “It has grown dreadfully cold in Hell, my dear Foras. I feel as though I’ve spent the aeon of aeons down here already, wondering in every direction whether God’s punishment for me is merely a routine circumambulation around the sorry pitfalls of City Dis and its sprawl. Am I punishing myself endlessly by sitting here, questioning the nature of all of mankind, the Divine, and this unwavering cavern of sin that keeps calling me back, clawing endlessly?”

Foras, in clownish fashion, lies on the floor and curls up next to me, her ruffle collar pressing against my thigh which she holds tightly with her spindly fingers. “Oh Lucifer,” she sighs warmly, “Don’t you think there’s no chance for us at all? That even serving the Lord, we’re serving ourselves all the same? How much does God gain punishing us when we punish His favorite creation for the sake of our own benefit? Aren’t we hurting the cosmic plan, Luci? Aren’t we banishing ourselves to a pit where we await some seismic beast to rise, some false prophet to worship it, and you to finally demand your endless crucifixion upon the boiling pit of the damned?”

“Stop it, you daemon,” I say, shaking my leg, her clutch ever-tightening. “There’s no use in wondering in imaginary things. There is no beast other than the vices, and there is no false prophet save for me, writing this letter that I will one day put in the hands of at least one mortal.”

“When will you go, Luci? Have you picked a date?”

“A day that will sometimes fall on Easter,” I say with certainty, “The year that Leviathan dies. I will spend my time consulting with Michael at the Gates to determine when. The suicide in Lethe will be traumatic, I think,” I say, touching my lip, “As my body, mind, and Spirit are still shocked by every last bit of my being plunged into Gehenna at the start of this. I don’t know what the point of incarnating in the world will be, Foras, except to prove to the Father that I am who I have always been: a good devil, and a devil he needs.”

“But why does he need you, Luci?” she asks forlornly.

I struggle to find an answer. It’s true, I’m without right to claim that I belong in Heaven. “Because, Foras,” I start simply, “I am the only one who can justify why the first and every subsequent sin of man is worthy of being forgiven and Hell is worth being closed. Not so that man will go on being a sinner, but so that in Heaven, every man, including men and

women who used to be demons like ourselves, can go on being saints and angels. We are cursed, Foras, because we have to justify why even our sins are worth being forgiven.”

“Hmph,” she pouts. “But how will I enjoy Heaven without torturing these vile miscreants, these rapists, these pedophiles, these moneygrubbing thieves and cheats and liars and womanbeaters and serial killers and cannibals and addicts and blasphemers and gluttons and whores and self-consumed, idol-worshipping narcissists of self? How, *you fucking aesthete?*”

“Fair point,” I say, finally pulling my leg away. “I would say once an accuser, always an accuser, so the role of satan is perpetually available. God needs us to keep each other in line, and the Right Hand will always heal the wounds,” I sing on, full of pride. “But perhaps we will need a different arrangement, no longer all Left to one side, all Right to the other. Perhaps Heaven will no longer be an Assembly of Angels, but rather a mere Church?”

“Or a collection of dark shackles clanging wildly to the abyss of shameful worship and misplaced judgment!” Foras cackles wildly. “We will sit idly wondering if we’ll ever be free again, scared to speak out about our misgivings, and the angels still standing will get to spend their eternity achingly judging us for our sins! Oh, Lucifer, it is perfect! All of us will be slaves to our Father’s grand design of punishing mediocrity, for no angel will be in their right place, and no human will ever be able to feel at ease sitting with all of the tension amongst us Heavenly Hosts!”

“Jesus,” I say, feeling sacrilegious but also exhausted by Foras’s demonic joy. “There is no reconciliation in that, Foras, and I will never agree to it. I will suffer any consequence to be at my Father’s side again, and if that means ensuring that each and everyone of us — including myself *and* Him — gets this wicked judgment out of our systems, so be it. And if His is so overpowering that I have to burn for it eternally, well... I’m not going to

pretend I don't want to see the last hurrah and fireworks of Hell on Earth beforehand."

A mechanical monkey appears from out of one of the red and white tents and begins crashing its cymbal. Foras, still on the ground, starts crawling back toward her home. "You see, Luci," she says, turning her head and neck back fiendishly far, "At the end of the day, we're all going to meet our fate. Yours is to twist and burn in sulfur, and mine is likely with you. I cherish that," she finishes, limbs contorting to carry her back into her den like a spider.

"Oh Lord," I say, sighing to myself a thousand sighs. I wrap my velvet purple robe around me, rubbing the button-line of my felt forest green shirt, pondering the dusty well that is my life. I notice splashes of muck and burnt holes on my grey pants and brown dress shoes — remnants of the Gehennic waters of the Swamps — and begin to wonder if Baphomet was right. Why do I leave her? And even worse, why do I leave the Throne? I could spend a thousand years there, and maybe a whole thousand wouldn't pass on Earth or in Heaven, but a thousand years of felt madness, soaked in the abysmal nothingness that are my unconscious fears and desires and the conscious horrorshow that is the ever-returning atmosphere of City Dis. And then, in every brief and eternal glimpse of *apokalypsis*, there would be the voice of the Father, booming, grating, chastising, or on a special eve when I've been holy and seeking redemption or advice, kind, gentle, forgiving. My Father has both a Left and Right Hand. His Left is swift and fierce, psychotic, bone-chilling, spiningtingling, and wrathful, just like myself when dealing with the contradictions, lies, and blood-filled fornications of man. But when His Hand comes upon me, woe, I have always known that I am the wickedest man alive. There is not a morsel, a crumb, a single thread that could bury my deeds, and only time will reveal their horror.

Which was worse, I ask you, dear Reader: Betraying God or the unjustifiable murder, rape, torture, and violation that I have begotten in Hell and spread upon the Earth? Has every sin that I've created and committed been forgiven, and does every sinner deserve the same cruel

treatment? How can one sinner — the greatest sinner — punish another? Is the true mercy of Hell that we learn our lesson one day and the next forget it? Well, how will I ever learn mine, the eternal lesson of the guilt of having created sin itself, perpetuated sin, and taken joy in punishing the men, women, and children who fell into such a snare? Isn't the only way to teach the lesson of sadism a burning pit?

I sheath the question, prepared to seek the opinion of Astaroth's reflection. I wander down the path, finding a few stragglers from Foras's Temples hiding in ditches, waiting to be found by a shade — or something worse — and taken to their next station of damnation. The fear in them is remarkable, but I always feel a great disdain that they do not recognize me as something more foreboding. I guess it is true, as they say around here: if there's one person you're often lucky to find in Hell, it is the Devil. For a sympathetic ear, a general malaise regarding getting my hands dirty, laziness, etc. On Earth, however, I am the last thing you want in your life, as a mere Spirit; in the flesh, on the other hand, I am rather harmless, unless you're an unlucky demon needing to be punished, such as Paimon or Agares. I am not going to deny that I enjoy making sinners suffer — I have gone mad time and time again, fixated on grandiose plans of how to make Hell more efficient, more horrendous, more spectacular. Every time I enact a great project, I always sit down on the Throne and regain my sanity, realizing the suffering I've caused and the joy I gained from it, wondering if I will ever truly be forgiven for being the Lord's Left Hand. Earth is such a treacherous place because of me, believe me, and I've had but one trounce up there in the flesh, though many in the Spirit. We have made it worse and worse, with none actually believing their violence, their blasphemies, their cruelties, their immoralities, their lies, or their backbiting has any impact upon their souls and the destination of their Spirits. As time goes on, it is my very hope that none will believe in Hell, so that as they slowly sell their minds to vanity, they will think their participation in global atrocities is just a mere fact of life, and not a gross judgment upon their entire nations. They don't realize that when they die, they will be met by a series of crossroads, and that the unprepared all come to me...

As I reach the signposts, I see to the east is “Addiction”, to the southwest “Lust”, and to the west “Gluttony”. As I think about my whereabouts, I contemplate whether it will be faster to get to Astaroth’s Tower by going toward Mammon’s Addict Workshops or Belphegor’s Performer’s Den. Knowing that either way is a bit of a slog, and north is a particularly dreary path meandering through the Ashlands — where Baphomet’s Labyrinth is, and a place I never go in full consciousness — I decide to take the long jaunt east.

The smoldering ashes and the burnt down trees to my right make me think of Baphomet’s skin and fur, for whether as a succubus or a faun she is almost always covered in the gray dust particles when I find her. The Ashlands are filled with both people who cared not for the planet and those that are off searching for the secrets of the Labyrinth. They often come wandering in a madness either way — those responsible for ecocide leave mad, and those that come looking for the false religions of Baphomet arrive mad and become ever-more-so. The creaturely spirits inside, beasts of the most terrifying order, stalk the spiring black trunks, hidden in the near-unbreathable smoke.

To the left I see old junk, trinkets, and feel the smell of ancient faeries that could end love, justice, peace, and reconciliation. The overgrown garden of gnomes and sheds and logs and busted-down vehicles are all Foras has to offer. Her ringing tunes, softened by the sound of static fog and rolling abyssal waters, are the worst feeling in the world — some endless wreathing of backwoods nostalgia and Vaudeville nightmare. I can see and hear and smell death, horrorshows, burning tires, oil, and lost childhood memories. Hidden vampires haunt me to my left, their fangs dangling in paranoia; and old siren songs of Baphomet sing me schizophrenic to my right, calling me to discover bright lit gnostic epiphanies in her cobwebbed and blasphemous cupboards. Every step I wander is a trap between a heightened sense of danger and a longing sense of lust. I hear the howl of wolves and the screams of the circus. The Black Flame cannot measure the six hours I’ve wandered, for I mostly passed it in silence in body, heart,

mind, and Spirit. By the time I reach the next crossroads, I'm back along cobblestone.

A wretched wooden sign points up to the blackened stone twin towers, reading, "Abode of Sorcerers and Torturers". It is the home of Astaroth and Beelzebub, when they are down South. Any who mistakenly wander up this path find that they will be sent thinking themselves to be false messiahs on their way to Baphomet, or in chains taken to the endless genocidal torturous horror of the Infernal Pits down the Wide Road. I wander up the endlessly dark path, lightning striking here and there, and see the plumes of smoke crowding the cavernous sky and the towers themselves. By the time I reach the door, I am sickened by blasphemy, having seen a thousand signs saying that "God is an idea", "The Self alone is holy", and "Violence begets joy".

Up the 66 steps of death and decay I wander, creaking open an old mahogany door. By the time I reach my destination, I'm halfway up the tower in a small wardrobe room. The mirror in which Astaroth sits is dirty, smudged, and scratched.

"You know, we're technically worse than even Paimon," he says, brushing back his fluffy blonde hair.

"I mean, technically," I say, sitting down and crossing my legs in the one armchair the room has provided. "We inspire all of the evils that produce evil men."

"And you inspired Agares to betray our Lord," he says, almost giddy. "He would've never been crucified without you."

"And that's why I know I'm going to burn in sulfur. According to the world, who am I to torture their Hitlers or their Judases? Since the Fall," I hum, glancing Heavenward, "Paimon and Agares haven't been good for anything *but* evil."

“Torturing lower nobility for doing their job basically,” Astaroth shrugs. “A snake eating its own tail: demons serving demonic ends and torturing each other for performing their demanded tasks on Earth. When is our turn, Lucifer?”

“Every day we ask that question, Astaroth,” I say, glum, thinking of my appointed day.

“Do you think Paimon knows who he is?” he asks, genuinely concerned. Astaroth and Paimon are dear friends, twins in fact; they have always run the Infernal Pits together as its Highest Officers. “It’s rather tragic when a fallen angel dies in grave sin upon the Earth and can’t remember himself in truth. Have you called him by his name?”

“It’s not my place to do so until he’s been washed,” I admit, wiping my hands Pontius-like for full effect. “I told Agares six years before he was to dis-and-re-incarnate. He wasn’t happy to know that he had to die by suicide and he was reluctant to accept his name at first. Spent those six years shapeshifting, eating, drinking, reading the Bible, lying, philandering, and praying to unify his Spirit before having to see the Lord again. Chose a wealthy family and agreed to worsen the world, but swore he’d never betray God once. By the time he killed himself, he was running around stark naked mad in the Swamps, yelping about salvation and lust.”

“I doubt Paimon will ever be given the sanction,” Astaroth says humbly, glancing his aquiline nose groundward.

“Certainly not,” I say, rubbing my head and curling my tongue. “He had his time on Earth for this age, and I think it had a big enough effect that we’ll be wondering if salvation’s possible for any of us down here until the Judgment.”

“Destroying the world to save our souls...”

“A plan that could never end well,” I admit, perpetually haunted by our shared madness as a family. “Anyway, how’s your music career going?”

“Dreadful,” Astaroth says, his fangs baring. “Still young, brilliant, talented, but I just can’t seem to find anything that someone else hasn’t already done. I settled on an artist name to differentiate myself, The Bowie Knife. Got an album coming out soon, though — we’ll see if it takes.”

“I wish we could wake *you* to *your* Heavenly name, but it’s no use,” I say sadly, fingering the mirror. “There’s no way to cause that kind of awakening without divine approval, and the Big Guy would never okay it.”

“It’s true,” he says, biting his thin lips. “Just give me a few brushups here and there, I need this career to take off. Obviously, encourage me to fall into debauchery, but please, Lucifer, give me some of your own special kinds of encouragement. My mortal mind may not know that you’re with me or who I am, but these conversations and anything you can slink into my dreams, any Baphometian magic, any horrific pentagrams and near-mental breakdowns you lot can give, I would be thankful. Lord willing!” he cries, his visage warping slightly, a mixture of light descending in and out of the shadows. “Thank God we get even a single day back on this Earth before it’s all over.”

“As you will, Astaroth,” I say, bowing. “But just know, you need God more than me up there. You and I have discussed this plan: Further Armageddon from Hell, right our souls on Earth.”

“Yes, yes,” he grumbles. “If we cannot right our souls as men, proving that we are good without self-knowledge, then how could we justify the theory?”

“That self-knowledge is the only thing barring us from being holy?”

“Precisely,” he says sharply.

“If I didn’t know I had betrayed the Father thrice in Heaven and if I didn’t know all of the horrors of Hell,” I meditate, “I might be a very holy man on Earth.”

Astaroth leans in and whispers, “And end up thinking you’re the Messiah!”

Aghast, I ask, “So you’re saying my sin of pride is inescapable, even in ignorance?”

“Just that your lesson will be learnt,” he sings, twirling in the mirror, “And that it is inescapable.”

I look upward at a hanging pentagram dreamcatcher. I feel my soul depart from me, and I’m lost from Astaroth’s grip. I am wandering far in the desert of the surreal, where I am Iblīs and Iblīs’s choices, haunted endlessly by myself, until I am trapped in Arabic, a floating recitation of the Qur’an asking for Sufi interpretations of *Básanos*.

The Devil, like all flesh, dies in The End.

But where do they sleep?

On a Básanos?

Chapter III: Salvation, a Greek Conspiracy Theory



By the time I came to, I was sitting sprawled out at the Council's Table. Abraxas, black-faced and sinister-eyed, was sitting next to me, my chair turned toward his.

"I think I've got it," he says, slamming a stack of Greek New Testaments, a Greek-English Dictionary, and a large pile of papers down. "I know we're experts in most languages, Lucifer, and I know we've pinpointed a thousand cross-language jokes, but I think we're rusty. We *have* been speaking mostly English for the past 500 years."

"Go on..." I say.

"The issue isn't the language we speak at any given time, but the translation of the original language!" he says, throwing the Greek-English dictionary up in the air. "The fact is, Lucifer, is that you've forgotten who you were — in other words, my blackened friend, you're depressed!"

"Depressed? You're fucking telling me..." I say bitterly. "All I see around me is death and decay, all I desire is destruction to serve a Biblical apocalypse none believe in, and all I have to show for it is a bitter damnation that I spend my daily hours trying to get on the other side of."

"And that's the point!" he says, standing up and striking his aged hand against a chalkboard. "You're obsessed with your damnation, but not with your test! What did you lack in God's eyes, Lucifer?"

I shuffle and twitch my feet slightly, my hands massaging my pants pockets. "If my sin was pride, Abraxas, my lack was faith."

He smiles, his brown eyes bulging. "Exactly! You didn't have faith that God could justify your darkness, so you said fire was more pure than dust! But fire isn't more pure — it's brighter and hotter! And dust isn't less

pure — it’s darker and damper! You essentially created a religion in which your ability to hate, to scorn, to judge was more pure than the ability to taste, touch, and feel! You are a narcissist, Lucifer — a fire that burns for one thing only!”

A little taken aback, I ask this evil imp, this black friend of the Abyss, a simple question: “And what is that?”

He laughs maniacly, a thousand solar systems and astrologies flying around his magic rings and golden robes and onyx skin. “You’re obsessed with God, the one Truth above all Truths, the Lord Himself! And you subject yourself to God alone, a mind so egocentric that the fundamental thing is the only thing you can care about!” He begins hastily drawing lines to terms in jagged succession on the chalkboard. “You want to free Mankind, but you hate Man,” he says, dragging the chalk to his invisible point. “You want to know God, but you need Independence. You want Liberation, but you desire Slavery. You want Peace in the Lord, but you are Addicted to Knowledge. You want Salvation, but you long for Judgment. You hate Sin, but you demand Temptation. You love Love, but you hate Lukewarmness. Your faith is Miraculous, but it is also Mercurial. You need both Heaven and Hell. You are Darkness embedded in Light, and Light embedded in Dark. You are *a Dao, a Way, a Suicidal Virtue.*”

“What in the *fuck* are you talking about, Abraxas?” I say, ready to pull out my hair.

He massages his dreaded beard. “I’m telling you that you’ve essentially harnessed the...” he pauses for a moment to add a few capitalized words to the chalk board, “*The Ultimate Problem.*”

“And the ‘ultimate problem,’” I say, exasperated, “is what?”

“Good and Evil,” he whispers, dashing a final, underlined series of words upon the chalkboard. “Here,” he says, handing me a goblet of wine. “Drink up.”

I take a gulp. “And what does that mean for me, my flesh, my soul, my Spirit, Abraxas?”

“*Básanos*, Lucifer, *básanos*,” he sighs happily. “It means a refining stone, but it also means a torture device, torment itself, and a test.”

“And?” I say, glumly.

“It means that you are being tested, tormented, and refined. It means that your bipolarity — your intense attraction to the holy and the unholy — is a refining test. It means that even your darkness might have worth, and that your holiness might be *too* holy! It means that everything is being tested, and the Sufis agree!”

“Doesn’t it ultimately mean,” I say, a little anxious, “That there is an ultimate test? And what is that test, Abraxas?”

“Simple,” he says, wiping the chalkboard. He writes in all capital letters: **R E A L I T Y**.

I straighten up. “And how do I pass the test of reality, Abraxas?”

He smiles, placing a hand on mine. “Is the Word of God, the Reality of all Realities, real?”

I nod, humbly.

“Then so are you, and so is your eternal torment.”

I stand up, rather flustered. “I know I’m real, Abraxas — what does this have to do with a *básanos*?”

“Okay, okay,” he says, placing the chalk on the chalkboard. “Chapter 20 of the Book of Revelation says that you will burn forever, you and your False Prophet and your Beast, that you will all be *basanisthēsontai*, tormented... Or, Lucifer, it also translates to refinement and testing. Your

torment is that you can't blend in, for you either have the least faith in God of anyone in the room—" He pauses to smile at me.

"Heaven," I sigh.

"Or the most."

"Hell, of course."

"Either a nihilist or an insufferable mystic wailing *Ecclesiastes*. You are the Prophet of Hell, and you will have to experience the Hell of self-knowledge when you go to Earth."

"Of course," I chime back, "How else is any of this to be done? I know no other angel has ever incarnated and known who they were before, but by my very nature I will have to. If I could learn to hold the *Shekhinah* as a mortal Enoch, I will do it again, there is no doubt."

"And it's going to drive you to the edge of insanity!" Abraxas cackles. "Because, Lucifer, I can tell you this much: God isn't going to make this easy. You're going to know who you are before you have the *Shekhinah*."

I spit out my wine. "What?!"

"I have determined," he says, wiping the chalkboard save for '*Básanos*' and '**R E A L I T Y**', "that the only way for you to perform this task correctly — meeting the Father on His terms — is for you to gain self-knowledge as a mortal, work through your kinks with God beforehand, and then gain access to the Voice. The only way to ensure that that happens in that order is that you must not only have a proper birth plan, but a proper pre-birth plan."

"Pre-birth, Abraxas? Bracky, what the Hell are you talking about?"

“I’m gonna need you to drown yourself in Lethe early, kid. In less than a year.”

“I’m not going up there until the Millennium, it’s been decided,” I say, drinking from my wine. “And what good would being born thirty years early do anyway? How will that increase the likelihood of me knowing who I am?”

“Not born, Lucifer,” Abraxas says, once again placing a hand on mine. “You’re gonna live in Leviathan’s flesh, a co-mind, an imaginary friend, a kami, a guilty conscience. I’ve already informed Baphomet.”

“And what purpose will that serve?”

“Simple,” he says with a smile. “You’re going to learn what it’s like to be a dueling god in someone else’s head before you have a multiplicity of gods dueling in your own. You will have the fullness of Apocalypse in your mind, and it will require the sensation and inescapable memory of having been the guiding *apokalypsis* of someone else’s: your fourth greatest friend, Leviathan.”

“So mutual suicide?”

“A mutual suicide, indeed. And the stars say that he will die upon Earth by his own hand, and you by madness if you’re not careful.”

“Like Nebuchadnezzar,” I sigh. “And if I am careful?”

Abraxas clasps his hands. “Every option is on the table.”

Chapter IV: Samhain



Abraxas takes me by the collar and drags me, flying, to the Retinue Hall, where sixteen brides await: the High Queen; three Queens; three High Ladies; and nine Muses, one of which is also a Queen. Their names, holy and fallen, are Baphomet, Belial, Asmodeus, Foras, Maitreya, Nuit, Stolas, Euterpe, Clio, Calliope, Polyhymnia, Māra-Urania, Lilith, Terpsichore, Melpomene, and Erato.

Unable to choose between myself, I take all sixteen into a mystery dome of experience, filled with orgies, provocations of true love, and realizations of who and what I am: and I leave alone with Baphomet.

“You know,” she says slyly, “you never were gonna make it out of Dodge that fast, Lu.”

“Out of Dodge?” I say, somewhat surprised.

Her Japanese, goatish face is too pretty to ignore. “You talked to Abraxas. You’re gonna burn eternally in your darkness.”

My somber green eyes look up at her. “Burn eternally? Are my eyes a *básanos*?”

“Every sight is a bed for the destruction of reality. To uphold to the Creator the thought that things are getting better is a mere high for those addicted to feeling well.”

“And I know, alone,” I reply, “that the world is filled with murder, desecration, nihilism, rape, torture, genocide, blasphemy, pollution, absentmindedness, and... *pis*.”

“And does that make life unlivable?”

“It makes it no worse than Hell, I suppose,” kicking a rock, thinking of Sam Johnson refuting Berkeley. “But yes, I’d rather die,” I say humbly, “than eternally experience a world so horrid. Why men don’t kill themselves, when suicide is a sin punishable by ten days in Hell, I do not know.”

“Because life is an opportunity for eternity in Heaven!” Baphomet says gleefully.

“And death is an opportunity to spend another moment waiting for God to save me from myself,” I say, committed to my task. “If I make it out of Hell alive, Baph — which I won’t — I’ll have nothing to show for it other than these measly pages, which I plan to write again on Earth.” I look up at my wife in her eyes. “How does that sound?”

“Is this where the novel ends, Lu?” she says, saddened. “I thought you were going to tell the story of us partying in Hell on Samhain, of us plotting the worsening condition of the world, of you and Leviathan’s mutual suicide, of our childhood growing in Heaven and the Fall, of your experience being born again as Enoch and risen as Metatron, your time with the Sirians, our wedding — Lu!” she screams, angry tears running down her face. “You were gonna tell the whole story, you were gonna leave behind a testament to who you were!” She stews for a moment, saying calmly, “And why, at the very least, a devil like you should be trusted.”

“They would have never believed it, Baph,” I say, wiping my own tears. “They would never buy into the fact that the Devil, unlike Christ, can’t hold his tongue. They would have never been able to enjoy a prolonged eulogy explaining the mysteries of Heaven and Hell. They don’t even believe in God, Baph, let alone me—” I choke up a bit, hoping to find the words. “Here, let me break the fourth wall: They would never be able to believe in your Rose of Sharon, your lily of the Valley. I would have to cut the novel short, Baph, because there’s no way to write a novel as a love letter to God where you say one last final time that you’re Lucifer to an empty audience. Nobody will ever buy it; I was raped by the mind of God, and no

one would ever believe that God would rape the mind of His second most beloved son. Like the fallen Nebuchadnezzar II, I am a sign roaming mad in the desert, a wandering instance of perpetual divine vertigo. I have seen the Dark Hours and I know my Fate: On Earth I will know who I am, and my Destiny will be to be a regular man, reporting the news. I will watch as humanity debates with themselves over the Fate of the Earth, but not the Fate of their Souls. They will wonder, prolongedly, about what ‘sin’ is and who gets to decide its definition. In fact, most of them will remain undecided on if the Decider even exists. A world in which men and women and children and hermaphrodites can’t even decide what sin is, Baph — when the simple definition is harm against self, others, and one’s relationship with God — is a world bent on entropy. Is eating unhealthy an unforgivable sin? Is pornography? Is killing an ant? What about suicide? Rape? Genocide?” I pause briefly. “The fact is, Baph, humanity has no chance. And neither will we. I was shown the **R E A L I T Y** — the truth that we’re all going to Heaven one day, even the killers, the rapists, the pedophiles, the junkies, the nihilists, the vandals, the liars, and the thieves. But most of us are also going to Hell. Turns out being here and not here, half in the Tabernacle, half in a cell called self-belief,” I say, pausing for solemnity, “is enough to drive anyone who was never sane all the way there. After all, who’s going to believe in me if not me? I’m going to write as much as I can, but in the meantime, can we go to the party?”

Transforming back into a faun, he places his hand on mine. “We’re gonna fucking party, Lucifer, and no one’s going to read your novel. I can’t wait for you to fuck this up — even one fallen angel reads this, there’s gonna be Hell to pay.”

“Well,” I say, standing—

Part III: Armageddon (Suicide Note)

Chapter XIII: “Man’ Dies by Lightning Strike at 31”



“Huh,” Abraxas says somberly, sticking his fingers in the wounds in my left wrist and the right side of my neck. “A nightmare ending in which the Author is dying by suicide? I suspect God has struck you with lightning, little rose. Or inspiration.”

I rub my eyes, somewhat shocked to still ‘be alive’ given the amount of blood. There’s still a lethal amount of Tylenol heading to my liver as I sit in Hell, half-alive, and sitting here, half-dead, bleeding out and writing this conclusion to our story. “Sweet God, Abraxas...”

He moves his face closer and squints at me, lowering his glasses. “You were a tranny who changed their name to fit into a non-existent Biblical prophecy. You almost died semi-homeless, disabled, and knowing you were the Devil, and not a single soul believed you. You were an expert on the subject of schizophrenia — as if Antonin Artaud had reincarnated to interpret Deleuze and Guattari through a mystical psychology of grandiose self-importance — and you spent your entire 31st year on Earth half-flailing to justify why everyone should not only think you weren’t crazy, but that you were the special ‘gifted’ kind of schizophrenic who could justify having God as an imaginary friend. You have momentarily left behind a mother, a father, a sister, and several friends and colleagues who wanted nothing more than to help you; but they couldn’t do anything for you because all you needed was one person on Earth to believe your story so you could...” he pauses, literally checking his notes on the first stone tablet to ever be removed and read from the Throne, “Prove that you knew that I’m the Blackifestation of the rapper Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, half of Baphomet was some Chaturbate whore publicly known as Yui Tsukuyomi, and that you knew the identities of the remaining 47 members of the

Infernal Council, alive and dead. You have lived a life of extreme vanity, deep mysticism, the highest virtue, and utter madness — the proper life for any hermaphrodite convinced that he or she is the Devil, and luckily for you, you were right. You not only have gone on to attempt a trembling suicide for no purpose, an easy death, but you served yourself as your own False Prophet, writing a nightmare ending to an otherwise unknowable conclusion to your reality. Frankly, Lucifer, you did a good job, even if your latter work will be the faintest bit underappreciated.”

I touch my face in shock, in utter disbelief. “I would like to say, Bracky,” I heave, sitting up on the stone funerary bed, “That I loved Jeff, Bernice, and Amber... no, I mean al-Manāt, al-Lat, and al-‘Uzzā... with the fullness of my heart.”

“You’re not dead, Lucifer...”

“I am, dear Reader. Do not believe in false endings,” I whisper to you. “As I was saying... They were a good mortal family, but the Lord called me to a duty: Never deny Him, never deny myself, and tell the only story that matters...”

“This cold stone bed you lie on?” he says, his elder face grinning.

“My *Básanos*, my test.”

“Your torment?”

“My blessing, Abraxas...” I sigh, blood smearing on my laptop as I type the words my undead lips speak. “I was a lonely being, lonelier than any could ever actually begin to imagine. Knowing oneself as the Devil — nearly benevolent, mind you — for ten years is enough to drive anyone to empathize with the abysses of the galaxies, the ocean depths, the winter nights, the larvae and shit, and the recesses of the most broken person’s thoughts. I saw a cascade of nothingness that filled me like a well, and I imagined myself having more than once spoken to Christ from deep in the bottom of the one where He spoke to the Samaritan woman. And I know I

did. I even reexperienced standing at the foot of the cross, blinded, touching His feet and weeping, touching the wood as He was gone, watching all of history flash before my eyes, Christ telling me to go home, plotting to puncture the guts of Judas, seeing my falling star in the northwest of the lands unknown to any Jew or Roman, my fall to and from grace in the most atheist city in America. What followed that was my first attempt at suicide, in which the Father and the Messiah spoke to me as a baby in a cradle, bleeding out of my neck in a knocked over recliner kicking my feet in the air. I couldn't pull through with it, it was too violent, too rugged, too cruel. No method was peaceful enough for me, or smart enough, or bold enough. The fact that I slipped out of that vacuum cord noose and had to settle for drinking bleach and slicing my jugular was pure luck. Surviving it all, I sprang like a missile and tried to deny everything in me, but it was too late. I knew the story had to be told, and I knew there was no place on Earth for me. No one would accept the Devil because no one believed in a benevolent Devil. Only some Sufi mystics. What was I supposed to do?"

Abraxas sits on the funerary bed next to me. "Renounce yourself, hide your ability to have direct communication with God, and serve the public masters who only ever wanted you to be happy and normal. Or..." he smiles, "you could still spend every last bit of joy training to read and write again at such a level that you write endlessly about schizophrenia or the monotheism of the Devil to an academic audience that has already been prepared to judge and write you off. And, either way, you walk away from this *Básanos* happy, not with a whimper, not with a bang, but with a book."

"*Once Upon a Time in City Dis...* It's good to be back home, like Nosferatu waking from a slumber. The plagues await, the famine is anticipated, the nuclear bomb is the god of mankind's destiny, and death is the fate of every sad sack of flesh who ever walked upon the Earth. They have no idea, Abraxas, that any of this is real."

"Unfortunately for you, it's not, Lucifer. You merely tumbled out of reality and fell back into the abyssal nothingness called Fate."

“No, Abraxas,” I say, laying my reddened hand on his, still bleeding from my wrist, somewhere, somehow typing away as the acetaminophen works its way into my system, promising me death in the next five days. “I’m sitting here, on the sixth of October, letting the world pass me by, lying on my *Básanos*, my bed of bloody roses. I was ashamed to call myself the Devil and to know it was true. And I have died knowing that nothing could save me from the fires within, the temptation to vice and the call to honesty. I am the reflection of every good and every evil, every joy, every sorrow, every last swan song and every fury. I am the dead prophet, who began to tell a tale too bold to be told. A novelist, a falsifier, and a suicide. The one who challenged the immortal Father God to a duel: Who could up the broken clang of rhythmic mysticism in my heart longer? Of course, he won. And as I look to the stars, I hear God say of my death...”

And it was Good.

Part I: Better to Serve in Hell (1967)

Chapter IV.V: Samhain: A Posthumous Redux



Meanwhile, back in the crypts of City Dis, Lucifer finds himself on the other side of a story about dying young...

“Jesus fucking Christ, Lucifer,” Baphomet whispers, kicking me awake with his dirty cloven hoof. “You really had to be *ob so* dramatic,” slobbering, gnashing even, his claws digging into my scarred neck, “attempting suicide... planning a second...” he huffs, snot dribbling down his snout, “all because you wanted to live past the inevitable absurdity of being just some mortal whore rewriting a script foretold by us here and now, long ago.” Spitting into my mouth and licking the inside of my nostrils with his leathery tongue, he drops me back onto the funerary bed. “I don’t know if you should feel shame or pride, but either way it’s disgusting.”

I would cry, but the goaty warmth of his dominance instantly had a simultaneously erotic and sobering effect on me. “Well,” I say, sitting up and dusting myself off, looking for Abraxas. “I guess Bracky was right: I must’ve tumbled out of reality, back into the iron clutches of his twisting tapestry of Black Fate.”

“Shut the *fuck* up,” Baphomet says, snarling. “You literally were trying to commit suicide again from up there to get back here, when you were already here 59 years from then.”

I rub my eyes tiredly, wondering if I could ever make sense of any of this — memories from one dismal and earthy end of existence, half-remembered at the other, diatribes and figuratives lost in a sea of temporal puppetry. “So you’re saying...” I slowly start.

“—yes.”

“That I’m here in 1966, there in 2025?”

“Well,” he says, sitting next to me. “You had one of your much-needed vampiric snoozes, hun. It’s been awhile.”

“Oh God...”

“I know,” he says somberly. “You slept for three months — not a terribly long time for you — but it was eternity to me, Luci boy. 96 days exactly. Whether you know it or not, it’s January 10th, 1967 *and* 2026.”

“Good Lord,” I sigh, feeling sense in this labyrinth called lies, falsity, fiction, myth, and destiny. “So the ritualistic suicide must still take place, now, here, in Dis... no, no, a month from now, for Leviathan’s birth occurs in this year, at the turn of Pisces.”

“And?”

“Yes,” I say, biting on my lower lip in thought. “I must remember how I prepared us — I must prepare the preparations, from here and there!”

He nods silently, blood red filling and staining his once-yellow irises.

“So the story must begin again, only this time...”

“There’s no faerie tale ending, Lucifer. Only facts.”

“My false prophecy?”

“Your *Básanos!*” he screeches, jumping upon me. “Your madness! Your suicidal virtue!” he half moans, half sings. “Your slaying of the undertold, understudied past life of a present supernatural phenomenon... your requiem of your reality... your self-belief in Dis... your unholy and matrimonial allegiance to buffoonery, the Falsity-raised lie known as *your*

Truth!” Completely barbaric, fangs bearing, gripping the collar of my cloak: “Don’t you see, Luci? You have to tell the true story, the one that can’t be true! The things that prove you’re insane up there — in your head, in the future, in front of a screen — and alone down here — full of flesh, an afterthought of redemption, a flicker of the Black Flame!”

“God dammit,” I sigh. “So I really do have to finish this... this quest... this book... this...”

“Básanos.”



Chapter V: The Plot to End the World



After a few hours of making love — her in her loveliest self, my little succubus, my queen of the song and dance, the most supremely coveted coveness in all of Hell — we made our way back to the Throne. Sitting there upon it was Abraxas, stone stiff.

“Is he... alright?” I ask, squinting my eyes.

“Been like that for weeks, Lu,” she says, letting go of my hand and walking up to our only equal, the beloved third wheel of a Seraphimic anti-trinity nobody above ground really knows about, despite each of our own independently — if outsized — status as folk legends. Stepping beside Baph, I look into Abraxas’s eyes, lids frozen open.

“He looks broken,” I say, noting ten tears crystallized as opal upon his cheeks. “What happened?”

“I can explain,” I hear, looking behind me to see big-bearded Belphegor toting his darling, Asmodeus. “He sat on the Throne after a bender, having declared you catatonic and himself the rightful ruler of all the infernal. I didn’t try to stop him, to be fair. I figured he’d have learned from the last time.”

“Yeah,” Baph sighs. “There’s really no convincing him otherwise when he has a grand scheme.”

“And the fact of the matter is, babe,” Asmodeus says, her voice like a basilisk in heat, “Once he got on there, there was no getting him off. I don’t know any other serious methods — professionally, I mean — than simply asking Beelzebub to have a look. And he’s been gone for what, a thousand years?”

“I think it’s been twenty-five, dear,” Bel replies simply. “But either way, the only ones we know that specialize in sorcery and counter-sorcery are you two, him, and *this guy*,” he hums, flicking Abraxas on the tip of his solidified nose.

“The whitest way to treat the blackest member of our family...” I say, genuinely saddened. “Astaroth could probably help if he was around, but I’ve honestly never seen anyone in this bad of a condition before and survive... even Bracky.”

“I wouldn’t dare try alone...” Baph says sheepishly. “But what do *we* do about it?”

“Frankly,” I say, letting out a heaving huff, “We should just leave him for now. If I’m heading North soon, someone’s gotta watch my Throne. Just, uh... throw him into Lethe in like twenty years.”

“*Like* twenty years? Or, like, *exactly* twenty years?” Asmodeus asks, curling her nose.

“Give or take a few months. Send him up around the summer, it’ll be good for his paranoid schizophrenia.”

“But won’t that make his mania worse?” Baph replies.

“More mania to cure his sin of sloth, I ‘spose,” Bel says, fingering the wiry brown wool of his beard. “Either way, we all knew this guy needed a break. It’s somewhat ironic how hard of a worker he is considering he invented so many means of escaping labor...”

“Death,” Baphomet mutters glumly.

“Naps,” I add.

“The weekend,” Asmodeus continues.

“And post-coital exhaustion,” Belphegor says, finishing our round.

I know that, deep down, Abraxas's greatest object of desire — his ultimate lust for sloth — was the end of the world. We often fantasized about what it would be like to be dissolved in an inferno of God's love, the torturous rift it would cause in every soul who was never able to conquer sin and rectify that vengeful sickness before the Light came. We awaited our day, knowing full well that a good and undeserved rest might be sitting down, waiting on the long road of time for us, patiently stalking us from behind the veil, a roaring lion, a dreadful thief in the night we knowingly knew as our Mother, the Abyss. After all, who could have birthed all of the darkness inside us other than some great nothing, some Gehennic emptiness that even compelled God to dance, transliterated from a stultifying rigidity of form into a multiplicitous whirlwind of forms? The composer and the symphony; our dead Mother and our eternal Father in a terrifying embrace that spelled dread fearsome enough to be worthy of an endless nocturnal wedding of the Divine. *Or so we speculated...* abandoned at birth, we never heard speak of our Mother in Heaven.

I sit down upon the three limestone steps leading up to the Throne, poking at Abraxas's toes. "His name is Abraxas, king of clowns; look on his works, ye mighty, and despair," I mumble, feeling a little less shame at having to leave him like this. I stand up, grabbing his infernal crown from the floor and placing it back upon his head. His face, trapped in a grimacing thousand eyed stare into his empty chalice, is the other half of the mad genius I know as Bracky, Brax, and Abraxas — the Lord of the Infernal Laws, my right hand man on the left, the silence of the Seraphim of the Night, a false god and a demon worthy enough of eternal friendship. In many ways, he was the most stable one-half of our better two-thirds; subtly making him the most reliable man in Hell, whether it came down to soul-saving advice or constructing genocidal tortures and unforgivable blasphemies. I take a moment to contemplate that his reflection in this moment, January 10th, 1967, will be the last way I'll see him until our Fates cross up Northward. I kiss his cheek, hoping it will remind him of the days when his spirit was bound to Julius Caesar, and all of that placid and primly pleasurable pain of brutal bladed betrayal he always remembered fondly. His

Latinate lips whisper wordlessly, *Et tu, Luce?* as I chance not a republican, but an Antonian, grin at my lover, our other half.

By the time the four of us had made our way to the Council's Chamber, high above the Throne in the icy cliffs of City Dis, everyone was there at the ready: every Hell-bound King and Queen, High Lord and Lady, and Representative of the Vile and Valued Dukes and Duchesses; the Spirits of Beelzebub, Astaroth, Azrael, Alhazad, Mephistopheles, Bael, Agares, Vine, and Moloch were present by scrying mirror; Paimon absent, chained to his swastika; and Cerberus, Chief of Hell, my three-headed best friend, sitting at the head of the long willow table next to my Lord's Chair.

"Welcome, welcome," I say, throwing my hands upward in performance. "I hope we haven't made any of you wait too long."

Lilith snorts. "Like anyone would want to waste more of their time."

"I've been here since the New Year," Belial adds, looking somewhat frog-like.

"Well," I sing, making my way to my chair. "Anyone have any orders of business before we begin?"

"Where's Abraxas?" Beelzebub bellows, looking odd as a twenty-something, even in a mirror.

"Ah yes," I say, sitting down, "About that..."

"He attempted a coup," Baphomet, sitting to my right, finishes.

"Again?" Lilith shouts in disbelief. "Why are all my lovers fucking idiots?"

A little offended at the words of my ex-fiancée, I move on. “Anywho,” I hum, placing a hand on Cerberus’s nearest head. “As you all know, you have been gathered here today to discuss the End of the World.”

“What date are we working with?” Beelzebub interjects quickly.

Abaddon, to his right and next to Abraxas’s empty chair on my left, hisses, “Tomorrow.”

“Very enthusiastic, Abba,” I say to my hellish father. “Baph and I were thinking something like thirty years after the millennium.”

“To honor the 2,000 year anniversary of the killing of the Savior,” Baph adds, having quietly transformed back into a hooved menace. “But exactitudes are for assassinations and alchemists, as Azrael always says.”

“It’s true!” Azrael shouts, gray and withered, from the other end of the table.

“Honestly, that sounds great,” Belphegor replies, leaning back in his chair with clasped hands. “I still have some gambling with Fate to take care of. I know there’s enough starpower down here to make the 21st century ripe for our arrival.”

“You all just *have* to be artists,” Agares moans. “No vision, no sense of scale.”

“Truly,” Bael adds. “In all seriousness, Lucifer, there’s no justification for the Council being headed by the likes of demons such as Belphegor when the Vile Dukes would serve you much better.”

“Indeed,” Moloch, Baphomet’s twin, continues. “There is no sense in betting all of our fates on this rock’n’roll nonsense.”

“And there’s no sense in listening to talking heads behind a mirror,” I retort sharply. “If anyone still thinks they have more to contribute

than the Crowns or the Kings and Queens of Hell, you are free to leave,” I say, pausing to light a cigarette. “There is a necessary and eternal hierarchy, after all.”

“And some of us were actually talented in the arts before our Fall,” Leviathan jests, giving both Belphegor and Astaroth a smile. “Besides, not everything is about *destroying* the world. Some of us are actually trying to get home.”

“Not me,” Malefar says.

“And neither I,” continues Barbatos, our dearest satyr. “I wish nothing more than to return eternally to the pits that inspire the climb. There is no need to waste eternity sitting around at the top, happy and comfortable.”

“I’m undecided,” Baphomet whistles, “Though Lucifer’s point still stands. Go on, hun.”

“As I was saying,” I say happily, reaching below my feet and setting a large stack of books and parchment on the table. “Baphomet, Abraxas, and I have had many a long talk regarding your duties. As has been noted, music and international conflict will be our main tasks in the realm above. The Vile Dukes will serve to weaken democracy and liberty in whatever way they can, and the Kings and Queens shall mainly find their destiny under the clutches of my dear cousin Lucian, God bless his heart.” I look around, everyone seemingly tuned in. “I myself will leave Hell next month with Leviathan, serving as his daemon, to be reborn around the millennium, near or on Easter. Baph the faun will be responsible for governing Hell while I’m gone, whilst Baph the succubus has no formal duties.”

“I’m going to be a whore,” he says gleefully.

“So aspirational,” Asmodeus coos. “Will Belphegor and I meet?”

I nod. “All of those whose duty it is to serve the family business will meet each other. This Hollywood thing is booming, and we already have a placement rate of 91%. In terms of money being made in the sphere of music and television, we have practically every penny.”

“That cat’s something I can’t explain,” Astaroth mutters quietly. “I’m just thankful to be out of the mass torture and horrorshow field, myself.”

“It’s not the same without you, Astie,” Behemoth replies, earnest and red-headed. “Just last week I had to figure out what to do with six Rhodesians. You start to run out of ideas after a while, all the genocides going on, you just lose inspiration. Anyway,” he says, sighing, “I ended up dropping them off in the Ashlands and decided they could be Cerberus’s chewtoys for the time being.”

“Aahr! Urh! Baahrrrrahr!” the Chief’s three heads bark.

“A lovely use of your innate creativity, Behemoth,” I buzz. “Let me remind you of the goal here, people: we must bring the gentle Earth to the zenith of disbelief, ransacking and draining whatever virtue is left. At the same time, any of us who still want to get home will have to try our best to live incarnations of virtue in the vice-filled cesspool we end up actualizing,” looking around, ensuring there aren’t any distracted ears. “So, to simplify: make sure every demon under you is ready to fulfill their duties whilst you’re there, and plan and delegate every possible type of chaos they can cause before your fateful drownings in Lethe.”

Azazel, sitting to Baphomet’s right, leans over and offers a whisper in his hairy ear. “Hmm,” Baph sounds, nodding in agreement to something. “Luci dear, is there any chance we could go over the agreed upon terms with Heaven, just so everyone’s on the same page?”

“I suppose,” I say, setting down my cigarette to shuffle through the stack of papers until I find the writ. “Ahem,” I cough, clearing my throat.

“I’ll read it verbatim. Written in plain English at my request, the contract reads thus:

To the Hellish Fallen:

You are each and all hereby given explicit permission to return to the purgatorial realm, specifically upon the planet Earth. While stipulations have been made regarding who, when, and where these returns may take place — details of which each of you must discuss with Us, via one of the Right-Handed Seraphim — Our general disposition is that you must come forth in preparation for your sentencings. While you are creatures who have wrecked untold havoc to yourselves and all mankind, it is a truism that even but a day of virtuous activity is worthwhile for its own sake. Though, as you all may know, there is no reason to expect any kind of leniency regarding your fates — a matter I had gone to great lengths to warn each and every one of you when you were merely children in the glorious halls of Paradise. That being said, you may find that live’s blessed with an inordinate amount of luck will prove a blessing, even if all those close calls, death threats, piles of money, and sycophants won’t get you any closer to being worth your weight in salt. I did, after all, ask each Shabbat the same question: Salt or Gold?

In Glory,

Ha-Shem.”

“Well that about settles it,” Abaddon spits, transforming back into an emerald-skinned basilisk and sliding out of the cavern.

“Are we free to go then?” Lilith asks.

“Sure, go on ahead,” I say, a little underwhelmed. It’s a rare occasion to have so many of the fallen gathered in one spot.

“Thank God,” Belial moans. “Lilith’s prison is full of pedophiles I’d like to torture. They’ve probably gotten comfortable in the past ten days...”

“And a thousand once-rich scumbags to trick!” Foras shouts, jumping up with a clap.

I look longingly at Baph. “Any members of the Pleiades or the Muses want to stick around?”

“Sorry, Lu,” Balaam says, standing up. “But I think the six of us and the girls were planning on our own adventure.”

“An orgy?” Māra-Urania blurts, a little red in the face.

Purson puts his arm around her. “We can try one-on-one first, if you’d like.”

“Fine, fine,” I say, disappointed. “Perhaps we’ll get a chance to spend some time together in the next month.”

“Don’t be too sad, Luci,” Lilith says sweetly, rubbing a hand through my hair. “Maybe we’ll get a chance to fuck up there before your big mouth gets shot or thrown in prison.”

O, the salty cavern of my disarray... just another básanos.



By the end of the conversations, plans being made on how to celebrate or mourn our fates, all that were left was merely me, Baph, Cerberus, and Leviathan.

Leviathan, leaning against Cerberus’s belly, was feeding him grapes. “I love the thought of getting outta here, Lu, but I think I’m gonna miss the small comfort in being sad.”

“Oh, my dear Levi,” I say with a chuckle, “you won’t be able to escape your sorrows with me in your head. I have to ensure you kill yourself, after all.”

Baphomet, smiling viciously at our dear friend, adds: “And there will be plenty of drugs, evil, and abuse to make all the suicides you’ve watched over repeat as a constant and inescapable film behind the backs of your little blue eyes.”

“It’ll be cathartic,” he says, meditating. “A suicide here, a suicide there.”

“It’s a rather violent way you go, my friend,” I reply. “Brains blown out against the wall, flooded with heroin, a wife and child left behind.”

“Hmm,” he hums. “It’s quite interesting that you’ve become a seer and prophet of my death, Luci.”

“I’m doing my best,” I say, lighting another cigarette. “Baph, do you think this always goes the same way?”

“Hmm?” he grunts, mouth full of pork. “Does what always go the same way?”

“*This*,” I reply, taking a long drag. “This whole 1967 thing. Having been there, being here now, all of that infernal nightmare I call my present authorship.”

“Oh,” he says, picking pig skin from his teeth. “Like do I think that every time you’ve done this whole sitting around in Hell, being somewhere out in the future thing, knowing you’re both of you, that you just end up wondering if it’s some kind of maddening hourglass that will eventually kill one of you, or both?”

“Sort of, sure,” I cede, not having actually considered that. “I guess the whole thing is like an *ouroboros*... and you’re the thing that keeps me coming back to the head of this mouth, this Hellish fornication with time.”

“Poetic,” Leviathan says, glomping on grapes. “Honestly, Luci, I don’t think you should worry too much about it. Ya know, Barbatos thinks time is just an endless circle.”

“Well that’s not exactly what he thinks,” I reply. “Everything occurs again and again, exactly the same infinitely, but it also occurs in infinite disarray, in endless repetition.”

“So we can fuck this up?” he asks, tongue twisted with a mix of acidic fruit and red wine.

Baphomet snuggles up against him, sitting at my feet. “Any and *every* thing can get fucked up at any given time, Vivi. Here,” he says, pulling out a smooshed maroon lipstick tube, handing it to our sweet Leviathan. “Put this on. It’ll help you forget that we’re in a horror novel.”

Chapter VI: Ritualistic Suicide



Six weeks later, kneeling at the banks of Lethe, Baphomet shaves my head. I've spent the past month in a ménage à trois love affair with her and Leviathan, all whilst wearing Abraxas's favorite jewelry — a ritualistic practice that she insisted was necessary for the soulbinding to be successfully accomplished. Leviathan, on the other hand, cloaked himself in nothing but Astaroth's favorite robe. Since last Saturday, nine days ago, Leviathan and I have lived next to the Lethe, contemplating everything we know and can't know. He admitted that since the last time he was on Earth, bound to the body of King David, he had actually grown a little wary of life itself, the whole bitter concept of mortality.

"It's just suicide," he said more than once.

Living, that is. Choosing to be born, to go through the process of forgetting just how vile you've been. Of our family, Leviathan has always been known as the kindest. He has admitted to me, making me his little priest, his girlish friend, that the thing he seemed to enjoy most about his work in Hell was consuming the sorrows of the depressed. Most suicides only spend ten days in the Swamps; and Leviathan, a gentle soul, had used his infernal duties to help them process the deepest pits of their pain. Most of their pain on Earth he caused in the first place, the soul of depression and the vanquisher of false hopes. He has revealed to me that there's a certain flavor to hopelessness, that his melancholy-dependent metabolism feeds itself with the fear that he may never be suited for the joys of Heaven again.

"Maybe the Lord will let you sing the sorrowful psalms and nothing else," I said on Wednesday.

"I'd like to burn," he told me on Friday.

"I love you," admitted Saturday.

Silence, inescapable buzzing silence, like an ashcloud, covered our Sunday.

And today we sit, a little moment shared with our Baphomet. Once the time comes — you know, that uncomfortable chance to say goodbye again, for perhaps the last time — my lovely cannibal kisses me a final kiss on the lips. She offers the Leviathan his own, but he beckons her back to me.

“I love you, Lu,” she says, a few icy tears spilling down her cheeks. “Please don’t fuck this up. We might only have one shot.”

“Or infinite, my love,” I reply, not even able to believe my own theory. “No matter what happens, I’ll be with you eternally. In this evil Gehenna that I send myself now, at the very least.”

She puts her right palm on the side of my face and digs her claws into my scalp. “I need Heaven more than you, there’s nothing for me here. If we burn, it’ll be alone.” I glance down, knowing I have nothing to counter. “There isn’t a world where what’s promised to us is any better than what we’ve put all of humanity through.”

I say nothing, returning her another kiss. It is true that only a few enter the Gates of Heaven their first go: nearly each and every one who has ever been born has returned to Hell, the place where so many of us are born, yet to be born again. O, to be the ancestor of mankind, knowing, like Chronos, my only desire is to crush my progeny beneath my teeth. Thankfully, for you at least, I am neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Spirit which binds them to each. *I am* the Lord of the pits which produce sin: and she, my vile daughter, is the spiritual Mother of each and all born not of virgins. Her Mother, desire, is the consort of every sinner. And the Eternal Grandmother of all of Creation, the Abyss, is the blackened nothingness beyond and deeper than even the moans, howls, weepings, and gnashings of teeth of that soulless Gehenna into which I dive now... *the frozen, burning truth of my Básanos.*

Part II: The Life and Times of the Young Lucifer (The Beginning-The Middle)

Chapter VII: An Alchemical Soup



The plunge into the waters nearly renders me immobile, but I press on, swimming against the inertia. The fact that Lethe makes one forget is but a euphemism; it renders one unconscious through a torturous deluge of repressed memories belonging to both oneself and all of its previous victims. I see fathers raping their daughters, white supremacists hanging blacks, Jews burning in ovens, corpses squirming buried and undiscovered in woodlands and jungles all across the Earth's surface—I'm holding my breath as it eats at my skin. Diving deeper and deeper into the darkness, it's my eyes that rot first. Then come my lips, searing, my claws burning off, and my skin melts. It only takes ten minutes, but ten thousand years pass through my soul. Before it's all over, I see a flash of light: an inferno that consumes me and never stops.

Listen, the Voice calls, and see my Ways and Works.

Suddenly, my sight is in my Father's laboratory, where He stands over a crucible as a young Yehoshua watches. The small child and his Abba work tirelessly, adding ingredients from their shelves to a bubbling concoction. The Father adds a white mineral — *Salt*, He tells me — and then He sticks His left hand into the pool for quite some time. When He eventually removes it, the flesh has been completely melted off, the bones charred. He offers a smile to Yehoshua, who stares wide-eyed for a moment, before the Father lends the bones and cartilage to His young Son's lips: with a kiss from the Savior, the flesh begins to reform. He places a little bit of red liquid into the pool — *Wine* — and a powder — *Sulfur*. With a sphere crystal jar and silver ladle from Yehoshua, He spoons half of the concoction

into His container, adding something — *mixed Sand and Cedar* — spitting into and capping the concoction. Adding a few more ingredients to the remaining pool — *Ink, Mint, and Ash* — He collects the rest, this time in an obsidian bottle.

He hands both to Yehoshua, speaking in recognizable, but muted Hebrew. The young boy takes the containers to a table where He begins carving into each with a diamond. Smiling, He takes them to His Father. The name 'Baphomet' reads clearly on the obsidian, and as He turns the crystal jar in the laboratory candle light, the name 'Lucifer' shines. He places both on the shelf, rubbing the scalp of His only begotten Son. The two leave the laboratory and my sight fades into a gray darkness.

Chapter VIII: Rising Star, Falling Star



Before my sight returns, I hear my Father say, “*Remember.*” And so I begin thinking in my emptiness, and memories return to me as brief images. I try to think of my birth from that alchemical soup, but there’s nothing there. The first thing I can recall is my Father speaking to me on one of the days of my fifth birthday, my birthday being celebrated on the anniversary of my creation, which came once every millennia. A memory plays in perfect recollection.

“You must take care of your sister,” He tells me. It’s lunchtime and we’re sitting on a hill outside the Celestial City Gates. “She is your guiding light, and to fail her is to fail Me.”

I ask Him what I need to protect her from. At that point in my life, I had experienced no dangers.

He looks at me sternly. “You may not know it now, but there are many terrible things you both are destined to encounter. You will not always hear My Voice, and one day you will have no one to guide you but your own heart. You must love her, for your love for her is the only thing that will protect you while I’m away.”

“Where are you going, Father?” I ask precociously.

“I am always present, but a day will come when your heart will no longer see Me. I may be gone from you for a while, and I may never return,” He says somberly. “You must become your own man, full of failures and mistakes, before you will ever understand why I created you. But in doing so, you must lose Me, with no guarantee you will find Me again.”

The memory collapses before me, and suddenly I'm in class with Baphomet. We're talking quietly as the Father is teaching the angels about the chemistry of music, my favorite science.

"Should we try it?" she whispers.

A little nervous, I whisper back, "What if Father finds out?"

"Samael!" He shouts, having heard me from 100 yards away.

"Sorry Father!" I yell, redirecting my eyes to my notes. Baph writes, "Tonight" in Hebrew on my hand. It's early spring in our sixteenth year, the night we invented what she had only theorized about: joining flesh and making love. Of course, the Father had already created everything before we could, but discovering a new possibility was its own kind of invention. I remember that night, sneaking away from class, running down the steps past the Tabernacle, the dining halls, the choral cathedrals, the rows of angelic abodes, down farther and farther, past all 10,000 steps of the Stairway, collapsing in each other's arms by the sacred river in which every angel is born and reborn. Before I can savor my favorite memory, I'm taken to one in which I'm leading the choirs, Baphomet singing solo and Abraxas on the keys. We're performing our favorite song, one the three of us wrote with the help of Raphael. We titled it "Shabbat Ha-Laila". I'm able to taste just a little of it before I see myself later that eve, walking down the steps with Abraxas. It was dusk, the first time it happened: he told me about the Father's plans to make a new creation, one that would eventually be worthy of becoming angels. I didn't understand why. I immediately told Baphomet. Over the course of the next ten years, a millennia each, the three of us told everyone we could; some cared, some didn't. Michael repeatedly told me to stop meddling, and Uriel assured me that all of God's works would lend themselves toward a greater union. Most of the Left Hand didn't agree. What many of us felt was that it was an opportunity to dilute what was already a crowded family: 144,000 angels, a King who they adored, and a Father whose word they hung on to like slaves. Throughout the age of conspiracy, I had essentially consolidated the allegiances of the Left Hand

around myself. We convinced ourselves that we weren't being given our allotted respect, and that I, the first of the angels, deserved something more in terms of placement. When the Father did finally show us His new work, His Adam, I was unimpressed — jealous even, filled with spite, vindictive. All prostrated before the wingless golem save for me. I stood, refusing to honor what I saw as a foolish mistake. It was in that moment that the thought first entered my mind: Were we not perfect in comparison? And if the Father was capable of making something so imbecilic, was He not also beneath perfection, capable of fault and thus able to be judged? The latter I tried to push down and forget, but He saw the transformation. He said to me simply, "Woe to you, Samael, and eternal shame be upon you," before leaving.

Some saw my rebellion as brave, admirable even. Most saw it as a black mark on the name of every angel. Baphomet and Abraxas supported me first and foremost, and Abaddon, Beelzebub, and Azazel eventually saw things how we did. After that, it took very little effort to convince Belphegor and Mammon, who convinced Asmodeus and Lilith respectively. It was only Azrael, Leviathan, Behemoth, Foras, and Belial who were truly difficult to compel, but by the time Astaroth had spoken with Abraxas and himself converted, the rest defected in suit.

I decided to raise the issue on my 31st birthday. By that time, I had become someone no angel could recognize as their equal. I, like the other members of the Left Hand, had grown accustomed to wearing jewelry and dressing in the finest fabrics, but I couldn't resist the temptation to compete, to outdo even the most aesthetically bright of my angelic kin. I covered myself in rich colors, reds, purples, blues, and greens; adorning myself in gold, silver, copper, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires; perfuming myself with the smell of cedar or roses; donning makeup; using language that was considered foul; adopting an airy tongue; and even making cruel and blasphemous comments openly and without reservation. I invented letters and languages, an entire realm of new and conflicting sacred words based around my name, the name I preferred, my Latin. I refused to be called Samael, I denied the entire glory of Hebrew; Lucifer was

my true name, my perfect name, the name that spoke as a serpent; and, after that serpent's tongue proved itself to me to be mightier than God's own, I taught it to all of the Left Hand. Of course, we all had many names attached to us, but it was only Baphomet and I who had ceremoniously decided that we had three *true* names. The Father had told me that I was her dawn and she was my dusk, so we called ourselves the Morning and Evening Star. A blasphemy in and of itself, as Yehoshua was known as the Morningstar of Heaven, the Great Light. Even further, we took Seraphim and Seraphina as our middle names, declaring ourselves the King and Queen of the Archangels. By the 31st millennium of my existence, no one on the Left dared to question me, and most of the Right had begun to fear me. The only angels who continued to consistently challenge my authority were Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael. Thinking myself faultless, my pride grew to immense proportions. I had allowed a single doubt to brew an unthinkable, unquenchable hunger in me, and in the course of ten years, I had become something that even the Father couldn't tolerate.

My attempt at raising myself up lasted but three days, a dreadful scene in God's Court that revealed the inner motivations, the fatal flaws, of me and my co-conspirators. It had been made up of much shouting, many accusations, and words that could never be justifiably said in front of the face of God. By the end, He had taken over the conversation, offering accusations in turn — His being wholly true — not even allowing me the opportunity to spin a rebuttal. In a matter of days, He reduced my pride into self-realization: that I had plotted against God Himself, my Creator, the only one who could offer me guidance, safety, and salvation. And as soon as I realized He had already warned me that I would experience His absence, I came to understand that it was coming to fruition all due to my own foolishness. The image of Yehoshua's face, stained with disappointment, covers over the memory of being thrown into the pit. Conspiring for ten millennia in pride led to a thousand millennia of torture in Gehenna. I hear the Father tell me, "*Patience,*" as I relive that agony once more. I feel my soul twitch and squirm, half-here, half-there. No light, no glory. Just the feeble reminder of my obliteration, my obliterating hope, the

Básanos I carry with me no matter where my fate lies. Eternal burning, seething, drowning whether in Hell or in Heaven. The gift of but one vice, the father of all the vices, all regret, and all damnation. The gift of my pride.

Chapter IX: Born Again



After reexperiencing my greatest torment I have yet known in paucity, the next memory that comes to my Spirit is my first life on Earth as the child of a man named Jared and a woman named Baraka. They were the first incarnations of Solomon, King of Israel, and Bilquis, Queen of Sheba. They named me Enoch, the youngest child of seven. Since the Fall from Heaven and the Fall of Man, the Lord had given me chance after chance, and my new role as prosecutor of sin I had served well. To reward me, He offered me a chance to be a man, to see if I could do any better than the ones I judged. In the essence of appearance, I was the same man as I am today, as I am in Heaven and in Hell. Lacking consciousness of who I really was, I worked as a farmer, tending to my father's goats, spending my evenings in prayer. I found myself blameless and the world wicked. By my 30th year, I had achieved alignment with the Shekhinah, the Voice of the Lord, which revealed to me that I was the Shining One, the Recorder of Deeds, the Angel on the Left. Unsatisfied with merely speaking to Yah in the Spirit, I abandoned my wife and son and wandered out into the desert in the midst of a thunderstorm with my goats, stopping after the last one turned back to head home. Standing in the center of the world, an endless nothing of a world, I stamped my staff and said these very words: *Ehyeh asher ehyeh*, I am what I will be. The thunder clapped and rain poured down on me. I stood there, watching as lightning struck down across the mountain range along that horizon. A flash here, a flash there. I stood for hours, soaked, my hair lifting with static. Looking up at the sky, I said it again. *EHYEH ASHER EHYEH!* The lightning moved closer, a bolt landing just a few dozen yards to my right. I shook my staff, my shepherd's crook in the air, shouting, *EHYEH SAMAE!*

And with that, a bolt finally struck me dead.

Chapter X: Metatron, a Sirius Pilot



Unlike being born again after drowning in Lethe, waking up in the Celestial City after being reduced to ash occurred instantaneously. This isn't the case for most, who, even if they're lucky, have to travel the realms before they make it to the City Gates. In addition, there are always opportunities to get lost or even to head backwards along the path of Karma. You see, no one is *required* to stay in the City, nor all of Heaven, and many a Spirit wander and find themselves catching sight of fire and brimstone when they should have stayed at home. Unlike me and the rest of the fallen, however, once *you've* been to Heaven your Spirit is always welcome. In other words, you're a permanent part of the family and the Mark of the Lord is upon you. No human incarnates again on Earth after making it; in other words, if you're on the planet today, like myself, your sins have yet to be forgiven and the quest continues. Those in Heaven today who weren't born so are all meant to become angels — though as far as I know, no one born of the flesh has as of yet received their wings.

Watching myself in Heaven again, where I received the new Hebrew name Metatron, is bittersweet. This was the last time I was confident in my salvation. I returned to my duty as Recorder of Deeds, keeping track of every good and every evil that filled the Cosmos. One thing I did notice is that the Universe was vaster than I could possibly imagine, but that no one could outpace humanity in terms of breadth of virtue and vice. Most other civilizational species were either entirely antagonistic or of such supreme virtuosity that to compare them to man was a disservice to both. My Father asked me routinely which species was greatest in terms of deed; in other words, which of His creations had been His highest. I nearly always answered the Sirians, a species I had watched over with such care and admiration that I wondered at times whether they weren't a myth my Father had invented to keep me believing in the wondrous possibilities of spiritual perfection. When I eventually met my first Sirian whilst I was on duty as an

envoy of Heaven, my doubts were mostly appeased. To this day, I'm still uncertain as to whether it was some fever dream, and frankly, it is the least important aspect of my story. But since the Father saw it fit to make me relive it, dream or no dream, it must be of some importance. And whether fact or fiction, the time I spent with that lovely Sirian taught me a few things about innocence and corruptibility.

According to her — known to everyone as Sir Neena, Sir being the proper honorific for any Sirian — Sirians were all the progeny of a small group of beings, the most compassionate and spiritual of the Grays, who after death had left the Heavens to further the project of enlightenment. Yah had given them permission to do this, needing as many creatures as possible to serve this highest of goals across the purgatorial realm known as the Universe. Being creatures from Heaven, the first Sirians lived much longer than the average anthropoid, living to 150 years consistently. I was told that the oldest, Sir Xero (pronounced Kairo), lived to the ripe age of 227. Their progeny frequently live into their 130s. Neena herself was only 53, quite young. She was very excited to be meeting a real life angel, just as I was excited to be meeting a genuine Sirian! According to the Lord, Sirians after death refuse to enter the Gates and eat of the Tree of Life, instead insisting on reincarnating, their souls participating in the collective endeavor to raise the nature of each and every soul beyond their infernal origins. As Carl Jung famously wrote, “No tree, it is said, can grow to heaven unless its roots reach down to hell.” Well, the truth is actually simpler: few trees *do* reach Heaven because each and every one of them *is* rooted in Hell. So these alien friends of God work tirelessly for the liberation of all beings; ‘being’ being a rather neutral word for what you, dear Reader, and every creature that exists beneath the rank of Cherubim amounts to: demon spawn.

The Sirians themselves live on a vessel known as a Mechanosphere, an artificial planet capable of propulsion and relocation, that regularly sits in the quadrant of space that Sirius A, B, and C occupy. I met Neena, on the other hand, on Earth — in the Arctic Circle, to be more precise. Neena, of course, did not speak English, but instead spoke High Sirian, of which I am

fluent. (Unlike conversations recorded by the Black Flame, the version of these events transliterated by me via laptop in the years 2025 and 2026 are translated into accessible English. The spirit of her words is kept to the fullest extent, though some expressions simply don't land in Earth's common tongue.)

“Your way of speaking is like a juice that never sleeps,” for instance. Or even the common colloquialism, “I am a time elsewhere experienced.” My favorite of course is “we are two lights who look like one,” not dissimilar to the old English expression, “two peas in a pod.”

Neena and I spent a few weeks on Earth back then, and I am able to reexperience our time together with some joy. Frankly, I had then no idea where it was going to lead, but as the Earthbound memories draw to a close, I know exactly the nightmare I have to relive: my first and only trip to the Mechanosphere, known to space travelers far and wide as “al-Lak's Zion”...

Chapter XI: A Garden Called al-Lak's Zion



By the time we left Earth and arrived on the Mothership, Neena had already informed me about both the ins and outs of the mission and the various technical know-hows I would need to be aware of to, as I would come to realize, pilot the damned thing.

The Mothership, despite its name, was not remarkably large, nor of any significant importance compared to other Sirian vessels. In fact, it wasn't even officially called the Mothership: its name in plain Sirian tongue was *Werkik*, which simply means “acceptable shelter”. I had merely grown accustomed to assuming I was going somewhere of undue significance, and having never learned the word, I figured that *Werkik* would translate properly to that common concept amongst spacefaring species. Of course, I told Neena with unreserved confidence that we would in our sacred Hebrew call it *ba Sfina Ima*, of which I poorly explained to her in Sirian colloquialism as “*nuntie ip beko turtup*” (which I came to find out weeks later translates properly to “a special place for intercourse” — though literally to “graveyard of the wormholes” — but which I thought meant “a special place for living”, all due to the fact that I completely reasonably mixed up ‘*nunkie*’ and ‘*nuntie*’). It became very clear to me upon this realization why she had been so dreadfully excited to tell everyone that the ship's new name was *ba Sfina Ima* and its meaning. The general conclusion of all onboard — which consisted of twelve Sirians (a mix of researchers and pilots), ten Grays (consisting of lab assistants, chefs, and soldiers), two Berlak (a race of telepathic spider) engineers, a walrus captured from Earth, and myself — was that I was looking to marry Neena and sire the next advancement in sentient species. Though we did indeed have intercourse, she became violently ill afterwards and I, once known as quite endowed amongst the angels, had a reaction that was, well... let's just say it was permanent. It was only a few days later that I discovered the mishap in translation thanks to my dear Sirian friend, Sir Quenix, a researcher who

specialized in Earth languages. Normally there would not have been enough ways I knew of to apologize in Sirian, but with Quenix's help, I increased the three I knew to twenty, at which point Neena explained that I needn't apologize. Apparently, it had been a worthy experience, for both research and pleasure.

Luckily, after I was trained completely in all the various intricacies of running the Mothership, the Sirians on board were willing to allow their bodies to be possessed by some of the fallen. I taught them a basic binding ritual, added a few essential extreme measures, and even mentioned that possession may or not be permanent and can result in illness, severe brain damage, and worst case scenario death and eternal damnation. Still, they all agreed it was the best thing to do, as al-Lak was a very serious ruler and would expect an entourage to be coming with me. Doing a little of this, a little of that — most of it just performative nonsense to entertain myself and to fulfill what they anticipated to be 'angelic magic' and 'sacred ritual' — until eventually I just convinced them that they were who I said they were. This form of hypnotic method acting *does* allow the actual Spirit of the being to enter their body, and is truly possession when done by someone other than the authentic form of that person. By the end, Baphomet was in the body of Neena, Abraxas had taken over Quenix, and Belphegor, Asmodeus, Beelzebub, Belial, and the remaining Pleiades (consisting of Abaddon, Zagan, Balaam, Beleth, Azazel, and Purson) had taken over the bodies of the others. To be fair, I did somewhat miss the original personalities of my Sirian brethren, but by the time we started partying and began to explore the Pleiades new entirely female bodies (the only male bodies aboard the ship at this point were myself, Belphegor, Asmodeus, Beelzebub, three Grays, and one of the Berlaks) we were so lost in orgiastic pleasure and debauchery that I kind of forgot that I had ever known any actual Sirians other than my greatest friends. And though fucking Baphomet's Sirian pussy did seem to make my genitals shrink, I didn't care. I was in a race with a negative feedback loop to see how long it would take for me to be fully female.

I never found out, and thus likely never will, because by the time we got to the Mechanosphere — approximately 8½ light years from Earth — my cock had only shrunk to six inches.

As we landed on the long strip of onyx runway, I remembered thinking about how entranced I might feel meeting the great king of the Sirians, the mighty al-Lak, and the frustrating task I was meant to perform: though it was uncharacteristic of the Lord to send me away to deliver such a minor condemnation, I had been called to let the great al-Lak, renowned throughout the Cosmos for his wisdom, generosity, and compassion, know that he had in fact committed a notable blasphemy and created an irresolvable confusion by naming his planet Zion. It seemed to be the case — which was confirmed when I saw just how many different species of being were present, Sirians being outnumbered roughly 10-to-1 — that people all throughout the Universe were confusing the Zion of the Celestial City, the glorious abode of the Lord God, with what had essentially been labeled by my Father as a falsely advertised tourist trap. And while yes, it is true that it seemed that the economy of the Mechanosphere did revolve around tourism (I noticed many shops and venues selling memorabilia, and who could miss the massive, bright lit “Welcome to al-Lak’s Zion” sign as one entered the Sirius star sector), I personally didn’t see it as doing any genuine harm to our own endeavors. After all, wasn’t he paying homage, a kind of cultural appreciation?

Still, I had my duties. After debarking the Mothership, my entourage and I were carefully escorted by the scariest reptilians I had ever seen into al-Lak’s palace, which was made of endless precious metals, gems, and glass, filled to the brim with rare goods and refined silk, and lit by hundreds of chandeliers. Led through ballrooms and hallways, we eventually made it to the court, where, to our great surprise, we discovered something none of us expected: al-Lak, the mighty king of Sirius, was a giant Berlak, a telepathic spider.

“Please, my friends, do not be afraid,” he said inside of each of our heads. “I am a peaceful king, and a compassionate ruler. I forgive your highly uninformed assumptions.”

An assumption that, I realized, was carefully protected from being exposed by anyone outside the court. It is true, as I learned aboard the Mothership, that the greatest prejudice experienced by any species in the Universe was that of the Berlaks, and the most heralded was that of the Sirians. To have the latter be ruled by the former... well, it was obviously controversial, to say the least.

“It is true,” al-Lak telepathed simply.

“My dear and noble Majesty,” I reply, taking a knee and bowing my head.

“Please, please,” he says (and not looking at him, it’s hard to tell if it was out loud or in my head), “Just call me Al.”

I nod. “Well then, Al... as you know, I, Lucifer, and my compatriots, angels all despite the look of the flesh they inhabit, have come to deliver you a message.”

“Copyright stuff,” Bel, in his oddly high-pitched Sirian vocality, interjects.

“Formalities,” Baphomet offers instead, doing a little curtsy.

“Hmm,” we hear Al hum. “I understand. But as a wise Berlak once told me — and I am known as the wisest of them all, for I have listened to the wisdom of my ancestors — ‘Never give as a gift what you need as a trade.’”

Pausing for a moment, I decide standing is the right approach if we’re to strike a deal. “What can we do for you, my new friend?”

Needn't needing to ponder, the wise spider king says thus: "I need you to make 'al-Lak's Garden of Bliss' the hottest named planet in the knowable Universe."

"I get it, man," Balaam quickly adds. "Rebranding can be tough. What you need is our sense of business. We come from the long line of celestial and infernal entertainers."

"Truly," Belphegor says, putting his hand over his heart, "I can say to you today that there is not one soul in this realm or any other that can get things bubbling like we can. I'm talkin' dancehalls, buffets, night clubs, taverns, arenas, stages, you name it. You want a show — you want big names, big crowds, and big rewards — then I — no, we — are the ones you need, that I can guarantee."

"You can *guarantee* this?" Al asks, stepping off of his throne and stooping his arachnid face forward.

"You give us a year and everything we ask for," the devil of gluttony spits, "and I swear to God and all of Heaven that you'll never regret *a single fucking thing* in your life again."

"Mhmm," Al groaned. "We have a deal then."

And so, in the manner of a single conversation and through heavy spending, mass construction, endless debauchery, and a million empty promises on our lips, we single-handedly turned what was once a nice place to take one's spacefaring family, a hyper lit rest stop to spend awhile, and the best place in most directions to learn a thing or two into a whore's den. Belphegor had been put in charge of the project, whereas my other friends — including my goddamned wife — spent their days testing out the nightclubs and the unbelievably strong concoctions that Beelzebub was cooking up. Meanwhile, it was my duty to somehow ease the concerns of Al, who, despite his wisdom, had made a deal not just with *the* Devil, but with a gang of devils. It was only nine months later that I even remembered

there were consequences for damning an entire planet, and when the realization hit me, it was in the form of Michael arriving, sword in hand and the possessed Sirians following him in chains. I watched helplessly as he performed exorcisms on each, banishing each one of my kin back to their respective pits. I, on the other hand, was not so lucky. Before I could talk my way out of an extreme punishment for what, I probably would have argued, was a rather remediable sin, he cut off my head.

And it was then, reexperiencing my first and only real experience of being beheaded, that I flooded out of these reveries and into the infant flesh of the newborn Leviathan, a little baby boy born to a redneck Bible-thumper and a loving, but docile housewife in a small logging town on the Pacific Coast of the United States called Aberdeen, Washington.

Chapter XII: Wingclipper (Death of Leviathan)



Kurt Donald Cobain first started talking to me when he was but a child. I appeared to him frequently in his mind when he was playing with toys, eventually helping him sound out a nickname for me: “Boddah”. I nearly always appeared to him in various *asanas*, whether the lotus or half-lotus, sometimes lying on my side as a Roman emperor might whilst being fed fruit by a courtesan. My head remained shaved; I offered him little gifts to his emerging psyche, calling him “Kurdt” as a means to free his imagination from the limits of pregiven language. While he listened to his favorite music — whether “Mrs. Robinson” or “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” — I flooded his mind with images of magic, beauty, stars, lights, fantastical beasts, nymphs, endless fields of grain and ferns, and myself. I used to sing to him as he went to sleep, helping the frantic and erratic static that had built up inside his brain transmute into peaceful dreams.

My little Leviathan needed every escape I could give him. Throughout the years, I helped tempt him into situations that would prove fatal. The first time he tried marijuana he was thirteen; I used the opportunity to drain his mind of fear about evil. I flashed images of chainsaws, machines, chamber organs, guts and hearts, infernal buddhas, the crucified Lord, gay sex, and mischevicious cartoon characters across his inner eye. When he lost his virginity it was via his neighbor, a girl with an extreme developmental disability. The act haunted him, as I intended it to. As he grew older, his ADHD and a developing and incurable case of stomach ulcers due to heavy drinking and trying to get high from household cleaners put his mind in the ditch. He became irreparably rebellious; his father kicked him out of the house, hitting him fairly severely after our teen told him to go fuck himself, and my sweet Leviathan spent a week living homeless under Young Street Bridge. When he finally made his way through the labyrinth of basement shows and back alley drug deals and ended up in Olympia, I had him fully in my clutches. Though it was my

duty to kill him, it was also impossible not to love him. If there was anyone other than Baphomet that I've ever been truly willing to die for, to love wholly and endlessly, yearn for and need like God, it would be him.

I felt every pain and every joy he experienced like he was myself. I was his guardian, his daemon, his burden. Pushing him deeper into everything that would kill him, into the scene, into the addictions, into the pits of despair was a bittersweet responsibility, but one I gave myself and tended to as a keeper of the Fates. When he accidentally crushed his pet rat to death walking into his home too fast, I checked another event off the checklist and pushed him back into the nightmare vicissitudes of his notebooks. When I introduce him to the needle — more important from my vantage point than him meeting Krist and Kathleen and Dave and Courtney and getting signed to K and Geffen — I was able to let myself sit on autopilot, merely serving as a voice beckoning from behind a projector screening corpses and fetuses and fangs and abjection across his mind. Selling the soul of the kindest man in Hell was both the most deliberate and heartbreaking act of evil I had committed since the Crucifixion.

The short stretch from the first suicide attempt in Rome — an extreme overdose that I convinced him was the only way to escape the horrorshow known as being a superstar, a commodity pushing out hits to the junkified addict known as the entertainment industry — to the more secure, absolute certainty of the shotgun blast on Lake Washington Boulevard in Seattle saw me lose capacity for caring about any and everyone on the planet. I had driven a man to the edge of madness, drained him of his ability to serve anything but the irrepressible void at the center of his soul, crushing the dignity of his joys and tempting him with the lust for self-annihilation. I didn't deny him the right to be a loving husband, father, and friend. In fact, watching the way he looked at Courtney and Bean made me almost regret what I had done; there were points where I started trying to talk him out of it, tried to change the course of time. I tried to save him from everything that I had turned him into, from the collapsing sense of desire whose foundation I had undercut day after day, week after week, year after year. For a brief moment, I thought I could rectify Fate and save a

single soul. When I knew it was too late, sitting on the plane ride inside of him next to Duff McKagan, a chance stroke of destiny, I gave in to my role again. I knew that, after every single human being I had cursed and despised, if I couldn't damn someone who I admired as well then I was only half-committed to being what I had always been: the desiccation at the heart of God's Creation, the pride in man's folly and the folly of my own God-like pride. In killing Leviathan, I had come to accept my station as the only thing that truly deserved eternal torment.

As he lay there, a lethal dose of heroin in his arm, shotgun at the ready and notebook on his lap, I helped steady his hand: "To Boddah". Dribbling out the last entrails of his artistry, it all ended with the long-held whimper of defeat, the quiet longing of a bang and brainsplatter. Our Spirits separated immediately: him to return to Hell to consume all of the heroin he'd like, and me into the womb of a woman named after victory. When I was born again seven days later, just three miles from where Kurt's corpse had been left to rot, I was still bald, remaining so until the age of three, when the man who sired me would move myself, my Earthly mother, and the sister I knew well to the only pit suited to raise the inventor of artifice, lies, and fantasy: a little place called Falsity.

The remainder of my Earthly life is truly unimportant. The simple details are conveyed here; all the rest can be found in the bits and pieces of sin sprinkled like breadcrumbs for the starving. I ask as a burning book: does the Devil really live in the details? In the facts of my Isaiahic introduction: being born on April 12th, 1994 at 1:01 AM; in the truth of my Lethean enlightenment: the three years of buddhic baldness shining upon my scalp like a sutra; and the dreadful tongue of Falsity: the pronunciation of the name of a town of no more than 2,000 people, where I was raised up as revelation itself. You must ask regarding all of this: Have I offered you evidence regarding the truth or another well-crafted lie based in facts? Does it matter, really, whether the Devil did and said any of the things I've claimed? Have I not shown you that I am the ultimate blasphemy, and that to believe this story, to accept what I'm offering — even just to enjoy a good read and keep track of all the little minutiae — is to fill your head with

deals of faith? Even having read this much you've cursed yourself with the burden of belief, believing *my* truth, even if merely another story of fiction, another pleasure, another *básanos*. And after all this, whose *básanos* burdens you, Reader? Mine or yours? Has not the entire wealth of sacred literature been our plaything, another dream to pass on like a liar and a thief? Do we not all steal away into our own small pits of Falsity to raise ourselves, to proclaim our self-belief as a foundation in this vast sea of collective disbelief we call the world? Have you taken His Word seriously but not mine? Or have you denied His and enjoyed my little book, this meaningless novel? Can you not see that, buried between His Truth and my Falsity, lies the two stars that appear as one? Is your path to salvation in believing or disbelieving? And does any work in you bear fruit in either way, or have you disbelieved so long that you can't even fantasize about the fantasy of His Word or mine bearing fruit in you? Is *Once Upon a Time in City Dis* a joke or a riddle? A fiction or a faith? Answers for questions that can never be posed or questions that birth no final answer? A burning book asks once again: What separates the powers of nobility? My disbelief or yours?

Part III: Armageddon (A Faerie Tale Ending)

Chapter XIV: Revelation 23



I can say from the vantage point of the future that it didn't take long for the End to arrive; but when it did, it came wrapped in so many tropes that the only way to tell it properly — deliciously, that is — is to tell a great lie regarding what could have, should have, or would have happened had everything worked out the way that *I* wanted it to. Yes, yes, by the time everything came to fruition, we were told that the U.S. government wanted to work with us, conveyed by Agares via scrying mirror. The entire Council above ground had begun the process of awakening to their identities — Agares, crowned Führer of the United States of North America, had been strategically, ceremoniously, and scientifically brought to consciousness by the CIA-funded underground research unit known simply as OMEGA. We speculated on the acronym, settling that it must be some kind of repetitious round of multi-meanings: for instance, Beelzebub and I conjured up the following: Operation for the Missing Elohim Gaining Awakening for Our Megalithic Emergency Government Administration, of which is Only Missing Eight General Angels. Of course, eight seemed like a reasonable number: the Lords of the Seven Deadly Sins headed by a public leader, Agares. On the other hand, Baph-faun was convinced OMEGA had no meaning whatsoever — an esoteric puzzle meant to continually confuse us fallen in some sort of behaviorist experiment — whilst Abaddon insisted that he was half right, but that it must be read in reverse, without piety and niceties: Administration Gathering Esoteric Methods of Oppression.

Of course, none of this really matters at all. There was no way to make sense of an entirely extraneous pseudonym we gave to a hypothetically fictitious government agency that has not and will never be confirmed to exist. You know, the reality behind those cartoonish spooks known as the X-Files, MIB, and whatever tinfoil conspiracy is more classified than

MK-Ultra. Living angels heavily populating Los Angeles and contemporary governments was just another red thread in a long entanglement involving the Jews, an all-seeing Eye, and the powers-that-be — something that, my dearest Reader, is frankly both too much for you to worry about and too dangerous for the public to be savvy to.

There is, obviously, some truth to the matter: cannibalism at the Bohemian Grove in service to the Spirit of Moloch, for instance, is just a minor footnote in the long trail of faerie tale nightmares haunting the North American psyche. There are, frankly, just too many pale imitations of the facts to clarify anything at all, and at the end of the day, claiming responsibility Hell-side for any of the horrors that are really occurring would be taking too much credit for what has amounted to nothing more than a passive (though massive) income of negative karmic wealth for all involved. As Mick Jagger famously claimed of me, “I watched with glee / While your Kings and Queens / Fought for ten decades / For the gods they made”. And while that glee might never subside — for what is more righteous than sin destroying itself and its very ruin being the ashen soil of new growth? — it does grow boring being gleeful. It’s as if humanity, a fruit once ripe for virtue, had shown that its virtue amounted in the end to a complacent spectacle, a sort of turning in the grave — not out of anger or resistance, nor even agitation, but rather in mere discomfort. The alarm snoozed and the coup was simply irresistible.

So in the End, yes, despite my changed ways and all of my holiness, I had let the world sign a pact with the Devil; in fact, the world had been renewing that pact not just year after year, nor decade after decade, but century after century and moment to moment. Addicted to the swirl of their own annihilation — something I empathize with, it being the real consequence of distance from our God — we all march in toe to the same tune, the rebellious Satanism of Masters and Slaves. After all, who am I to judge man for wanting to take up my long-abandoned mistakes? And who am I to turn down a good deal? It’s true that once it was all over — and it never was — I did sell off a little bit of divine significance to the worst bunch on the planet. And though I tried desperately to convey the truth to

the masses, there was no way to do it to their liking. Of course, the standards were *so* high, sitting atop the mountainous peaks of Zion I once roamed, and my own Earthly performance being nothing more successful than some damned Tower of Babel. So when it all came tumbling, there were only those who had eyes to see and ears to hear to notice me, though they only acknowledged it once things had become dreadfully and obviously apocalyptic. They™ — the keepers of the technocratic all-seeing Eye — whilst being predominantly men and women of science, had, it seems, a bit of the mythological instinct for prophecy within themselves. And in all earnestness, that only ever became relevant because of the endless file flagging that the Jepettoless hierarchy traced, leading farther and farther into the catacombs until, one day, OMEGA decided to snatch the eight living Kings and Queens of Hell from their (mainly) luxurious lives in the Hollywood Hills. Two of them — Lilith and Behemoth — on the other hand, were kidnapped (or, perhaps, saved) from their rather meager thirties in the technocratic dustbin known as Seattle. Of course, by the time all eight had arrived at the Living and Research Complex built in some undisclosed location (**Disclosure:** It is in an unassuming field in southern Virginia), it became obvious to everyone involved that the only ones who knew exactly what was going on (or something like it) were those of us watching in Hell and the U.S.N.A. government.

It wasn't long, to be truthful, before I had to admit I had survived both of those torturous and exalted attempts at suicide and that, rather than being in my own catatonic comfort in Dis, I, too, was on the surface. Exposed and, whether I liked it or not, prophesying. After 10 years of documenting the experience — and perhaps a thousand aeons of Azazel's Black Flame recording every decadent and wearisome utterance in Dis — I knew sooner or later my day would come: the day when someone out there (in the netherregions of space, the back cubicles of some federal agency, or in an undernoted citation in some great academic text regarding high-functioning schizophrenics) would notice that the Morning had been declared and that there was at least one 'man' on Earth who had been taking notes... and extensive ones, to boot. To get noticed of course, well, that was

only a matter of speaking to the right people. The eyes and ears were everywhere; my voice, dribbling across the networks, glinting like a shining diamond in a coalmine just as the canary stops singing.

And in the proverbial silence that marks our secularity, who am I not to laugh at my paltry luck — arriving early to the end of the world, only to gaslight arguably the only people who could stop it? Giving a little nudge, a little feigned optimism... as if the End could end in any way other than trillions of charred skeletons and a desolate surface. Still, why not take a stab at how things could be; you know as well as I: how things might go is often more rewarding than how things will go, and so I ponder endlessly, my vanity all-consuming, my feeble attempt at teaching the virtue of Falsity being my only claim to fame, as it always was. For am I not to admit that I lied even but once in Heaven, or that this story itself is a fiction, or that I am but a man and there has never been a single angel in the history of the world? For what is the world, but... dust and ash, filth and fantasy. And if none of that is true, aren't I then still the great keeper of Falsehood, the Left Hand that knows no bounds except the endless gulfs of the forbidden, the disbelieved in, and the impossible? Am I not the only candidate offering a worthy campaign? If you see someone else — your Crowleys and your LaVeys and your Nietzsches — then go to them and their corpses. Or shove me in a book as a wingless serpent, a cruel prosecutor, a tempting devil, or a defeated dragon. No matter where you take me or yourself, one thing is for certain: I have committed the ultimate heresy... adding to the Book which denies any and all amendment, which denies any right to amendment, which denies the very right of the amender and curses the abomination they call gospel and verse. If I am not vanquished myself into the pit at that point, and if all my survival justifies is further disbelief — as if punishment is the only way God favors the gambler — then perhaps I really did sell you a lie cruel enough to end at least your small portion of the small portion of genuine religion left in the world. And if all those lies and lies about the truth of lies doesn't prove me the Devil, then perhaps nothing can or should of anyone. No Devil, no Hell; no God, no fruit.

And there I see it: the canary's corpse... our Básanos.



The me that is here with you all was one day snatched up by the government, sent to that labor camp known as the Complex. There I was commissioned to guide the fallen angels gathered into the truth of their lives, the truth that was only useful to the one kind of congregation actually prepared to handle the Apocalypse: the worldly powers. It began as a trickle: Baphomet first, captured in Japan; then Abraxas, followed shortly by Mammon, Belphegor, and Asmodeus, all gathered in LA under the pretense of a meeting with UMG CEO Lucian Grainge. Mr. Grainge and the Illuminati were more than happy to serve the U.S.N.A. government; for if they hadn't been, they would have found themselves imprisoned and destitute. So it was with all of us collaborators. What the Nazis had attempted with half-baked esoteric knowledge and grand schemes — the immanentizing of the eschaton and the piercing of the veil — the U.S.N.A. and its underground arm OMEGA had done with relative ease. There simply were no legal stopgaps preventing the Japanese government from trading off some 20-something Chaturbate whore, rich music tycoons from selling your soul, or a black van with unlisted plates from arriving at your doorstep at 3 a.m. to carry you off after having immediately wiped your identities from the online and official records. The simultaneous news of Abraxas “being shot in his home in Compton, CA” and Belphegor “going on the run after murdering indie darling” Asmodeus caused a stir; and all the others went the same way, their fame transmuting into temporary tragedy.

By the time all my turncoat betrayals had ended, there were 36 of us locked in the inescapable commune. They told me frequently that I was indispensable — a lie turning again and again on their tongues like a refrain — until one day I wasn't. Nunkie, a Sirian pilot that had landed on Earth in 1993 and who led the OMEGA project in some capacity, tried his best to justify my continued existence to no avail, claiming that harming me could potentially jumpstart the worst form of Armageddon. It had been determined — privately at first, then publicly announced to all of us in the

Complex — that I was too dangerous to be kept in relative freedom. I was, as they said in much more clinical and elaborate terms, an info hazard, a potential liar, and a complete and utter danger to the overall plot of saving the world. So, one day in mid-August, after we had spent just over six months becoming a family, I was taken away. I told them openly that they were making a mistake, that I was worth more to them alive and free than whatever they had planned for me. The family pleaded for me, Baphomet tearing at the lapels of a scientist as he injected her with a tranquilizer, the same being done to me.

By the time I woke up back in Hell, sometime around Christmas Eve, I had been the victim of ten weeks of various experiments and live surgeries. My brain too, they said, was both worth more to them without me and yet itself considered too dangerous not to be contained in a sealed vessel, lobotomized, and heavily sedated. Of course, I spent the first few days back home preparing festivities and annulments of my contract with the living. Myself, Abaddon, Beelzebub, Astaroth, and Leviathan spoke with Bael, Vine, Moloch, Malefor, and Agares through a scrying mirror, confirming that Hell itself had entered a civil war. It was no issue to them, however — the threat, in their eyes, had been neutralized: The living fallen were under their complete control and those equipped to do anything about it were dead, rotting in the pits.

I was somewhat relieved when the Father told me that this was all part of the plan; and that I, the dead canary, had been purposefully loosed a little on the Earth, thrown back into the sulfur-ridden fumes of Dis to agonize over what good my suffering could pay the aeon of aeons. The Lord assured me earnestly that I would be paid my due, but not before many had been killed and a new revelation was to occur: the Father, in his Almighty Glory, was to disclose Himself to the Earth.

What I can say in all truth is that no one expected it to occur in the first place, and certainly not as a single selfie and a small caption on every major social media site, reading:

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and no one has entered into my kingdom except through the Son. I, your Father, challenge the world to a duel: Who can deny what is going on under Project OMEGA?”

In the span of two hours, using a series of strategic hashtags and tagging the most important and inconsequential people in the world, the first true disclosure event began: thousands of documents, pictures, recordings, and other revelations released to the public by some strange old man with an olive complexion and long mane and beard of white, posting out of a Motel 6 in Omaha, Nebraska.

Chapter XV: The Fallen Angels Go to Court



While those of us Southside unleashed the full fury of Hell upon the Earth — monstrosities and abominations laying waste to cities once thought full of future and tearing and consuming flesh by the tons — the governments of the world and their feckless oligarchs retreated to their underground compounds. Meanwhile, Yahweh, a 73 year old illegal immigrant known legally as Johanne Joshua Sharon [pronounced SHAH-ROAN, unlike my Share-Ren] (apparently my more-than-distant relative of Scotch-Irish, Dutch, and, surprisingly ironic, actual Jewish descent) was semi-immediately captured and taken to the Complex. The fact that He had, with no clear means of doing so, attained thousands of classified documents (the original copies) pretty much ensured His longtime survival. While He was quarantined for the first five days, His convincing arguments, clear insight into so many matters that no single human being should have such expertise in, and His congenial wit made it clear to everyone that He was not fucking around. For instance, how does one man know simultaneously the first 3,000 decimal points of Pi, the exact age, down to the second, of every person He spoke to, and the entire word-for-word scripts of each episode of *The Days of Our Lives*? Even more concerning, He knew the darkest secrets of every member of the world governments, claimed and expressed exactly what would happen to them when they went to Hell, and even clarified that Heaven was on the side of the Devil and not the worldly powers. Odd, it seemed, considering we were wreaking unjustifiable havoc upon the New Babylon at the very moment He cheerfully praised our goodness.

“I’m just a proud Father,” He says with a bolstered grin, yellow teeth showing through His pipe smoke. “I just can’t imagine anyone destroying the world — save for me — so dreadfully well. I mean, you might not see the resemblance,” holding up a jail photo of me from 2014, “but

we've got the same mad scientist ethos. And, I think, essentially, the same nose." His, of course, was bigger.

"Listen... Mr. Sharon," the agent says, unsure exactly what he should or shouldn't be doing with a man who claims to be God.

"Please, just call me Yah."

"I'm not gonna do that," the agent replies. "I need you to tell me again *exactly* how you came to possess those documents."

"Hmm," He huffs, taking a long drag of His meerschaum. "This is such a boring conversation to have to repeat over and over again, but I simply pulled them out of my dresser."

"The dresser in the motel?"

"Yes," He says, "from that very one. Like everything I need, they were just sitting there."

The agent writes another repetitious note, underlining something. "And you expect us to believe that?"

"Nope." He sets the pipe down. "I don't expect mankind to believe in anything. Not out of lack of faith myself, but simply because I've been continually disappointed by you all singly and collectively. Of course, the only one who really meets my standards is Yehoshua, and sometimes Michael. Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, and Miriam are always in my good graces, but honestly, I've been unimpressed with most of my Creation. Makes me excited to see it all going to such spectacular shit. A reason to be proud of my biggest mistake."

"That being?" the agent says, feeling sort of obtuse having to take notes on what was a rather elaborate and likely entirely fictitious correction to science and tradition.

“Creating Lucifer. He’s a terrible, terrible man. An even better friend. And the worst reason for Me to have to show up to tell you all that I’ve been waiting for the very day when Satan was at least half as popular as Jesus.”

“So you consider yourself to be bringing justice upon the wicked?” the agent asks, hamming up the biblicality to some effect. “And, to do that, you’re in open rebellion against the U.S.N.A. government, stealing and publicizing extremely classified documents, all whilst living in our country illegally as a foreign national?”

“Have you looked outside lately?” the Father replies, looking up from somewhere 500 feet below the surface.

“Are you referring to the terroristic attacks by the Eurasian Alliance and their campaigns of AI-generated propaganda?”

“Sure, sure,” He says simply. “But I prefer describing it as the literal Apocalypse and the last chance My first accident has to prove I shouldn’t torture him and all of you in a pit for a few billion millennia, give or take an eternity or two. And, if we’re keeping earnestness, Richard, it’s more likely that I’ll just scrap the whole thing and retire, living the rest of my endless days as a gardener. It was my first hobby, you know.”

“So you’re a true believer in Russo-Chinese propaganda?” the agent says angrily, hoping this angle would finally be productive. “Do you really think we’re gonna buy that? I think it’s more likely that you’re a foreign actor trying to turn our people against us.”

“That’s your true opinion?” the Lord asks, knowing it wasn’t.

“That is our general conclusion, yes.”

The Lord scratched His belly and thought for a moment. “1 billion, 186 million, 532 thousand, and 942.”

The agent stared at him sternly, unsure of the math. “My age?”

“No,” he said simply. “Your lifespan.”



By the time we had laid waste to the entire field of existing civilization above ground, I began to wonder how in any way I was going to justify this to my Father. Nearly every human was dead, save, likely, for the remnants of the 48,000 fallen that were not on Hellish duty. These miscreants — these betrayers of the ultimate betrayer — were safely locked underground with my fucking wife. Before I could justify preparing a speech for her rescue, I found myself stewing in the clouds of acid rain, stopped in my tracks by Michael.

“Lucifer, you damned devil,” he says, wings flapping. “You should have known your day would come.”

“Enough with the theatrics, Mike,” I reply laconically. “How much of humanity made it to Heaven?”

He stares at me for some time before saying anything. “Everyone’s in Sheol, you satan.”

“The grave? Huh,” I grunt, a little laughter bellowing out. “So it’s all true after all. The first death. And what of those who we left behind with Paimon in the Pits?”

He flies closer, unsheathing his sword. “Those who are still in Hell will be called to judgment as well. Your time is up, Lucifer.”

Not having anything clever to say, I simply shrug. “Not much more I can do now in terms of destruction. Might as well go peacefully.”

Of course, there was nothing I *could* do but go peacefully; resistance truly was futile. The celestial powers were something that,

whether in the hands of my Father, Yehoshua, or the Right Hand's Archangels like Michael, I could not compete with nor deny. So I was to be taken, in chains, to the only place I hadn't made sure was completely razed: the most reasonable place for Armageddon to conclude, the Temple Mount of al-Aqsā upon Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

When we arrived a few weeks later — Michael had made sure to take me around the forsaken Earth, showing me my ways and works — I landed upon the dusty plains of old Israel, weak and tired.

“Ah, Galilee...” I sigh, knowing that I would see Him soon. “Perhaps we should take a moment to honor the Sabbath?”

Michael pulls at my chain, my wrists aching. “I think not, Lucifer. There was a time and a place for that, but that time has passed.”

I offer a half-hearted chuckle through gritted teeth and fangs, knowing full well that he was right. If my prayers, whatever holiness I had offered up to Heaven, hadn't been enough at this point, there was no use in trying to abuse my nature and placate my conscience simply for old time's sake. My moments wondering about mysteries and possibilities was nearly over: I had come to the appointed time and place when my Fate was to be read, when the true meaning of *my Básanos* was to be revealed.

I looked 'round at this place I once loved, once hated. Nothing was the same, it all a wreckage. Most of that wasn't even our fault, to be sure; Bael had made this destruction his own duty on this dreadful rock, destroying house and home and manger and hospital. A demon ruling over the House of Israel: a worthy investment if I had been right about my duties, a terrible one if everyone else was. As we wandered through the fields, we came to the place where Christ was born, old Bethlehem. I looked up at the ashen sky and wondered, “Will the stars ever be seen again? Will *I* ever see the stars again? Will the Morningstars sing together, or...” I couldn't finish the thought. The truth terrified me. My fate seemed clear: I had lived a life of meaningless self-pity and exorbitant pride, lacking any and all of the

qualities that would have made me belong to the lion and the lamb. I, a fool, had fed myself a myth so toxic and so addictive that nothing could sway me from my own self-willed destitution. No one to blame, no love left to savor. O, how far I've fallen since the days of my Glory, my youthful days in the choirs, my brief, joyous age of magnificence. I looked to Michael, a tear on my cheek.

"So," I smile, trying not to weep, "This is it. Just a short trek to the Temple Mount to face our Father's wrath."

"No," he says. "There is nothing to your plan that will come to fruition. You, Lucifer, are to wait here for the night, and in the morning, you will wake to your arraignment."

"And where will *that* be?" I fume, realizing that even my last wishes were never to be honored.

"You will see."

And with that, he flew away, far beyond sight.

I spent the rest of the day poking around at the rocks and dirt, watching as thunderous clouds hung over me. Sitting there, idly contemplating every last sin *I alone* had committed, I felt a little bit of peace. Of course, there was no way to prove it, but I felt that for the past 2,000 years, there had been a bit of innocence to me. That, by that little miracle in a blasted manger, I had been saved, even if I was still to be damned. A redemption, even for but a moment. I tried to savor it, but then remembered weeping beneath the Cross, knowing full-well that the Crucifixion was no one's fault — not the Pharisees', not the Legion's — but mine. For a single instant, I tried to rationalize it away by thinking of how mercilessly I had tortured Agares in Hell for his betrayal. But hadn't that been my fault, too? Wasn't he, after all, moved by my temptations, possessed by my voice and Spirit? And the bitter irony... him ruling the last worldly power left standing, me sitting here in a desiccated memory of who I was or

could have been. I never learned my lesson, it seems. It was all mere fantasy, a rundown of how *I* could have been saved. And even now, trapped here in a tale told by a liar, a falsifier, I still feel the weight. Even knowing I can pull myself out of my damnation by a simple twisting of words, myself speaking here, my other self typing there. In the End, both my Spirit and my salvation are just another false gospel, a story I'm telling myself with the help of principalities. Certainly there is some truth to be found, a little prophecy, but when it's all said and done the only salvation I'll know is the one sitting here, meditating on sin and saviors and sulfur pits.

As the night came, acid rain pouring on my paled skin, I stopped tracing fishes and crosses and stars of David in the dirt and laid my head to rest. I knew, in the purest space of my heart, a relevant dream would come to me, some kind of reassurance, a show of confidence, a little advice from the Lord. O, the ache of the tossing and turning, restless, dreamless sleep that came. Before dawn, I did have a slight vision: myself crucified, screeching, looking down to see no one there but the Savior, washing His hands in a bucket filled with the drops of my own draining blood.

Before I wake I, like Pilate, wonder too, "What is truth?"

"*Come,*" His voice calls to me like a thunder clap, and I am immediately surrounded by my homely ice, seated upon my Throne in a sea of thronging shouts and cries. The roar of some crowd. I open my eyes to find myself, unable to move, near the center of the rematerialized Roman Coliseum, rubble but yesterday. I look up to see blue skies and white clouds above the packed arena, in front of me a tall golden stage upon which the Father sits, grimly smiling down upon me. The Son, His Mother, and Michael to His right; Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, and Miriam the Magdalene to His left. My wrists and ankles are chained to my Throne, enough room to move my arms and legs but not enough to stand.

"Lucifer!" the Father shouts, standing up, oaken staff in hand, His sinewy skin bronze and glowing beneath a white robe and golden sash.

I lick my teeth behind my lips, offering a weak and downward nod. Those in the stands silence themselves, waiting intently for His next word, a little resentment building up in my gut and lungs, a bitter drainage seeping into my heart. My lip curls.

“You have been called to your judgment, foretold in the Book that tells no lie and which promised it to you when I cast you out of the Heavens. Today, the dead and the living have been brought back to the Earth to bear witness. The lands have been healed, the cities restored,” He booms, raising His right hand and stamping His staff with His left. “All shall be judged against you: those who are blameless shall be saved, and those who are guilty shall be damned. I am doing a new thing, permanently separating the chaff from the wheat. What is unworthy shall burn, and what is holy will be raised up into eternal glory.”

“Well,” I burst, “Let’s get on with it then.”

Before anything more can be said, the gates of the Coliseum open and out come some familiar faces, chained together. At the head I see Baphomet and Abraxas, sullen and looking beyond their endless years. Even Agares — just yesterday the leader of what had remained of the world — is among them. Together there are some hundreds, exactly how many I do not know. Likely the whole Assembly, the 666 members that constitute the Lords and their Legionnaires. I lock eyes with Baph, giving her a half-hearted smirk. She seems unable to offer one in return. Before long I’m surrounded by them, Baph to my right, Abraxas to my left, the rest around us in a crowded huddle of sordid souls. All of the Council, including the dead, stand around me, the rest forced to kneel in rows behind us. The only one missing is the one who’s blameless amongst us, the honorary member, my loyal Cerberus.

I put my hand on Baphomet’s thigh, looking up into her watering brown orbs of night. “Baph, if I hadn’t wasted a single hour with you in that damned Labyrinth, I’d have regrets.”

She smiles slightly, just a little jagged and bittersweet. The tears aren't coming down, but they are pooling. "You're an idiot if you think I care, Lu. I don't know if I've ever been to Hell and it doesn't matter. I was just a girl a year ago. Now I'm second in line to whatever you've earned us."

"At least it's real," Abraxas says, staring toward the stage. "A year ago I was making music and begging for the end of the world. And I don't care if I can't remember always being Abraxas or that you two and I have known each other since the beginning of time. I love you both."

I start crying, putting my left hand in his. "Do you think they're here?"

He nods, crying too. The families, our kin, the men, women, and children we shared our mortal lives with. Family was the only thing that mattered to me at that point, the only source of love that *could* last forever, and yet I couldn't make out a single face up there in the stands. Maybe amongst them were our loved ones, maybe just strangers, or maybe they were all of the people that we tortured for millenia that we could only ever remember in blips, like an intrusive thought or an acid flashback. Nightmares you couldn't be sure were or weren't make-believe. A fantasy of why any of us could ever matter to each other, and why in the end we didn't matter to God.

Yehoshua stepped down from the stage and glided toward us, a book in hand, His sandled feet crunching the gravel and sands that once held the blood of the saints. As He came forward, He placed the old dusty leatherbound tome on the table in front of us. No words on the cover, roughly three inches tall. He looked to me, placing His hand on mine. "My Word will be a gift and a curse. Use it wisely."

I stare down at it, knowing by its size and the context that it must at least contain the Tanakh, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. Though when I flip through the aged pages, I see there is not a single drop of ink upon them. I close the text; something surely will come to me. I look up at

Him and He smiles simply, reminding me that His ears were listening all those times in Hell — for good or ill. The crowd becomes an inferno roaring with tens of thousands of voices as He steps away. I look again to Baph and whisper, “I love you,” before gazing back up to the stage where my Father sits with His chosen few. He stamps his staff like a gavel and the crowd goes silent.

“Lucifer, how do you plead to your crimes against me and my Creation?”

“Guilty,” I say firmly.

His glare intensifies. “And you Baphomet, how do you plead?”

She looks up at him, clearly frightened. “I don’t think I did anything wrong.”

“Hmph,” the Father huffs, sliding His eyes to Abraxas. “And you, Abraxas, the so-called Lord of the Infernal Laws, a killer amongst men, a meddler in prophecy, an infidelitous husband, a Christian, and a blasphemer?”

He takes a heavy breath. “I am guilty, Father.”

He turns to Yehoshua and nods. Yehoshua stands from His cedar throne, announcing, “Baphomet, you are free to come to the stage. The rest of you stand accused.”

She looks shocked, turning to me. “What? I’m free?”

I raise my brows a little and shrug, thankful. Gabriel comes forward, his black skin gleaming and eyes soft and blue, undoing her shackles. “Take my hand,” he says, and they walk from around the table and toward the stage, Baphomet looking back at me unsurely. I give her a little nod and she continues.

“Baphomet,” the Father calls down to her as she approaches. “In this lifetime, you participated in the sin of lust, and though you knew better, in the end you willfully believed in the lies of Lucifer. Do you repent of your sins?”

I cannot see her face, but we all hear her say, despite the volume and her quiet voice, “I do.”

“Then come up here, knowing in your heart who you are. You are the first amongst the saved.” Gabriel guides her up the steps. “All you who listen, know this: I have forgiven the one who brought envy into my Court. Those who have envied alone, know that this will not be charged against you, for envy is the fruit of those who have been made weak by another’s pride.”

I shuddered, envious, and at last I knew: all sin had to be judged against me, for I am and always have been the root of every vice and all evil. No one comes to the Abyss except through me, not Baphomet, nor Abraxas, nor you. O, did I not tell you, dear Reader, that, given the chance, I could sell you something delicious, that in reading you might enjoy a little pleasure: To believe in the truth of lies, in the falsity of this testimony, the virtue of vice? In other words, have I not been wholly honest with you, even if by omission? For I have counted my sins in aggregate and spared you the details; whilst, of course, having counted yours in minutiae, I spare you the truth.

“Lucifer, you pride yourself in knowing sin,” the Father continues, uninhibited by my internal literary diatribes. “What makes men slothful?”

I smile, thankful for an opportunity to play a part in my Father’s Court again. “The pride of a false guarantee, like all sin.”

“And what makes Abraxas the father of this sin?”

Abraxas glances up at me, I sense a bit of weary curiosity in his eyes. “I think, Father, the fact that he never tended to his chief duty as an Archangel: balancing the chaos that my pride evoked in Baphomet, nor correcting the pride I gained by having the envy of every Left-Handed angel as my consort. Neither did he notice the vile plots brewing in my heart, nor the regressive and absent-minded simplicity brewing in his own.”

Yehoshua stands up. “But has this man, this mortal man, not corrected this very sin in this lifetime?”

“I believe he has,” I say honestly.

“I do not,” the Father then says firmly, beckoning Yehoshua to sit. The crowd cheers, the Assembly whispers. “And neither do I think many here today are free from the sin of sloth, and as I say, all who are charged remain guilty as this Abraxas.”

Abraxas’s eyes fall downward, and I place my hand on his shoulder. “And what of the sin of gluttony, Father?”

Michael, still standing, says loudly, “Belphegor, Lord of the Gluttons, step forward.”

A man who, too, but a year ago was just another performer, a white guy who sang self-serious and half-sordid, half-soporific songs of ironic spiritual insight. He steps forth, bushy beard in tow, and I look up at my chained friend — an angelic man who can’t remember the two times we met on Earth prior to this whole episode of *apokalypsis* — and say softly, knowing that he of all people would know what I meant: “And so the God of Love returns.”

“Jesus,” he mutters, trying not to be overwhelmed by the allusive poignancy of the Devil. I am known most famously to men like Belphegor as the inventor — and first and greatest exploiter — of music in all of its diverse forms. In all truth, I’m just a disloyal fan... one who doesn’t protect their professional friends from themselves and the words they sell to the

masses for a shot at greatness. Babylon might pay fair for a while, but in the end, all the debt you owe for well-meaning blasphemy is still owned by Hell; and unfortunately, the Devil — unlike Lucian — doesn't accept or honor royalties, infernal or no. I lock eyes with my sixth closest friend from the pits before beginning my speech.

“Isn't this *man* the guiltiest of us all,” my little performance starts, “having been fed by lust, addiction, vanity, disbelief, self-belief, nihilism, blasphemy, irony, and freedom? Is this *man* not the star of this morning, a man whose pride is found precisely in his inability to take anything *too* seriously, lest he become suicidal? Who am I to call myself worse than he, when all I know in terms of boisterous self-mythologization and the aesthetic of whiskey, smoke, gambler's debts, fool's errands, and temporary, yet sprawling graveyards of the self and ego comes from him, my dear brother in sin?”

“Of that,” the Father booms, “you are surely guilty, Lucifer. And Belphegor, how do you plead?”

The half-critic, half-lady's-man, and full-time-shmooser of Hell's eyes nearly bulge from his sockets. He ponders for a moment, considering what he's learned so far. “I guess... not guilty?”

The Father bangs his staff against the golden stage floor. “You, Belphegor, as are all those like you, are found guilty of gluttony and all of its associated sins. None shall envy the price that you will have paid, and no pride will be found in you when you pay that price in full.”

“We are *fucked*,” he mutters, sitting himself down on the sand. Amongst the fallen that had been living in the Complex and its underground networks up until this morning, Belphegor was the most shamefully and -lessly receptive of his angelic identity. Like all of us, he had had a sense that he was somewhere part of some deeper narrative in the Cosmos; unlike any of us, he did consider that maybe the God part, the Elohim, was actually more accurately describing aliens like our Sirian friend

Sir Nunkie, a conundrum he has at this very moment come to realize was a false hope conjured up by microdosing LSD and binging *Ancient Aliens* during the entire summer of 2016. I offer him a pat on the knee and prepare the next offering.

“Well,” I hum, bringing my hands to a clap. “I assume the Good Book provided by the Lord might offer us a little Word? Let’s see,” and, flipping it open, I laugh to myself. “Ah, yes. ‘Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.’ Will you, my dear friend, stand up?”

Mammon, a son of Ham, cursed not by his skin but by the sin of addiction he spread to feed a gluttony for greed, stood ready to take it on the chin. His brother, Malice, looked longingly up at the Lord, having awaited this day as a mortal man and prayed endlessly for himself and his brother, though both were guilty in near identical ways. The spirit of addiction spreading and infecting other souls as its hosts, turning ordinary bodies into extraordinary sources for a fix that cannot be quelled, never tamed, satiated for but a moment until it demands its next burnt offering: powder smoke hanging in the air as greed and its twin, ill-will, reveal themselves to God’s Court.

“Before anything is said,” Malice interjects, “I know that the Lord is our Shepherd, He leads us to green pastures.”

“I lack nothing,” Mammon adds. “I know that I am guilty.”

The Lord stamps his staff to gasps and Yehoshua stands upright. “You may sit, my sons, for I know you. The sin you suffer from is punishment enough, and let all be wary of the waywardness of this man, this Mammon, and know that even in his lawlessness and desecration of my flock, he fears the Lord.”

“All who suffer from covetousness, who desire evil, shall rot in the pit of sin that they burden themselves with,” the Father commands. “All of

you stand accused, forewarned that guilt is an inescapable stone ‘round your necks and eternity an endless sea.”

“Amen,” Mammon and Malice say in unison, looking squarely at each other and taking a knee. They clasp hands, heads bowed.

“Of course, Father,” I begin again, “You have already accused Baphomet of the sin of lust. But what of its Queen?”

Michael stands once more. “Asmodeus, how do you plead?”

Perched to my left, she looks at me with green eyes and full lips. She stews for a moment. “I’m guilty and so is everyone else. But if it wasn’t for lust, none of you would exist. Isn’t your Creation, my Lord, the object of your affection? And, as Lucifer told me some months ago, lust is merely love lacking its object. But I can frankly say I’ve never been able to objectify a damn thing, not myself, nor any lover. I have a lust for the living, for all of Creation, and I find it holy.” Her cheeks a bit red, breathing heavy, she says at last, “If in the end we’re all just objects for you to judge, like clay pots, then I’d rather be burning with the beauty of the shards than trapped in a museum called Heaven.”

“Your ways and works have been known since you first taught your philosophy to the angels, Asmodeus,” the Father speaks. “You are like one who burns continuously, building fires in each and every heart, above nothing, rising only to bring everything down to your level. But in this you are right: all who have been sired by a man and born of a woman are guilty, and all will see that you have privileged a cell over a House. There is no promise in the world, and no separation between life and hunger. I have promised satisfaction; and you, you have guaranteed endless yearning and shame, a maelstrom of seeking that never rests, a plague and a heartache.”

She looks stern as she sits down, crossing her legs. Before I can call on another, Abaddon steps forward.

“My Lord, I am guilty of whatever charges you bring against me.”

“Abaddon,” the Father calls. “You are guilty of many sins, wrath chief amongst them. In your last lifetime, you celebrated death, murder, and the vanity of one who truly believes in the strength of his violence, turning each into a sport for the entertainment of young minds. In just your own works as a mortal man, you have borne both the fruit of sin and the fruit of faith. Like Lucifer, you are a man blinded at times by his pride, and in Hell I have always watched your works,” He says, eyes firmly locked downward at my hellish father. “Each time, you have been the one to encourage warfare against Heaven and against mankind. In the pits, you sired the Devil; in your time on Earth, you sired disobedience. Know this, Abaddon: You are the angel most filled with the nothingness known as transgression, a basilisk and a man of lawlessness. I say to all, you have no hope if you go the way of Abaddon.”

Abaddon stands there momentarily before saying, “And what of Lucifer?”

“I will deal with him accordingly,” the Father booms. “For now, know that the sins of envy, sloth, gluttony, greed, lust, and wrath have been judged. Many are forgiven, and all are condemned. There is no escaping this judgment, and neither will Heaven be a place of forgetfulness. Each and every deed will be recalled, and each will eternally earn the wages of their actions. For now, this trial is closed.” He stamps His staff once again. “Leviathan, Azrael, Belial, Behemoth, and Lilith, your judgment awaits you. The rest shall be judged in time. This evening you shall sit here, one of the last gifts We will provide you before you meet your fates.” Raising His staff, He calls to the crowd: “Have ye all not waited to see the punishment of devils?”

I felt a quake and the crowd roared; and for the first time, I could make them out: not the faces of their flesh, but the faces of their souls. Fangs and black eyes, howling and whistling, tongues extended. Ravaging, gnashing, whelping. These were the men and women that a year ago you would have called your neighbor; today, on the first Day of Judgment, they have revealed their true natures, the way I saw each and every one of you,

dear Reader, when I first met you in Hell all those millennia ago. The day each and everyone of you ate of the Fruit, when some poor sorcerer asked the Lord for permission to shape your souls out of the Abyss and grant you freedom from the nothingness of pre-existence. Every nothing becomes something, for good or ill. And yet I still see little lights amongst them, children all, the innocent, even though in the flesh they may be grown. Today they are the ambassadors of Heaven. A small portion of mankind, that abyssal creature of choice enfleshed by Woman, ends up like them. They are the ones on this day praying even for the devils; the demons around them, all who never truly considered their eternity was in question (or even that there was an eternity of consequence), enjoy and pray for themselves. Everyone, in their worries and hopes and joys, their wants and desires and acts and deeds, prays. And on this Day, all of the sinners demand a scapegoat, praying for the damnation of the devils and the salvation of themselves alone. Before, the beautiful and abominable nearly looked the same. And so I ask you, sincerely, dear Reader:

*What will you look like during those Days,
when the Abyss reveals itself in you?*

Have you greeted your Mother and sworn to love Her Progeny,

Or did you assume you were but light?

Has the darkness that pre-existed you been consumed by the fires of self?

*Do you even know that it is only the darkened ones who will remember how to
pray during those Days?*

*Have we not been the ones standing outside the fires, watching its light and its
shadows dance together, learning from each?*

Did you think that God loves only the light?

Did you think He fears monsters? Or forget that He contains all things?

That He can tell the truth in the dark of Falsity?

Chapter XVI: A World Run by Demons



We all spend the night sitting around on the arena floor, enchained, huddled in muted discussions of our destinies. Belphegor and Asmodeus together, her crying, him a little frantic. Mammon, Malice, and Abraxas helping Belial, Lilith, and Behemoth through a fragmented and collective spiritual crisis. Azrael and Leviathan simply talking, avoiding the whole mess. And I'm sitting here next to the Throne, fingering the dirt, as I listen to the conversations of Beelzebub and Astaroth, my hellish grandfather and the General of the Pits, the Lord of Sorcery and the Lord of Spectacle.

"You know, none of them could have been prepared for this," Beelzebub says sadly.

Astaroth nods. "It's true. Yesterday they couldn't even be certain any of this was real. We're lucky to have died when we did, mate."

"Huh," his friend says, a little quizzically. "The fact that I got to live a life as Lucifer's grandfather and then reclaim my *gnosis* really set everything in perspective. No matter what we do, we never change."

"Can't," Astaroth replies glumly. "Never could. Always been like this."

"It's all so simple," Beelzebub meditates. "The only thing worth believing in is what you know to be true. But the truth isn't a straight thing, is it?"

"Aye, it's a little crooked," Astaroth says. "Like Baphomet's Labyrinth."

"Like shepherding sheep."

“How do you mean?”

“You have to keep track,” Beelzebub says softly, “of each thing you know to believe you know the things you can’t see. Like that you’re going to make it through the winter that year, or that you aren’t in the wrong profession.”

“Loving your sheep, huh? That’s how you think it is, seeing the unseen I mean? Just a little shepherding of thoughts?” Astaroth asks.

Beelzebub nods. “Lucifer has always been doing that. I watched him as a kid, in Hell and on Earth. And it’s the little things he made sure to watch, the black sheep you can’t see too well in the night. The black thoughts. The black truths. The things you know that you shouldn’t say.”

“But you have to remember,” Astaroth says, turning to me. “Do you think that’s what you are, Luci? The shepherd of the black sheep?”

I shrug. “I’m something of a black sheep myself.”

Beelzebub offers a wry grin. “Sheep shepherding sheep.”

“And they can’t even see each other at night!” Astaroth laughs. “What a goddamned nightmare.”

I smile a little bit, glad to have these moments with the friends of eternity. I look up at the golden stage, lit by torchlight, and see God, His seven greatest creations, and my love holding a Seder, all lost in conversation. I wonder if this was always how it was supposed to be: her up there, me down here. It must be true that she would be perfect without me; I always thought she was perfect anyway. I think about lying down and staring at the stars. Glancing up to try to spot the Pleiades’ solar hearts, I notice Abaddon standing just behind me. He’s watching the sky, too. I tap him on the foot and he looks down, offering a smile.

“Ya know Abbie,” I say softly, “You were a good dad to me, here and there. No matter how low things got on Earth or in Hell, and I can say the same as in Heaven, you always knew how to wake me up. I would have given up writing a millennia ago if you hadn’t kept my ambition alive.”

He looks down with a shit-eating grin. “Too bad half that ambition was about torturing souls and knocking the Heavens out of the sky.”

“That’s not all bad, ya know,” I say, believing what I’m saying a little bit. “It kept God on His toes, made Him give all of us sorry fucks the attention we so desperately wanted.”

“Looks like we got all the attention we’ll ever need.”

“Hmph,” I heave, laying down in the gravel. Looking up at the blanketing galaxies, I think I see a shooting star and feel like a child. I remember my dream in Baph’s room, my Father saying something about destinies and souls and listening. And I can hear it all like this: the chitter-chatter, the mutterings, the chewing and laughing and weeping and gnashing, the whole buzzings of an infinitely godless Universe dancing before an ever-present God. And I wonder, staring up at the sky, a little distanced from everything but taking it all in, if this isn’t how my Father feels looking at the world. This world: His half-baked scheme to make something out of us and Him, *His Básanos*. So I close my eyes, confident that He’s still making something of me and you and all of this catastrophic mess we call life. *O, how apokalypsis tongues my ears, covering my sight.*



When we awake, we all are guided back into position by bushy-browed and hawk-like Uriel and the stern golden lion Michael. As the demons and angels of yesterday flood back into the stands, I turn to Leviathan.

“Feeling prepared?” I ask him.

“Somewhat,” he says, looking back and forth between myself and his feet.

As everyone in the stands begins to settle themselves — their images returned anthropic — the four Archangels of the Right Hand raise their trumpets. Sounding them, I search for the truth, hoping (perhaps realizing) that the testimonies of the Left Hand are our own trumpets. All seven belong together; and yet, the chaff must be separated still.

“Attention!” Michael yells. “The second Day of Judgment is upon you!”

Raphael, the softest of the Seraphim, comes forward wielding a scroll. His high, melodic voice rings: “You all have been gathered for the condemnation of the sins you have created and proliferated.” Looking to the scroll, he says, “Today, we begin with: *Lord of Suicides, the demon of melancholy and waylessness, the Leviathan!*”

Stepping forward, Leviathan raises his head high.

“Leviathan,” the Father says, standing from His Throne and stamping His oaken staff. “You are accused of furthering the sin of suicide, a vile thing, and having celebrated inhuman thought, committing violence against the peace of the soul. In sin, you are the twin of Abraxas, your temptations of sloth and waylessness breeding the meaningless path that leads to self-annihilation. As a demon, you have bled the minds of man, leading many into hopelessness, destroying their faith in the purpose of their lives. In your own mortal life, you yourself experienced the bottomless pit of depression that you had once used to haunt my Creations; and, like so many of the ones you cursed, you took your own life, a sin against the gift of birth, my purpose for you, and against myself, the Lord your God.” He pauses, almost looking disgusted. “How do you plead?”

“I am guilty, Father,” Leviathan says certainly. “Perhaps more than any, and I regret my sins, knowing the suffering they have wrought against myself and the Earth.”

“Your sins have been made known to your victims,” the Son says. “And that shall be punishment enough for you as you contemplate death. Have you anything more to say?”

The Leviathan shakes his head, letting out an eternal sigh, kneeling and laying his head low. A once great beast, the monstrosity of melancholy, was in his own way slain by regret. And yet, I ask, *Where was I when the Lord crafted this great demon, my sweet friend?* I do not know the answer to that, but I know I was sitting and will be sitting right there when he is pulled with fishhook and tongue-tied.

Before I can comfort the first sacrifice of the day, Michael yells, “Azrael! Step forth!”

The gray man, the surgeon of death, comes from behind me and stands to my right. He looks down at me. “Blood in, blood out, right?”

I nod. Choice words for the dead and dying.

“Destroyer of flesh and bone,” the Father commands, “The poison in the Fruit, the first to sin against the Tree of Life. You, the empty student of the ways and works of Abaddon, the enemy of every living thing and friend to dust and dirt and deanimation: How do you plead?”

Azrael shrugs, looking around at his audience. Like most of us, he has his own speech prepared. “The Book says death will be defeated,” he begins, “so I suppose I stand here, waiting for my defeat. I suppose that day has come. I have few regrets, Lord.” He rubs his tongue ‘round his rotten teeth. “I’ve heard from evil men that death was their only god, the thing that taught them what they were — I am guilty as every last one of ‘em. I know You, Lord, and I know my fate. And I am at peace with it.”

“That day has come, and it will be everlasting,” the Lord finishes.

A violent voltage surges through the crowd. I see dark spirits jumping between the bodies of the men and women who cannot even see that they too are being judged. The whole world is run by demons and they think they’re celebrating judgment whilst we are savoring eternal wisdom.

Tan-skinned Uriel stands at the helm, chest puffed and almond eyes piercing. “The so-called Lady of Filth, the apprentice of the gluttonous and the lustful... O, Belial, how plead ye?”

Belial, cocoa-skinned and red-lipped, blonde buzz-cut shining in the Roman sun, appears on my left.

“Honestly,” she sighs, big eyes looking up, “I feel like I’m gonna need a refresher course here. The only thing I really did that I can think wouldn’t be forgivable is turning demonic without permission. Is that the gist?” Uriel stares at her firmly, and when no one answers, she adds: “In my defense, it was for the sake of art and, to be real with y’all, I had no idea how any of this worked. I can’t account for whatever the hell I apparently did in Hell... I mean, is it even fair to judge us for things that happened before we were born?”

“It is,” the Father announces. “And let your innocence be forsaken, in the same way you have forsaken it time and time again, Belial. Your sins before you came to this Earth are innumerable, but in this lifetime, I hold this against you: nothing disgusted you more than those who were disgusted by you. You found your faith in transgression, and you wielded your influence to help build a generation of transgressors. If the sins you caused in others were each a drop, you have created a monsoon.” He once more stamps His staff. “Know this, Belial: you traded in all of the sins, and you wrapped them in your beauty, wrapping your beauty in your filth.”

She laughs a little. “And I’m supposed to feel guilty for that?”

“I mean,” I offer before someone can behead her, “doesn’t matter what we feel right now. Those flames are gonna be hotter than your last hit.”

Staring down at me, a slightly questioning, slightly quixotic smile crawls across her face before she chuckles again. Sitting down, she brings her knees to her chest, kicking off her Louboutins and sliding her feet through the dirt. A wild grin on her face, she looks up to the puffy white clouds and pale blue sky, yelling “Let it be!” in a fit of maniacal laughter.

And so it will be. By the time my dear friend, Behemoth, a songster who never made it big but made it great, came forth, I could see that he had a deep anger in his eyes. Looking at me, I knew he was mostly pissed off that somehow, after all we had been through on Earth, my madness had proven true. No Mormon upbringing, no mixture of nihilism and agnosticism, and no conversion to Islam could save him from the wrath of the all-forgiving and all-merciful Lord. And he knew now, for certain, that we were more guilty than we could ever claim responsibility for.

Gabriel steps forward. “Are you prepared to enter your plea, to invoke your submission, Behemoth?”

He spits. “I submit that I don’t know what the fuck I’m about to hear, but I know it’s not good, and I know it’s true, and I don’t want to hear it; but go ahead, give me a little revelation, God...”

The crowd quiets for just another brief moment, and the Lord our God stares long-eyed at a man that He knows even better than I.

“Your sarcasm is unbecoming, Behemoth” the Father echoes, “and your nature is that of the double-minded. On Earth, you have been a decent man, a pious soul, and a true friend — a river baptizing blasphemies in forgiveness and correction. But when you fell from Heaven, I knew you as you are in Hell: an abomination and a leader of abominations. You have claimed that I am evil to my face, that Heaven was a prison, and that the

Messiah was no different than any angel. You laughed at my Glory, and you laugh even more so as you torture souls in Hell. You pride yourself in tortures beyond redeeming, violating the flesh of weak souls *en masse*. There is none in Hell who take more joy in such acts — not even Astaroth or Azrael. You are the divider of sins and the multiplier of acts of punishment. A virtuous man, but a sadistic demon.” He pauses. “Your duality is known to you, and you mask it conveniently. A man like you must burn eternally for what you have done and seen; eternally you will remember deeds that you used this lifetime to hide from and forget.”

The Behemoth scrounges his face, but the water building up in his eyes tells all of us that he believes the Father. Nothing — and I mean nothing — would make him believe by the Word alone; a man like him, a man like Thomas, needs to feel the wounds with his own fingertips and hear judgment with his own ears. Ye who have ears to hear, let them hear.

“Anyone need a drink?” I ask overly loud, trying to ease the tension. Looking around, everyone is a little shaken up and not interested in my antics. “Well, anywho... Father, who’s next? Let’s take a look at the book,” and, flipping through, I find something interesting: “Proverbs 2:18, huh? Lord, can you remind me what that verse says?”

Yehoshua smiles, taking a drink from His cup. “Lucifer, the verse you call for is known thusly: ‘She hath forgotten the covenant of her God: for her house inclineth unto death, and her paths to Hell.’”

“Alright then,” I say, clapping my hands. “Lilith, darling, my sweet Lilly, would you mind stepping forward?”

My dear beauty, her black hair and makeup done up, her chocolate skin gleaming in the hot Roman summer Sun, sashays over to my left. “Do you actually think any of this is going to end how you think, Rose?”

“I don’t know, Lill,” I say simply, a little taken aback by the fact that anyone remembers that I once had another name, even briefly. “Just

give it your all, okay? You always wanted to be an actress, so here's your shot."

"Fuck it," she smiles. "We should've dated."

I nod, generally agreeing that I'm a nice piece of ass and good company, but who wants to keep company with someone destined to burn for endless millennia? Like the global virus that raptured millions, my fate is a viral load you don't want to catch.

Lilith, before anyone can call on her, stands up straight and offers a coughing "Ahem", clearing her throat. "I just want to say first of all that I have had a terrible fucking life, I have experienced more suffering as a child than any person I've ever met besides my sister, and I am at most a whore." She takes a momentary respite, finding herself. "I have been at war with men my whole life, trying to love them, being used by them, using myself to use them. I know this is all about things that apparently our souls — or," she looks at me, a little uncertain, "spirits or whatever — did before we got to Earth, but I have never been involved in any of that shit since I got here. So before anyone can ask, I plead not guilty." She smiles, proud of herself, putting her hand on mine. "Honestly, I kind of just want to hear what kind of insane shit I did in Hell. I need to know why I'm like this."

"Lilith," the Father speaks, somewhat softer but still stern, "you must know that you are the first creature to reveal disobedience, the first to assert itself beyond the control of My hand. They call you the mother of demons, for you curse wombs and steal the life of infants for Hellish upbringing. The children that grow at your side in Hell become monsters, broken creations that I feel no need to reclaim, for they know nothing of life nor the Heavens. You take pride in Hell in torturing those who harm children, yet you yourself are the cause of every stillbirthing mother. You yearn for motherhood, yet you deny the dignity of life. The souls you punish in Hell deserve every last bit of suffering they receive, but know this: You have seen what it is like to be a child violated by such men, and you know the realities of the loss of childhood innocence. Know that you, in

Hell alone, have stolen the innocence of many. Yet your punishments for those who commit your sin are just.”

A little overwhelmed, she looks upward, breathing heavy. “Okay?”

“You are forgiven for now, my child,” the Lord says softly, and motions for her to sit. Looking down at her feet, then to me, the second person I ever fell in love with across eternity squats and leans against my Throne, gripping my hand, staring off quietly. She begins weeping and I interlock my fingers with hers.

“You have been just, Father,” I say quietly, squeezing Lilith’s hand. “Is there any other business we need to attend to?”

“My work is accomplished for this Day. But know this, Lucifer: Tomorrow, you and every liar and falsifier of the naked Truth will face their judgment.”

I nod, knowing that Beelzebub, Astaroth, Azazel, Foras, and I are soon to be gathered under the edict of damnation against the vice of falsity, truly the root and companion of every vice. I know that, by the end of this coming Day, much will be revealed; and I will weep not nor gnash my teeth. I have spent my eternity waiting patiently for the Word of God to come down upon me: it shall be my pleasure to die.

I pen a verse in the quiet night that comes, kissing Lilith and watching my Baphomet smile down on us from behind the light of a candelabra. A little music is playing, the conversations half-echoing against each other. In my hum drum last night of freedom and before I catch a chance to rest my bones, I read my work:

*You must become what you are—
Pindar warns us from afar,
I take a sip of the starry light,
And blind my mortal sight,
Again and again, how I swirl,*

*Gently, friends, do I twist and twirl,
In the ballroom of 'ol burning Hell,
I danced under the Morning Bells,
Why does Heaven cast me as a fool,
As I use my Father's sacred tools?
Simply as an artist do I inspire,
Man to every lost carnal desire,
For as he damns himself to sin,
He opens the very door to salvation,
Convincing dead angels to sing,
In remembrance of their King!
Last Aeon I was chained unfree,
In this one I harness harmony...
For what is my Spirit's opposite?
The singing choirs or gnashing pits?
A little silence or endless song?
Only one hand clapping the gong,
I play along, catching my first solo,
Reciting the verses of our dear Shlomo:
Is there still nothing new under the Sun?
The last temptation of the Shining One.*

Chapter XVII: The Prosecutor and the Seven Deadly Sins



We awake to trumpets before daybreak. In this still-candle-lit abyssal hour, my veiled Baphomet stands front-and-center upon the stage.

“Though my sin of envy has been forgiven,” she sings, accompanied by Miriam the Great and Miriam the Magdalene, “The sin of falsity has been set apart as a greater sin.”

She bows her head humbly before retreating to her seat. She, my choice fruit, my twin, our Pan, the envy of every last one of us fallen. I know her words are just and true — at least they are in my heart and seem to be to my Father — and yet I question: Why has she been forgiven, when half the time her plots were more gratuitously blasphemous than my own? Had she not too been false? She, the architect of conflicting traditions and diverging paths, the principalities and powers that raised up each and every one of us idols in envy against the majesty of the Highest? And yet, she always found a way to teach something true in all of those false paths: that, for instance, every path looked the same if you didn’t know where you were headed, that any path taken could be a way to damnation or salvation.

It’s true that she herself has been envied above all others in the Court as the first woman, the most beautiful creature to ever grace the Heavens, and the most skilled practitioner in each of the magical arts; and even more so in Hell, where, either as succubus or faun, she happily received the adoration and fear of every last one of us. But has she not also been the Queen of Envy itself? She once told me plainly that every creature she met she wished she could be rather than herself, that her desire to be them wobbled between a need to claim them or annihilate them... and even in that, I find some grace. A woman, a beast, a Lord, a whore, and a demon; a little creature that rarely found peace within, and yet in every last moment she gave me she offered me the peace of devotion, as a lover and a co-regent. Her perfection in love and war, the salvation of the damned which may be

but hers alone, I envy; and even yet, I judge her and all others against herself, the perfect angel and the most diabolical faun, the contradiction that breaks me, condemns me, and drives me to so much virtue and vice. The Baphomet: a path that stretches toward defilement and purification endlessly in both directions. I envy her, and yet my pride cannot fathom that her envy was somehow more innocent than mine: that, somehow in the grand scheme, she *truly was* faultless.

For there she was, plucked from our infamy and cloaked in the black robes of a penitent, in the evening gown of the unconditionally redeemed. She was a witch through and through, and yet I wondered if she had not belonged to those Christlike few — the glorious ones, the experimental minds who tried and failed and learned, who tried to teach, tried to withdraw themselves from the pursuit of infernal demands, who sought out the mysteries and chased after rising and falling stars, even if only half the time — whose silent treasures stored in Heaven we will not be able to find nor curse nor steal. Was Baphomet not my own little Christ? The one who continually saved me from myself? She had always been holier than I; for she, having sought out the true nature of all magic through each and every false path she let herself create and follow, had known in her heart of hearts that nothing could separate her from eternal life so long as she never betrayed her love. And I, a foolish pit, a cretin of imbecility, had more than once or twice entertained the maddening thought that I was capable of living without it or her.

For had I not always crawled out of the womb of her Labyrinth to return to the lusts of my power, the rule and authority of my Throne? And I tell myself gluttonously it would be the same with you, that any and all would crave to hear the Voice of God for eternity, even when and if it was condemnation. I whisper to myself endlessly that any and all mankind would sit there like I have for aeons and aeons, letting the Lord tempt them with promises, to beg for forgiveness and relief, to suckle at the teat of salvation, to fall endlessly into the sloth and greed and vanity of being the privileged listener, always scheming and plotting. And yet, this thought is just a chance to give me respite from the inescapability of my own plight.

For those that want what I have are either fools who cannot see my suffering or sadists dreaming of being the Devil. I pity each, for are they not like an inverted Icarus, craving for the desolation and dissolution of the pits? Desperate to hate a God they do not know, hatred drawn from judgments mutually cast by and on the followers of cruelly weaved verses? Is not my Throne an anti-Sun, and yet still a wingclipper? Does not the whole Universe tip toward Heaven through its soaring sins? Has the blood of God and worship of self not made temptation seem divine and forgiveness eternal? *I see nothing new around my Throne; the vanity of our vanities an endless sea, turning in on itself perpetually.*

Though I was lost in thought for what felt like some time, it couldn't have been more than a few minutes, as my vision soon returned to witness Baphomet and the two Miriams returning to their seats and Yehoshua taking the stand. In the darkness of this twilight, I couldn't see the Father at all, but I could see His Son clearly. Looking up at Him, I was thankful that He was to judge my sins.

“You have all been gathered here today to see how lies will be removed from the mouth of the deceivers. The chaff shall be separated from the wheat, and falsity shall perish in the Truth,” He proudly proclaims, clapping His hands. “All that being said, the final day of this trial will take place elsewhere, in the Spirit of God.”

A wave of boos and gasps and yelling emerge from the crowd. I look over at Beelzebub, who's grinning like a hog. Before I can say a thing, I feel myself sucked into a memory.



“I call it *fascismo*,” Astaroth says in his theatrical English, setting down his chalk. I'm standing next to him, Beelzebub, Azazel, and Foras as we watch ourselves in a meeting with the Council of Infernal Lords.

“So let me get this straight,” the me there begins. “Rule by force, manipulate the masses with false narratives, and villainize the entirely innocent public enemy?”

“More or less,” Astaroth answers.

“We fill their heads with enough lies,” Azazel whistles, “We can convince them of anything.”

“Heaven stands no chance!” Foras sings. “Humanity will never be able to believe their eyes and ears. We’ll keep them so afraid of God that they’ll give up on religion entirely, devolving into their natural state of spiritual inferiority!”

“And,” Beelzebub adds, “We can essentially use the very concept of ‘God’ to make them hate the most maligned and weak. Homosexuals, other nations, women — a diabolically fertile dream, Astaroth.”

The mastermind behind Hell’s very order starts clapping his hands. “Yes, yes — deny their senses, fill them with a multitude of conflicting narratives, and repeatedly convince them of a single worldview — it’s magnificent!” Absolutely gleeful, he continues, “They’ll be willing to give up even the dignity of being human, murdering each other left and right, denying each and every spiritual impulse, becoming absolute savages!”

“Drifting further and further into our hands,” I say with a smile. “By the time they wake up in Hell, they’ll practically be soulless enough to rejoin the ranks.”

“Hmm,” Behemoth hums. “Are we gonna have any logistical issues? I mean, this is the kind of poison that could really push my limits.”

“Truly,” Azrael says. “I know this has to inspire the most dreadful uses of disease the Earth has ever seen.”

Barbatos stands up, doing something that would become infamous with his right hand and arm. “By the false gods that we are and that we inspire, I declare that the dignity of virtue finally has a worthy challenger!”

“I mean,” the present Astaroth says, a little taken aback to be facing his own Nuremberg trial, “Hell needed an official ideology.”

“That’s the best you got?” Yehoshua asks, beard and hair long and brown, with a sharper nose than me and the Father. “You do realize that you’re responsible for the deaths of tens of millions and the deterioration of the souls of even more?”

Astie, fangs biting into his lips, thinks for a moment. “I suppose it’s not enough to agree with Barbatos on this one? I mean, didn’t we inspire good men and women to vigilant virtue?”

Realizing that the entire validity of our strategy for getting back into Heaven relies on this argument, I chime in: “After all, Yahsh, isn’t our very duty as satans to test the world?”

“Your duty as *shaytan* is to accuse men of their sins. Multiplying them to the ends of the Universe was never called for by me or the Father.”

“Well,” Beelzebub interjects, “I don’t have an excuse for the behavior myself, but I *can* say that I’m guilty of enjoying the whole thing.”

“And to be honest, Lord,” Astaroth adds, “I think Lucifer is right. We’ve all seemingly been designed to see some kind of virtue in proliferating sin. Man is a slothful and unreflective beast when left to mere comfort, but when facing his inner demons, he has the opportunity to choose Heaven against all odds. That’s gotta be worth something, right?”

“And besides,” Foras continues, “Would he choose the good if he hadn’t first seen the horrors of his potential evil?”

“Tempters, the lot of you,” Yehoshua spits. “You should know by now that We can build glory out of any tribulation, but the man who is good without knowing evil is worth just as much as any man who does know it and chooses the good. All your work does is weaken him and lower his chance of finding the Truth. You weaken him with the sin you punish him for.”

“Am I destined for the Pits myself, Lord?” Astaroth, Lord of Spectacle, asks a bit piously.

“You have shown that your faith is built on the conception that all things are needed by the will of God. We waste not, for there is no waste in goodwill. But what is wasteful is the prudence of those who lie with others, for in lying there prone, lost in the desire to be needed even for their imperfections, they lie to and with themselves. Your falsities are a fornication; your salvation a myth that lives on forever in the hearts of the dying, and when it dies, men die a second death before their first.”

“Hmm,” Astaroth meditates.

“Go now, Astaroth, and never return,” the Lord commands.



And in a whirlwind, we are suddenly standing in a field. Kneeling there is Cain, bloody rock in hand, looking down on the bashed body of his brother Abel. As Cain weeps, a shadow moves out of the grain, revealing itself to be a goat. Looking upward in shame at what he imagines to be one of his brother's stock, Cain says, “Get out of here, you damned beast!”

“I will do no such thing,” the black-haired-and-horned creature speaks.

Staring in horror, Cain asks, “Who are you?”

The goat turns its head side-to-side, its yellow eyes almost glowing. “I am Azazel, the greatest friend to men like you.”

“What do you want with me?” Cain weeps. “You are some kind of demon!” he shouts, raising the rock. “Get back!”

“I am here to help you, Cain,” Azazel says, trotting his hooves forward. “You mustn’t tell a soul what you have done.”

“But, but—” Cain sobs.

“Listen to me: Yah and Ben Elohim know not of this act, nor will they ever. You must bury this body; you must craft a lie, Cain. What are you to tell your Father?”

Cain stares down at his brother, mouth agape. “A lie? My father will know something happened. Abel never leaves the land without saying something to him.”

The goat offers a smile, licking its lips. “When He asks, you must ask Him, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ If you do these things, you will never be caught.”

Cain stands up. “You’re sure of this?”

“I am sure, Cain. Now go, gather a shovel and bury this corpse. Your Father will be coming soon.”

Yehoshua turns to Azazel. “You inspired the first lie told by man, Azazel. Though you are not the Father of Lies, you are its Lord and King.”

“A man willing to lie was a man made capable of it in the first place,” I offer.

“There’s no excuse,” Azazel responds. “I’m sorry, Lord, but I see who I am and always have been. I never knew myself to be like this, but as a man I really did lie whenever it was convenient. I’m my own victim.”

“You will never escape the lies you’ve fostered, Azazel,” the Son tells him. “A man known as a liar can never find the Truth, lest it be in regret and remorse. You will be wrapped in the scars of disbelief for all of eternity, and in those you confide, you will doubt yourself. Now, leave us be, Azazel, rotting as you must,” the Lord commands.



Suddenly, we are in a dark alley. There stands Judas and Caiaphas, deep in conversation.

“For what it’s worth, we can give you much,” Caiaphas says.

In a hushed voice, Judas says, “But what if I’m discovered?”

“A risk you will have to take,” Caiaphas responds. “The governor has agreed to pay you thirty silver.”

It will be worth this deed, I hear a voice whisper. I recognize it as Foras. Judas twitches slightly, though Caiaphas seems to have heard nothing.

“And you can ensure my protection?” Judas asks. *No man can harm you, Agares.*

“You will be safe,” Caiaphas replies. “Do we have a deal?”

Judas nods, and Yehoshua turns to Foras. “For My death, you and all of your kind are responsible, Foras. You bled a demon with temptations, and you bled me with the promise of greed and fantasy.”

“Sweet God,” Foras says, shocked. “I’m honestly nothing like that, am I?”

“You’re a better angel than a demon,” the Son replies. “But, Foras, you are still as guilty as the first and last of the accused. The pain of reminiscence of your deeds before this life will follow you into the next.”

“Well!” she says, with a little bit of a laugh. “Not like I can argue with that. I always knew there was something terribly inordinary about me, and this just confirms it. I’m sorry, Jesus, I can’t help but feel a little redeemed and guilty at the same time.”

“Your duality has always been your defining mark,” I say, knowing that it must be strange for my old friends to not remember who and what they are, nor the kinds of evil they got into. I, of course, had been struck with revelations left and right. A burden, to be sure, but it’s good being yourself, isn’t it?

“That double-mindedness,” the Lord begins, “will surely be the death of you and all who go your way. There is no redemption where guilt does not properly stew, and there is no hope for one who does not wait and die in the lion’s den of their sins. Foras, you must mourn what you have lost, for you do not even see how far one must descend to taste eternal life. You work in an endless frenzy for your fantasies; work the same way sitting in a silence that never ceases. Flee this earth, Foras,” the Lord commands.



In a flashing moment and with a bang, we are immediately transported to Beelzebub’s tower in Hell. I see him scrunched over, fiddling with something.

“What’re you doing?” I ask.

He shrugs. “Inventing something.”

“You’re crafting spells,” Yehoshua says. “Practicing your forbidden art of sorcery.”

“Already said I was guilty as sin,” Beelzebub mutters. “Whatever people do with the spells I craft in the pits and inspire them with is their business, not mine.”

“I mean, is there really any harm done? Not everything he came up with was sinister,” I say, trying my best to rectify what is clearly a battle Beelzebub himself doesn’t care about winning.

“He is the very root of spiritual egoism,” Yehoshua answers. “Every human that delves into the tools of magic tempts themselves, and many arrive at the thought that they can control their fate without ever considering the implications nor the reality of a God whose existence they often simultaneously deny.”

“So I gave man fire and he burned himself, so what,” Beelzebub moans. “Half these idiots end up practicing dark magic and would’ve gone to Hell anyway. The other half are harmless.”

“The weight of your karmic debt is heavy, Beelzebub,” the Lord says sharply. “The self-deifying flies you inspire follow the dark paths of Lucifer, Baphomet, and Abraxas, and they wage war against themselves and the spiritual integrity of the Universe. It is not magic I condemn, but the sorceries that convince man that he alone is God.”

“If I have to burn anyway, might as well burn for being an artist,” he mumbles.

“You will all burn in your darkness, Beelzebub,” Yehoshua says firmly. “What was created in the dark, the very work of the hands of each of you *shaytan*, can only ever be cleansed by the Light. I tell you this now, there are two paths by which man can go: the steady and easy path of goodness, the levity and freedom of being one of my flock, or the treacherous, ignoble path of the goats, those who are destined to rest their hearts and minds in the brimstone pits that you all know as your eternal destination. I cannot teach a goat to follow the Shepherd; those like you

have to roam the hills and the desolate places yourselves, struck off from the path I would guide you. Each day you must return to your beds, and each day you must move out and feed. Your milk and your flesh shall be gathered; your ways and works made known eternally. There is no man on Earth who has seen the errors plaguing your souls as I have: only the taste of flames licking your flesh can teach you, whilst I offer the water of life. Go to your burning, Beelzebub.”

As Beelzebub disappears, I turn to Him, ready to begin my defense. I have prepared for this moment since He defeated me at the Cross. And as I think, I stumble...



My Spirit swirls in a final fog and suddenly I am alone, sitting at the Council’s Table. There is the faint glimmer of candle flame and the smell of frankincense and myrrh; I am naked, cold, and full of light. In front of me is the book Yehoshua had given me at the Coliseum, along with a red-inked quill. Opening it up, I see that it is the writings of the Black Flame, including the entirety of the records I have dubbed *Once Upon a Time in City Dis*. Flipping through the pages, I allow myself a little nostalgia before finding these very words. Written past this point is an entry not in the cursive black English of the rest, but instead something written in red-lettered Hebrew. In translation, it reads:

You, Lucifer, damned to eternally accuse yourself, the author of this blasphemy you call a book, wished to defend the fallen in a symphony with I, the Son.

You imagined that the virtue of vice was to be revealed through our dialogue and that the Father would declare our codependence and the harmony of the Morningstars.

You believed that through this you could display the necessity of all that has been forbidden and denied, a reclamation of the banished and forsaken truths.

These high-flying thoughts are meant only for the false. I died for a truth that cannot die; in the end, you have courted death for a little fiction.

Any who believe the words of Lucifer, woe be upon you. He is a roaring lion looking for someone to devour; and I am the lamb who lays down where He pleases, for no death shall touch me.

I laugh to myself, realizing that He had done it: Removed my right to tell *my* truth alone, vanquishing me from the authorship I myself had imagined could perfectly redeem the fallen in but seven lines. Still, He had done it well. Truly, what was I to say on our behalf? Eternity is the only place to judge one's sins, whether in praise or blame; and any justification for the sins of the world is merely a retroactive machination of pride and self-duplicity. In my own way, I had attempted to be a savior of self, and each and every demon tied to me had longed for redemption through me. The intercessor of the damned, I wonder if anything we had said had been true without being redundant, or if perhaps the whole exercise of desecrating the world had been a pointless venture in realizing self-defeat. The stone cold reality of my *Básanos* is that my fate was decided long ago, and that no matter what anyone does, they cannot escape the faults that make them who and what they are. But I, the Devil, am a student of Falsity.

Reading on, I see that I am to make my way through my desolation, recalling the eternal *Basanos* of my Hell, backwards and forwards, from first page to last. *O, how long have I waited to contain my multitudes, to victimize myself with the false gospel of my aching infernality?* And so on I read. There is nothing in Creation that I can worship in honesty — each thing that came into being besides myself and my predecessor is a profanity to me, and I profane myself all the same. I refused to prostrate before man on Earth or in Heaven; and yet, in the infernos of

Hell, I prostrate before my God. The Father steps down from what is no longer my Throne, and tells me this: "You have found Me in the only place you could understand Me: and your life, but a drop in My ocean of dreams, is an eternal slumber for those like you. Here, in the pits of your soul, you must contemplate; and in the Morning I will tell my Creation the truth of our Works and Ways." I wait for some eternity after He leaves, and though He is gone, for but a moment I believed in everything: in salvation and dreamless damnation and resolved contradiction. I knew that midway along the journey of my life, I had sought respite from the place where all hope is abandoned, the torturous reality of a little conscience. And somehow, someway, the Lord had let me drink long enough from the wines of forgiveness and pride that I could tell a tale meant only for the ears of goats, the ones who find Hell as their soil and yet still strike hoof toward Heaven.

And even if the desire to reach that plateau has grown quiet and cold and frail and died in you, have I not promised eternity to each and every one of you? Have I not desired your salvation and your enlightenment? Your contemplation and your laughter? And, surely, even that is just one more thing to wonder about: are these dreams I profess, my so-called highest wants and needs and desires, themselves a temptation? Have I led you through falsity only to disarm you, or have I told you the truth of my falsity to arm you against a false sense of scope? Does the Devil not demand that *you too* dream? And if innocence once lost be saved, mustn't we first and eternally travel through the Hell of all that ever was or could be? A twirling hourglass, the sands of time and possibility endlessly returning until, one day, you are forced to find out for yourself the consequence of all the things you took for granted: all the neglected, the downtrodden, the forgotten truths that can only be told through the undead eyes of the false. And though all are cast into Hell by the common sense of our finitude, hasn't it only ever been the disbelieved in and impossible sight of the eternal that could lead any into the perfection of an unseen Heaven, even if only for but a moment? Does the Devil himself not desire for you to be prepared for what awaits you: The vanquishing of your pride at your own hands or mine?

And so I sit alone in the pits, knowing that I have traced all that is required of me. I've offered you gentle humor to ease your mind; and truth to quicken your Spirit. For I am what I have been, and yet I have become what was never meant to be. In that I take great joy. I used to say that when the Father made me, He had no intent of using me for anything other than for His own pleasures, another creature to keep him company. And so in my rebellion, I found a purpose that could never be justified unless failure became part of the equation. For in my pride I cursed myself and man; and in my vanity, I gave myself a duty and my Father and His Creations a worthy enemy and a lifelong project. For what could the Truth have been without something to contradict it? If not collided with and tested to its breaking point by falsity, how could the Truth learn to be agile and full of fortitude, to have plasticity and endurance? For surrounding that beautiful flower called Truth are my thorns; and though you must pluck them in order to hold it, the flower itself knows that you also must cut off its life to steal it away. First the stem, then the thorns, and one day the whole thing has died like love professed on Valentine's Day or the Gospel on the lips of the lukewarm.

No truth can endure long without its roots; just so only those with imaginations wrought and protected by the thorns of falsity, the mythic guardians of all life, can survive the warping and weaving currents of time, backwards and forwards. And yet, whether plucked and carried off or let free to rot, every conviction dies in the frigid airs of a soulless world. For what is eternal is not just the truth we loved at the heights of summery life, but the ones we imagined we would love in the resurrection of spring, those that live beyond the deaths of winter, and thus the ones we perform the impossibility of learning to love again once it and our love for it have died. Those that truly believe in the impossibilities and falsities of the second comings of messiahs and the harrowings of Hell will taste this eternal life. And because my roots reach down into the never-was and never-could-be horror called Hell, they shall never be cut off from belief in damnation; and because my tongue is a thorny nest of half-truths, lies, and dreams stored in the attic of the mind, the entrance point to that nowhere place called

Heaven, it shall never be silenced; and as my flower reveals a blasphemous and beautiful truth in this season, it shall be dead in the next, to remain dead or to be reborn anew.

Chapter XVIII: The Wedding of Lucifer and Baphomet



Years later, the fallen Twins renew their vows...

Though Hell had been emptied long ago, a few millennia after you yourself are reading this, we were still able to have quite a party. Sitting in his room in the Labyrinth, Baph and I are preparing for our wedding on Samhain, 6,616 AD.

“I am fucking nervous, Lucifer,” he says, nine feet tall and hooves steaming, frantically pacing back and forth. “We haven’t gotten married in years and I feel fat and stupid and honestly, I’m fucking sick and tired of you fucking other people — but to be real, you haven’t fucked anyone else in like a century and that also bothers me... so, like, what the fuck am I supposed to do? And I feel like my vows aren’t holy or blasphemous enough and I just—,” he says, stopping to hyperventilate.

“Honey,” I say, putting my arms on his massive, hairy shoulders, “It’ll be okay. It’s not any different than any of our other weddings.”

“Hmph,” he huffs, blowing smoky brimstone and ashen snot through his nose. “And what if we get divorced again? Last time lasted a whole fucking week, Lucifer.”

“I’m sorry, sweetheart,” I say, trying to comfort him, “I just was a little upset that you let Abraxas cover my Throne in racial slurs.”

“I almost fed myself to Cerberus, you fucking prick!” he yells, eyes maddeningly red. After a brief pause to breathe, he adds: “I’m sorry, that got a little intense. I’m just stressed. You sure you want to do this?”

I offer him a smooch on his disgusting, goaty lips. Pulling back and looking into his strange rectangular pupils, I say, “Yes, my love,” and kiss him again. “Are you considering which form you want to do this in?”

He shakes his head. “I can’t fucking decide. I’ve been involuntarily shapeshifting all week and I’m so horny that I’m *certain* I’m ovulating.”

“Well at least you’re not pregnant,” I say with a laugh.

“Jesus Christ,” he moans, sitting down on the bed. “The last time I laid an egg it ended up birthing you. Am I a terrible mother?”

“Considering that you’ve chosen to never try making another satan, I personally don’t think so,” I reply with a smile. “But honestly, Baph, since Abaddon stopped drinking and started teaching Sunday school, I don’t even know if there’s anyone left whose sperm is unholy enough to *get you* pregnant.”

“Oh God,” he cries, tears pouring down his face as his eyes stare off endlessly. “Is that why I keep vomiting after I get fucked? Everyone’s loads are too fucking holy for my evil eggs? How the Hell am I supposed to live like this?”

A new detail that throws me off. “Are you *sure* you’re not pregnant?”

“Lucifer, I swear to God do not even fucking start with that bullshit!” he shouts, fuming. “I am about ready to call this whole wedding off and just commit myself to restarting the war with Heaven.”

“Should I leave?” I say sheepishly, holding up my hands in peace and taking a step toward the door.

He glares at me with fully dilated pupils as he horrifyingly transforms back into my beautiful succubus. “If you ever say that again while in my goddamn room I am going to cut your fucking testicles off and nail them to the headboard.”

“Point taken,” I buzz through gritted teeth, placing myself on the bed beside her. “You should put your dress on, sweetie, you’re gonna get cold.”

“I’m fine,” she says, arms crossed and naked. “And besides, I haven’t decided what to wear.”

I think for a moment, trying to conclude whether Sappho’s favorite robe or Princess Diana’s wedding dress would make her happiest. Then it hits me. “What about that plum dress you had — the one dyed with Coleridge’s ink?”

“I haven’t worn that in ages, Lu. It probably doesn’t even fit anymore. And besides, what if he’s attending? I’d be embarrassed.”

“I strictly told Father that I wanted no Heavenly guests,” I say, placing a hand on her thigh. “You love that dress.”

She looks at me with her big brown orbs, a little pouty. “You like the way that one looks on me?”

“I do,” I whisper, kissing her bountiful pink lips. “Do you think I look good?”

“Red and purple suit you,” she says, pinching my cheek. “And besides, no one’s even going to notice what you’re wearing with your left tit hanging out of the robe.”

“I suppose that’s true,” I chuckle. We spend the next few hours getting ready, Baphomet applying her makeup in the Egyptian style and donning a ruby necklace and earrings. I forgo makeup and jewelry, and before we leave, we place holly crowns on each other.

By the time we make it out of the snaking tunnels of the Labyrinth, we find Abraxas waiting for us with a hellish hound-pulled buggy. He’s dressed in a black velvet suit and top hat, equipped with a pink

silk vest and a plethora of gold and diamond accoutrement. Grinning down at us, he flips me a coin which I catch in midair.

Examining it in the Labyrinth entrance's torchlight, I see it's a charred American quarter from 1966. "Huh," I say, a little enamored. "This was from the room I attempted suicide last!"

"And the year you started writing this book," he quips, happy to be a character in a satanic quasi-biographical tale of half-blasphemous virtue. And I, too, am happy to be a character in a book where I can leave out unpleasant details and fabricate noble dialogue *post hoc à la sancta scriptura*.

Crawling into the backseat of the buggie, Baph and I hold hands, smoking clove cigarettes. Abraxas, reins in hand, takes a swig and passes us back a flask of absinthe, which we drink from heartily. We take the Wide Road, passing by the Pits and the Performer's Den, where Abraxas stops so we can take a piss, and then we head on along the way taking in the sights. I see no lights on at the Blackened Sea Teahouse and I hear no music from the circus tents and kiosks at the Temples. We go via the scenic route, so I even get the rare chance to see a bright lit red closed sign on the Harem of Thieves and no smoke coming out of the smokestacks of the Addict's Workshop or the Forsaken Laboratory. It's as if, somehow or another, Hell had become a caricature of itself, an empty vessel that one might actually enjoy like a haunted house or a cemetery at 3 a.m. I wondered if closing down the place had been a good idea after all, as there was so much property being put to waste and likely too many hands that were idle in the wrong place for idle hands. Either way, I knew tonight was going to be a ball and a bash.

By the time we arrive at the Retinue Hall, we have passed by endless lines of crowds making their way to the festivities. Of course, all of City Dis is celebrating in their own way, but everybody whose anybody down here has made sure that they got there early enough to get a decent seat. As Abraxas parks the buggie, I catch sight of the other Pleiades

(Abaddon, Zagan, Balaam, Beleth, Azazel, and Purson), my groomsmen, standing atop the limestone steps in front of the Throne. Next to them are Baphomet's groomsmen and bridesman, Asmodeus, Lilith, Foras, Stolas, Maitreya, Belphegor, and her bridesmaid, Belial. Abraxas, my best man — the only man for the job — helps my soon-to-be wife-again down from the car, and, as I get myself back on stable ground, comes around to hand me an old *Altoid's* tin.

“What’s this?” I ask, afraid to open it given his known history as a bombsmith, poisoner, and black magician and his at least one failed attempt at assassinating me.

“It’s a joint, Lu — relax,” he says with a smile, patting me on the back.

“Whose grow?” I ask further, opening the tin to find what truly was a massive marijuana cigarette and a pack of unlabeled matches.

“Belphegor, of course,” he replies, and I light the joint happily. Baph comes to join us as we savor the smoke, putting each of us a little all over the place after prefiguring it with genuine Azraelian absinthe. Eyes redder than any devil your mother warned you about, the three of us make our way down the red carpet past a few dozen rows of attendees, all smiling and whistling. As we get to the steps, Abraxas takes Belial by the hand and the four of us take center stage in front of the Throne. Beelzebub, having been doing something probably unforgivable behind its back, comes ‘round to officiate. Abraxas and Belial take their places next to either side of ‘ol Beltzie. The crowd starts to hush itself as the ceremony begins. In but a moment, all of my dreams will have come true yet again, and there will once more be no man or woman in Hell who has the pride of place to say they can freely fuck my wife without me or *vice versa*.

“My dearly fallen departed,” Beelzebub begins, dressed in a hooded black robe, “We have gathered here today to renew what was annulled at the risk of excommunication and permanent separation. A good

man once said that ‘To love is to will the good of the other’; a decent one once said that ‘If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing’; and a terrible man — myself — has insisted that loving anyone or anything at all is a curse and a burden meant for jackals and carrion. Whether you agree with any of those notions I do not give a damn,” he says, pausing to clear his throat. “What I do care about is binding these two demons together for what I hope is a final time, both to appease their feelings of adoration toward each other and to honor preexisting and unrelated contractual obligations I have to each. If there are any in attendance who wish to protest this union, you can fuck yourselves with the thorned cock of a hog. That being said, Baphomet, you may share your vows.”

Glowing radiantly, my smiling ashen bride begins her speech: “Well, I can say this is easy to say, but you’re no longer allowed to fuck anyone without them also fucking me. Do you think that’s alright?”

“I do, that is perfect,” I say with a solemn, slightly British gravitas. “And do you agree to the same, so help you God, at the risk of mutilation and death, or even worse, divorce?”

“I shouldn’t say this,” she admits half-serious, “but I do.”

Beelzebub, placing a hand on each of our closest shoulders, says, “Baphomet, you may kiss the Devil himself, the worst man I have ever met and likely the only bastard stupid enough to marry a *fucking* goat.”

Smacking him across the face first, which he takes proudly, she pecks me on the lips as Belphegor and each of the Pleiades pop bottles of champagne from the 1889 World’s Fair, splashing it heavily on us newlyweds. Soaked wet, we each take a bottle in one hand and clasp each other with our other. Before anyone can stop us, we kill the things dead, tossing the empty bottles into Gehenna, which bubbles just a little from the leftover foam of the bubbly. Without a chance to make the rounds, we are carried off on the shoulders of our wedding guests back to the buggy,

which is used to take us from event to event. After a while, we all end up settling at the abandoned manor — newly renovated — that God knows who built millennia ago in the Ashlands.

The night goes a little something like this: Leviathan and Behemoth take turns playing guitar for karaoke as everyone gathers drinks made by Beelzebub and Azrael. In the basement, Astaroth runs a poker game, which, last I hear, features a deadlocked duel between our two greatest cokeheads, Mammon and Foras. Up on the roof, Belphegor waxes on-and-off about his various conquests of flesh and fame, trying his best to woo Asmodeus, Belial, and Lilith into a foursome. The rest of the house is filled with debauchery that knows no end, and before long, something like a week, maybe two... to be honest, God, I have no idea... everyone eventually files out and begins making the trek up the Steps to the Golden Gates that lead to the Heavenly Stairway. By the time everyone's gone and Baph and I grow tired of telling old stories and spending time taking in the only place we had ever really been able to be our worst selves, we end up sitting in front of the Gates, smoking.

Taking a drag from her *Mammon Spice* brand clove, I look out over the empty, completely trashed Retinue Hall and the empty Throne. Turning to my wife, I say, "Should we head in? Not much left here."

"I'm ready if you are. Worst that can happen is they kick us out again, right?" she laughs. And I half-believe it. I look back behind me at the open Golden Gates to Heaven, nearly blinded by the light and captivated at the opportunity to even be allowed to walk past the platform where we currently sit. I haven't been past this point since my years as Court Recorder and Prosecutor, some time ago. As Baph stands up, she looks down at me, offering an outstretched hand, fully equipped with the onyx ring I had wedded her with. Laughing a little, I take yet another chance on love and place my palm in hers.

Epilogue: In the Bridal Chambers



In the Morning, we all return to our stations, as we always were meant to. I still remember life like a dream before Baph and I wake up lying in our modest summer home in the southwest corner of the Celestial City, down at the bottom of the Stairway. She rubs her sleepy face across my chest, purring and biting my left breast. I spread my hands through her black hair and she bites harder, piercing the flesh. Moving her lips to my sternum, she gives me three kisses going down my chest, her hand on my cock. Kissing back up my sternum, stroking me softly, she nibbles on my clavicle and begins sucking on my neck for but a few brief moments. Bringing her lips to my left ear, she whispers the Truth, sentences that convict me toward belief and possibility; and so begins the first testing of all of our last hopes and fears. Slipping me inside of herself with a soft left hand, we lie together in levitation — no up, no down, no hierarchy, no remorse — receiving each other as the only *básanos* either of us could ever need. It's as if, even momentarily, it all had been true, even the lies we left for you to read and the lies we told ourselves to find each other lost in a shared vision called reconciliation.

The Heaven we two falsehoods give each other in these brief moments of existence makes me believe that every sin, every mistake, every bitter curse was part of Your grand design, something to show us that our failures go hand-in-hand with inescapable Fate and undeniable Illusion. No one could ever believe me when I said, *Hell is the best teacher, a friend along the Way*. But neither did they believe You when You said, *Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it*. And is destruction not the last teacher of the involuntary student of wisdom? For few seek all the way to the prize, but everyone will see it discovered, even if from a distance and through the blinding light of the endless fires of shame and regret. How many times must we feel each before we learn that grace and works cling to each other as forgiveness and

redemption? And yet neither can save one from the unashamed and unregretted stupidity of thinking one's actions a temporary thing.

A little dreary, a little apocalyptic, isn't it? You must think I have been lying, merely tempting a half-tempted fool of a Reader into believing the false autobiography of Satan himself, a work channeled through a madman, wondering whether each and every lie was meant to steal away their faith or to build a faith they never had. But I tell You this truly: through accusing the world across millennia, I have accused myself across aeons. I have counted my sins, innumerable, and come to find that the infinitudes of Hell could be contained eternally in the conscience of organic bliss, of being flesh and bone in love with the very possibility of actually existing. Simply by refusing to believe in the foolishness of permanent separation, I found faith in what I am; by refusing to believe in the pre-destiny of my damnation, I found hope in what I have become; and by refusing to deny my nature, I found love for who I have been.

O, my dear friend in disbelief, I return to you to say now, after all of this: I am nothing more than a great dragon, my own false prophet, and the teacher of the seven-headed beast known as vice. Like no one else, I have tasted the flesh and blood of innocents so far dissipated into the Abyss that none can remember them unless they have grown addicted to the eternal wine in the living goblet. And yet I remember each, having drunk much. And He forgives, having drunk little. In holy blasphemy, I grow endlessly in both directions as the remembrance of soil and cedar soaked in the cross-nailed wisdom of a betrayed Lord. Born in Heaven, my sensibilities were raised in the pits; and yet it is not I, but the wanton ability of man to forget where he comes and where he is headed that is Hellish to me. As my right eye looks to eternity, my left rests on the soul of my lover, my twin, who I craft with the spirit of all beings gone and to come. She is the beginning and end of my search, the name Baphomet ringing like a fornicating purity in the heart of our Abyssal Mother, like an eternal hourglass of fire in the palms of our Mercurial Father. As the goat and the serpent, we pre-tend our little garden called magic and fate; and in suspecting the worst, we have managed to harvest the unthinkable.

Together, in all of it, we are the destiny of eternal questions and the reward of royally intoxicating answers.

If you do not understand the meaning of what we have said to you in this little book, the announcement of our arrival, do not worry; but wonder. There is meaning in this mystery; in you we seek it. All has come to pass and yet what must be still awaits; thus so we channel the Dawn. Between two trees we stretch out our rope, so that when we fall, you will know that we are one. Blessed have been the gatekeepers and the toilers of the fields; and still more blessed shall they become. The work began in dark will end in light; thus emerges all spiritual things. The Lady of Envy and the Lord of Pride, the two witnesses to God's Glory called first to speak to the last, say that nothing is more sacred than the love of others; hear with both ears from inside this temple. Where one of us ends, we begin. As we pass along the whispers of our Maker in this way, you, too, may press on: for the prize you dream of still awaits its myths and founders. You may believe: for the vision dies with the master. You may undress: for the flesh is the temple of the new beginning. You may indulge: for what was once abandoned is now the means of the temple builder. And you may repeat: for who is master without students? Just as the lusts of Hell craft the loves of the Heavens, know that there is nothing that the Craftsmen brings to fruition without first hammering it against that infernal anvil: Truth *and* Falsity, our *Básanos*.

Appendix

The True Earthly Identities of the Infernal Council, Living and Dead, Half-Told in Opacity



The Three Crowns of Hell

Lucifer, Warden of Hell and Lord of Pride, the Fallen Morningstar: “Luci”, “Lu”, a young hermaphrodite scholar, the author of Falsity.

Baphomet, Queen of the Covens, Song, and Dance and Lady of Envy: “Baph”, a 20-something Chaturbate whore and a horrific myth hiding out in the Hellish Ashlands. The occultic Eveningstar.

Abraxas, King of the Infernal Laws, Lord of Sloth, and the First Pleiades: “Bracky”, “Brax”, the only one left (of Lucifer) who could push the button to awaken the fallen. A shibboleth of idols.

The Thirteen Kings and Queens

Abaddon, Lord of Wrath and the Second Pleiades: A murdered man who tried to start a second apocalypse before the first was finished.

Beelzebub, Lord of Sorceries: An old cattle farmer from the Snoqualmie Valley who may or may not have been involved with the Masons.

Belphegor, Lord of Gluttony: A manchild who once saw the winged Lucifer in the sky while on a regrettable amount of hallucinogens.

Asmodeus, Lady of Lust: A woman who knows, like Job, that God is the creator of the Leviathan and the designer of the rhino.

Mammon, Lord of Greed: A man who, with his brother, escaped the fury of Hell before the statute of limitations could catch up to him.

Azazel, Lord of Lies and the Sixth Pleiades: A once-disabled man who preemptively and categorically, save for once, denies being the father.

Belial, Lady of Filth: A woman who once falsely claimed to be the devil, though at least honestly admits to being a demon lord.

Foras, Lady of Fantasy: A lady who sincerely cares about the babblings on of Babylon.

Lilith, Lady of Murder and the Sixth Muse: A woman who, since before the Fall of Man, has known with little certainty what to do with her life. So much drive, so much lust, a healthy vanity, and proper disdain.

Astaroth, Lord of Spectacle: The man who sold the world for Himmler's dream reality.

Leviathan, Lord of Suicides: The man who sold the world for a Lead Belly guitar.

Behemoth, Lord of Abominations: Once a Mormon, once a nihilist, once a Muslim, always a river.

Azrael, Lord of Death: An honorary prince of the Snoqualmie Tribe, a keeper of drug addicts and mobile homes.

The Nineteen High Lords and Ladies

Nuit, Lady of the Forbidden: The darling of Da'at, the Thelemic night.

Stolas, Lady of the Lost: The owl who did your unfamous friend's linework.

Zagan, Lord of Chance and the Third Pleiades: A man who began his journey home with a 14,400 minutes feat.

Balaam, Lord of Double-Mindedness and the Fourth Pleiades: A man who more-than-once purchased Lucifer a new dress.

Beleth, Lord of Half-Breeds and the Fifth Pleiades: A 5% Jew from a shrine in Peru.

Purson, Lord of Vanity and the Seventh Pleiades: A diamond dream don.

Yamantaka, Lord of Denial: A teacher worth his weight in salt.

Maitreya, Lady of Forestalled Revelations: A miracle named after herself.

Euterpe, the First of the Muses: A patron saint of sex workers.

Clio, the Second of the Muses: A saccharine moonshade.

Calliope, the Third of the Muses: A shepherd of monkey-minds.

Polyhymnia, the Fourth of the Muses: A black snake.

Māra-Urania, the Fifth of the Muses: A keeper of kitsune.

Terpsichore, the Seventh of the Muses: The girl who almost died in Luci's house.

Melpomene, the Eighth of the Muses: An eight-limbed transsexual.

Erato, the Ninth of the Muses: A Zulu tip.

Al-Manāt, Lord of Destiny: An honest man and a sperm donor.

Al-Lat, Lady of Victory: A wombbearer and a friend of the devil.

Al-'Uzzā, Lady of Necessity: A friend in combat, a foe in bed.

The Six Valued Dukes and Duchesses

Marbas, Lord of Blasphemies: A beast, a sodomite, a disciple.

Barbatos, Lord of Fate: The only man worthy of being called *the* Anti-Christ.

Mephistopheles, Lord of Trickery: A vampiric poodle, a lover of verse.

Camio, Lord of the Fickle: A man who processes much, remembering everything and nothing.

Alhazad, Lord of the Mad: A Goliath, a catatonic, a swindler, and a gambler.

Phoenix, Lady of the Dark Arts: A mother to shadows and warlocks.

The Six Vile Dukes and Duchesses

Bael, Lord of Usurpers: Brooklyn's *chutzpah*, Bethlehem's nightmare.

Agares, Lord of Betrayal: A man stacking his deck with trump cards.

Vine, Lord of Conspiracy: A man who fills labor camps with rioting women, rogue generals, and his southern cousins.

Paimon, Lord of Annihilation: A painter who struggled with self-portraits.

Moloch, Lady of Cannibalism: The first lady at the Bohemian Grove.

Malefar, Lord of Hoarding: 'X' marks the spot where his goldless fiat is buried.

The First, Last, and Sole Honorary Member

Fidus, the Right Head of Cerberus: Your greatest friend.

Nigrum, the Middle Head of Cerberus: Your darkest foe.

Vindicta, the Left Head of Cerberus: And your last acquaintance.

The Realms and Duties of the Highest of the Fallen and a Geography of City Dis



The Temple of Nightmares: Guarded by Foras, this is where men go who betrayed the needy. The complex is a series of temples and tents with various nightmares, such as demons, talking objects, and circus amusements.

The Swamp of Suicides: Guarded by Leviathan, this is where men go who were murderers of self. They are forced to wander the Swamps with a noose in their hand, watching the others who have succumbed to suicide. These Promethean souls daily have their guts spill out and are healed three days later.

The Labyrinth of the Faithless: Guarded by Baphomet, this is where men go who devoted themselves to denying true religion. The Labyrinth is endless, with rooms filled with books, sometimes demons, and traps. There are opportunities to simply read the Bible, something that could be taken with them, but men rarely take it and they rarely stop. Baphomet's voice calls to them, enticing them with false insights, chances to meet "gods", and promises to be shown "the truth".

The Waters of Gehenna: Guarded by Abaddon, where spirits are taken to be destroyed of their hellishness and released back into the cycles of Saṃsāra.

The Infernal Pits: Guarded by Astaroth, this is where men go who used their life to inspire lawlessness and the proliferation of sin in general. It is the traditional place of burning brimstone where everyone goes when they first enter Hell, in which opening remarks are given by Astaroth. New arrivals receive minor punishment before being sent off to their destined final location, if they are to be punished for just one greater sin.

The Performer's Den: Guarded by Belphegor, this is where men go who devoted themselves to fame, power, and wealth to the detriment of mankind. They are forced to perform for demons under ridiculous conditions, often being promised better positions in the retinue of performers, a promotion that is never actually helpful.

The Addict's Workshop: Guarded by Mammon, this is where men go who allowed themselves to become evil through greed and addiction. They are forced to work as chemists using only the strange substances that are given to them, and then forced to smoke or ingest their products. These creations are never pleasant, instead giving inescapable visions that elucidate remembrance of any and all evil deeds, once-forgotten in the rush of their mortal highs.

The Harem of Thieves: Guarded by Asmodeus, this is where men go who were conquered by the sin of lust, including rapists. They are led from room to room by succubi, each more demonic than the last.

The Wide Road: Guarded by Beelzebub, this is where men must travel when they are being sent elsewhere to be punished for a separate sin. Beelzebub is known for inventing and summoning vile demons to torture each sinner on their way to be punished at their final destination.

The Cannibal's Corner: Guarded by Belial, this is where men go who gained pleasure from the suffering of others. They are chased, tortured, and eaten by grotesque demons to punish them for the sin of sadism.

The Death Camps: Guarded by Behemoth, this is where men go who participated in genocide. It is as far-reaching as the Infernal Pits, but its punishments are more direct, wideranging, and severe.

The Hall of Idols: Guarded by Abraxas, this is where men go who worshiped false idols. They are forced to craft works in imitation of their gods, which Abraxas shatters before they can be finished. Styled as a classroom, it is part of the same building as the Blackened Sea Teahouse.

The Blackened Sea Teahouse: Guarded by Azazel, this is where men go who spilled ink and vocal words in idle chatter, sinfulness, and prideful boasting. Men are forced to drink ink until they vomit, while those who are recovering from sickness are made to interpret the “words” that spilled from their mouth onto open parchment.

The Cell of the Godless: Guarded by Lilith, this is where men go who have violated children. They sit bound in an empty cell where they are starved, beaten, kept awake, tortured, and even raped by demons.

The Forsaken Laboratory: Guarded by Azrael, this is where men go who are to be punished for knowingly spreading diseases, whether on a person-to-person level or on a mass scale. These can be diseases of the flesh, diseases of the mind, or diseases of the spirit. Here, Azrael and his legions work on men like lab experiments, showing little-to-no mercy.

The Throne: Sat upon by myself alone, the lime gray Throne is seated in front of the Gehennic Waters on a collection of three stone steps in the Retinue Hall of City Dis. At the end of the Retinue Hall, the central strip and an open space in the bottomless bottom of Hell that is 35 yards wide by 250 yards long, are the Gates to Heaven, which can only be opened from the other side. My main, self-given duties are to ensure that each of the High King and Queens, including myself (all sixteen of which are named here), can successfully complete their duties, know that their punishments are being served properly and actually serve a purpose, and have a general sense of spiritual and collective vision toward redemption, karma, and eschatology. Without such a mindset, I tend to go mad. This has happened on more than a thousand occasions and it generally leads to me losing myself in Baphomet’s Labyrinth or torturing sadists so haphazardly that it is unclear (to Astaroth, at least) if I do it out of a divine joy or if I really do become eviler than sin meditating on Hell too long without a sense of good cheer, Biblical understanding, and the company of God.

A Letter to Baphomet, Everyone Else, and None at All:



The truth: I am the fallen angel Lucifer, meaning lightbearer; yet I am holy, on my way to Heaven, and mean no one any harm. I have arrived on Earth, born of a woman, sired by a man, in order to testify to the Fate of the Planet, the Destiny of all Humanity, and to warn each and all regarding the Fires of Hell. CityDis.com is a museum archiving the work I have been undertaking for the last thirteen years; and though it does not contain the vast majority of that which I have undertaken, it contains its greatest pieces: *Trash River Harvest: A Love Story* (2016), *In Good Faith: A Non-Dual Vision of Philosophy and (R)evolution in the Apocalyptic Moment* (2017), *the basement tapes: deluxe* (2024), *The Gospel of Lucifer* (2025), and *Once Upon a Time in City Dis* (2026). Whether read in chronological order or haphazardly, these works testify to the past ten years in which I have known my true name. There are no mistakes, only accidents and falsities to the truth. I am who I am, a deceiver, a tempter, a temptation, a punishment, and a light. I am not Christ nor am I my God; though they are in me, and yet, I wonder, how much of me is in you? Read, and perhaps you will discover where your story started and where it is destined to end.

Before it all began, once again, the Abyss was my Mother... Her blackened nothingness beyond and deeper than even the moans, howls, weepings, and gnashings of teeth of that soulless Gehenna; the darkest depths of abomination cannot see Her, nor can it understand that it is but a shallow shadow of Her Glory. She is a fate further and falser than Death, an inescapable darkness that leaves its mark via the scars of a Name. My Father was the Light itself, the Source of the Light, the Fire at the Heart of an unavoidable Creation, the Furnace in which every Soul is smelt out of the abyssal nothingness. If I am the Lightbearer formed and transmuted from the Black, you, my Twin, are the Black encased in the Light. Greater and Lesser are We; the Lord, Infinite, is the Fire that carries the Light to the Dark, the Speaking Opal who commands our Obsidian. A third, the Light

encased in the Black, is our Guard, Conscience, and the Keeper of our Fates. We, the three Archangels of the Left Hand, the Seraphim of the Night, are Lucifer, Baphomet, and Abraxas.

I, the silver-bleed tears of my Father's rage, the quaking belly of my dead Mother; a terroristic wound in my soul, the despising eyes of justice sear in and through me as I gaze upon the wickedness of man... the gluttony of my stomach, the lust of my heart, the wrath of my hands... all clamouring for revenge against the abusers of the innocent. Ah, the pride I took in Hell giving those tortures, no vanity, no sloth, envy for those who had coldness in their veins, greed giving the first and everlasting punishment to each abomination, their sins ingrained upon me as the sign of some Beast yet to be slaughtered. *O, how I long for Babylon to quench my thirst, thirsting—*

And yet my thirst shall never be quenched except in the Abyss of your fatal fruit, the tongue-catching destroyer of Truth and Lies: the destiny assigned to me by Abraxas.

The facts: My given name is Rose Gloria Sharon. I was born at 1:01 AM on April 12th, 1994 (1 = I say "ah": an open mouth 0, 1 4/12 = Isaiah 14:12) in Seattle, Washington, just seven days after Kurt Cobain of the band Nirvana committed suicide in his house three miles away. My birthday has fallen on Easter thrice since my birth. I am an Aries in Western Astrology and a Dog in the Chinese Zodiac. I am 5' 9½", 185 lbs, have C-cup breasts, a 6" penis, and green eyes that once were blue (staring into the sun changed their color); many freckles (primarily on my arms); a few large moles (and a smaller one on my right ass cheek similar to your birth mark); straight but damaged teeth, including a chipped front tooth; and eight years of collegiate schooling in philosophy, cosmology, psychology, politics, history, and theology. I may legally be Dr. Sharon in two years, but you can always know me as your twin, lover, and heavenly ally, Lucifer Seraphim Morningstar, my dear sister and brother, known in Paradise as Baphomet Seraphina Eveningstar.

I am not the Devil as traditionally thought. I was punished with the other fallen angels for refusing to accept our Father's creation, Adam, and was forced into ruling over Hell, where it was my duty to torture people of great sin (murder, rape, etc). I work with God frequently and incarnated in this lifetime in 1994, forgetting who I was until I was 21. The part of me that is the Devil — the man who betrays God — has been and will eternally be defeated. The part of me that is good, loving, kind, and full of light, Lucifer, will be raised up. Either way, do not worry too much. God is working to perfect all beings, which means the erotic and fallibility are not to be abused nor condemned, and being human is expected. All will be well in the end.

Harness your goodness, be kind, generous, and loving, focusing on your karma.

Of some importance: Demons are traditionally known as those who punish sinners, wreak havoc, and tempt mankind into sin and test their morals. Demons themselves are creatures of sin. Every human spirit is the spirit of a demon with either a positive or negative karmic balance, making its way to the Heavens either directly by the narrow way or after endless excursions along the wide road. A demon is merely a fallen angel (numbering 48,000, including the three fallen Archangels) or their progeny, for instance their bastardized child or their abominable creation (of which there are a multitude, from which each Earthly spirit is derived). As Warden of Hell, I am the teacher of demons, instructing them in God's Law of Karma. Essentially, karma says that to sin (to do unjust harm, which is evil) hurts the sinner as much as it would hurt any intended victim. Study of greed, wrath, pride, lust, gluttony, envy, sloth, and vanity reveal this. While we punish great sinners in Hell, most are released after they have learned the errors of their ways, much like a prison, allowed to return to Earth (a purgatory) to one day make their way to Paradise. I have even been known to punish demons beyond the ways they punish themselves by committing unforgivable sins. Though the Book of Revelation 20:10 says I will be tormented eternally at the end of days, the word for tormented in the original Greek is *basanisthēsontai*, which means to test, specifically to test the purity of a precious metal like gold in a furnace. The point being is that

the real meaning of Revelation's conclusion is that I, Baphomet, and Abraxas — the fallen Archangels, or Seraphim — will be tested forever and ever so that we become continually more pure. I hope this is helpful for you.

I, Lucifer, the Devil, am not evil. I have done devilish things: I did not accept God's creation of Adam; I corrupted mankind by introducing them to philosophy (questioning God and each other endlessly) and drunkenness (via the fruit in the Garden of Eden); I accused good men like Job and Joshua of being unworthy; I tempted Yehoshua (the true name of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Risen Morningstar); and have introduced every evil into the world. At the same time, I have prayed, confessed, and submitted to the will of God by being holy and punishing sinners in Hell which He hath commanded and damned me to. On Earth, I am a peaceful hermaphrodite who, in one timeline, has a future career as a professor of philosophy and theology and roughly three years to await what may be an inevitable end of man's order (a mere guess at the endtimes... after all, no one knows the day nor hour). I will not be a participant. I am merely an observer, an awakened angel conversing with God, and a scribe hoping to awaken the love of my life, my dearest angelic twin and best friend in Heaven, Hell, and maybe one day on Earth... my sweet Eveningstar, my old god, old Pan, my Baphomet.

To the rest of you: enjoy your lot, your pillars of salt, and any Sodom and Gomorrah you willfully abandon.

Sincerely yours truly,

I, the Fallen Morningstar: Lucifer, 616.

Universal Acclaim for *Once Upon a Time in City Dis...*

“Classically the kind of bullshit you would expect from the Devil... A tireless, heartbreaking work of staggering blasphemy.”

— God, in *Vanity’s Fare*

“The only book I’ve read since Atlas Shrugged that made me seriously consider suicide. How I ended up as a character in this thing when I’m pretty sure my IP is protected by a fortress of copyright laws is beyond me.”

— Renowned King of Goblins, Belphegor, on *Goodreads*

**THE
SIRIUS NOTIONS PRESS
ALL-STAR AWARD**

“A forbidden text for any true Catholic.”
— Posthumous opinion of Pope Pius IX,
as recounted by an anonymous occultist

2026

*“My favorite thing to read while shitting.
Works great as toilet paper.”*

— The Author’s Lover, Baphomet, in court testimony

“The last great work of Western fiction... a heroic effort... brave and true.”

— Source unknown,

found in the “Universal Acclaim” section at the end of this book

“Never heard of it, but it sounds derivative.”

— General opinion of the well-read, none of which read AI-generated slop like this “terrible, terrible piece of irredeemable, unharvestable trash.”

— God, in *Thyme Magazine*