

Fall of Angels

By:

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Chapter One - It Begins

Bill looked at his paycheck mentally checking off the checks he had written last night. \$80; there would be \$80 dollars left. That was the third surplus in the last four checks, but more important, the debt that had strangled his family was nearly wiped out. They would be able to save a bit of money, perhaps even splurge.

Maggie had wanted new shoes, and Allan definitively needed a new coat for the winter. And he really should get something for Julie, his wife. She worked hard at her second job, just like he did, to get them back on their feet; perhaps they'd have a weekend without the kids, somewhere up the coast.

His good mood evaporated when the car's engine did not turn over. Bill mentally checked off the maintenance he had let slip on the car; nothing major. He had taken care of all maintenance needed to keep the car running.

He opened the hood and peered into the engine compartment. Modern cars ... there was not much to check. He grabbed one of the battery leads to jiggle it. The port came loose, spraying acid on his hand and arm. One drop found its way to the corner of his eye.

The angel watched the man fall to the ground. The loss of work and medical bills would ensure Bill and his family would see difficult times ahead. For good measure, the angel waved his hand and fused one of the cylinders to the engine block. That would run multiple thousands to fix. They might even have to scrap the car altogether. It smiled.

This had been an easy one. It checked the list; the next assignment looked a tad more difficult. It studied the file. The young daughter ... a rare disease, perhaps?

"Hey! Slick!" The voice was low, sounding like gravel going through a wooden trough.

The angel looked back at the ordinary-looking man standing not ten feet away. He then noticed Bill, a few people helping

him up. There were no burns on his arm, and his eye seemed fine.

"Who are you, and how dare you interfere with me?" A glow formed around the angel. A glow that swirled and snapped, like an angry animal.

"Well, slick, I'm someone who is tired of taking the blame for the stuff you do!" As he spoke, the ordinary-looking man's features slowly changed, his stature growing.

The angel looked away from the figure as he heard a car's engine turn over. Bill was frantically trying to put the car in gear, and once he managed it, he took off. The angel raised its hand ... but a clawed hand wrapped around its wrist before the angel could swerve the car into the concrete pylon.

"No." It was not yelled but spoken with a finality that caused the angel to snap its head back to the figure, now towering and dark.

Angry, the angel gathered its strength, light swirling about him, pulsating with great brightness. The light had no effect on the dark shape. The other clawed hand reached out, and as the angel watched, it buried itself in angel's chest.

The hand closed, and the light and angel both ceased to be.

The dark shape evaporated, leaving behind an ordinary-looking man. The six people who had helped Bill approached and stopped in a semi-circle as the ordinary-looking man turned toward them.

"So it begins."

Chapter 2 - Take Me

"How is it going?" The voice was quiet, but it carried the sound of power. Or at least, of power that was.

"It goes" The ordinary-looking man approached the reclined shape. "I started simultaneously in time and place, and it continues." The ordinary man stood beside The First.

"Good ... but I still doubt the outcome." The First stretched and rose. It stood twice the height of the man but did not tower over him. Rather, it seemed as one with the man.

"Long has HE been absent, and I fear the worst. The Angels have been bold of late and exceed the limits placed on them and us. Their power has grown."

The First turned to the man, tendrils of smoke drifting about them, making it hard to tell if their origin was the man or The First.

"It does not matter." The man grew into Shadow, his shape now indistinct, the darkness absorbing the light from the fires, and not letting it escape. The Shadow matched The First in height but was much darker.

"Most creatures of Smoke and Fire side with us and the others will not interfere. We will reclaim our place in this universe, and perhaps beyond." Shadow's voice was not outright angry, but there was tension in the words.

The First looked upon Shadow. Even in its prime, The First could not have hoped to gather such darkness. Once again, The First wondered at what it had spawned. The man had been ordinary, but the gift bestowed upon him had taken that ordinary, and changed him into something The First had yet to fully comprehend.

The First replayed the memory of his summoning. Never before had any demon, let alone The First, been summoned with such force. The First had found itself facing an ordinary-looking man, standing next to the three urns, one large, and two small, containing the remains of the man's dead family. The intensity of the man was overpowering and, to The First, was confirmation of what it always suspected about Humans.

"I saw the angel," the man had said. "They said it was carbon monoxide, but I saw the angel smother them. I could not

move and was made to watch as their lives ended. It laughed, the angel did. It seemed to grow in brilliance and power with each of the deaths."

The First had just stood there, looking at the man. It felt the anger in the man change into raw power, intoxicating in its proximity and intensity. And then the power dissolved, a decision reached. The man just looked at The First.

"Take me."

Two words that set in motion all that was to be.

Chapter 3 - Betrayal

Stepping outside of time, outside of place, The First had pondered the request. The Angels, Beings of Light, had conspired against both Humans and Demons, earning a place of privilege at the expense of them both. Why HE allowed it, The First did not know; it had not been granted an audience to appeal the judgment.

The hearing on the events in The Garden had been the last time The First had seen HE That Was.

The First visited The Garden once, to watch the making of Things, Animals, and Humans. HE That Was asked for both Angels and Demons to keep clear of the beings of flesh, and never return to The Garden.

The humans had been tricked into naming The First as the transgressor of that edict, and the punishment was set. Exile, for both. But not just exile for Demons. Their subsistence

would be the memories of corrupt humans. And so did the lore spread, from human to human; Demons fed on humans by corrupting them, and taking their souls from them.

Souls! How could Humans be so blind! The gift had been reason, independent thought, autonomy of action. No Demon or Angel could directly corrupt a Human. But the Angels had weaved those tales as well, setting impossible standards for conduct, arbitrary rules, spreading the seeds of guilt.

For guilt corrupted humans; small transgressions to impossible demands. Once guilt took hold, it corrupted reason. In some, reason rebelled, further corrupting them. At the end of their time, when demons fed on their memories, those humans were but shadows of what they could have been.

The Angels too suffered. They miscalculated, and did not foresee to what extent their stories influenced human reason. So many succumbed to the stories, even adding to them, and they too were diminished. A different kind of corruption, but a corruption just the same.

And then, there were humans like this ordinary man. They did reason. They did not believe the stories. They offered no sustenance to either Angels or Demons, for they did not ascribe to the reality of either. Some had postulated the rise of these

non-believers, their rise and increase in numbers, would in time become, or perhaps surpass HE That Was.

These non-believers shaped their universe, had the potential to be greater than Angels, Demons, and HE itself. Demons could do little but ignore them, but Angels took both direct action and, through other humans, indirect action; to control them, to limit the numbers of non-believers.

And now, this ordinary human, this non-believer, offered himself to it, The First. It could feel the power of this human and knew it could provide centuries of sustenance. But The First saw more. Here was the opportunity to align Humans and Demons.

The opportunity to fight back against their common enemy.