

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days --and also afterwards-- when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown."

Genesis 6:4

Prologue

means: Daniel: god is my judge, Cain: sig. killed brother

Daniel Cain jolted awake. His heart pounded and he was drenched with sweat. He was dreaming of the girl. Again. He still couldn't make out their location, but it seemed as if they were both outside and he was lying on the ground. She was **right there** and looked concerned as she stood over him. This time, she was close enough that he could see her features clearer than ever before. She appeared to be a teenager - perhaps 17 or 18 years old with dark, curly hair, but all that melted away when he saw her eyes. They were bright and deep blue - quite possibly the bluest eyes he had ever seen. The image of her eyes remained etched in his memory.

Daniel took a deep breath and shook his head in an attempt to release the hold the girl's eyes had on him. He knew they would cross paths, and soon. It was inevitable. What he didn't know was when; or where; or how the meeting would go. Would she survive? His dreams worked that way, always giving him a few clues, but never revealing the whole picture. The closer he came to meeting another of his kind, the more vivid the dreams would become. Sometimes his visions felt like a gift, other times a curse. He was disheartened lately after experiencing too many of the latter kind. Not having seen enough to categorize her, he tried to remain hopeful.

His cell phone vibrated from atop the bed stand. When he looked up to check the caller ID, he noticed the clock read six o'clock - time to get up. The incoming number was familiar, so he quickly grabbed the phone and crept out of the bedroom - careful not to wake his wife. In his haste, he left behind his bathrobe. The combination of the cold air and his sweaty t-shirt made him shiver. Once in the hallway, he closed the door behind him and answered in a loud whisper.

"Cain here."

"Morning, Mr. Cain. Just received word that your board meeting has been pushed back to 9am," said his assistant. "So...feel free to take your time coming in this morning."

"Thanks, Mary."

"I, um, noticed you were here pretty late last night - or should I say - early this morning? You should have let me stay to help. Do you need anything else to prepare for the meeting?"

"No, Mary. I'm all set. Thanks for the call."

His tone was sharp as he hung up the phone. He couldn't let Mary stay late to help, because she could never know the truth about what he was really doing.

As Daniel grabbed his clothes and headed into the bathroom, he chastised himself. *Mary is becoming more observant. I need to be careful, I don't want to be forced to change assistants. Again.*

Mary sighed as she placed the phone back on its cradle. This wasn't her first job as an executive assistant. She had experienced this before - her bosses working long hours and forgetting to stop to eat. In all her years, she had never worked for a boss as dedicated to his job as Daniel Cain. It just wasn't physically possible for any human being to function at this pace long term. She worried that he would eventually burn out. She had seen the signs before. Where would that leave her? And the kids? SO many kids were dependent on Daniel Cain and The Legion of Angels.

The Legion of Angels is a very successful non-profit agency owned and operated by Daniel Cain. Their mission is to raise money and coordinate volunteers to assist with various needs of disadvantaged children around the world. At least, that is their public mission.

In many ways, The Legion of Angels is not just what he does, but it is also who is he is. After losing his parents at a young age, Daniel was discovered by the previous owner, Jonah Gotzon, *God rest his soul*, while living in an orphanage. Jonah somehow recognized that he was - special. So, he took Daniel under his wing and raised him as his own son - taught him everything he knew and gave him full control of the company when he passed away.

Daniel hoped to do the same with an heir of his own someday. Unfortunately, he and his wife had experienced multiple miscarriages. They long ago accepted they would never experience the pattering of little Cain feet in their lives. Daniel's only hope was to find someone like himself - and he had yet to meet a candidate both worthy and willing.

Daniel managed to get ready and slip out of the house without waking his wife. She was used to his long hours, but certainly didn't possess his ability to survive on few hours of sleep. Her alarm clock wouldn't sound for another fifteen minutes - and she would appreciate each and every second of rest before having to function as a second grade teacher. That, and lots of coffee.

While driving to the office, the girl from his dream continued to haunt Daniel's thoughts. Perhaps this is the reason he didn't notice the patch of black ice until it was too late. Before he could react, he was spinning out of control and headed straight toward another car. He leaned on the horn in a desperate attempt to

warn the other driver before their inevitable impact. The sound of the crushing metal and the following silence were deafening.

Chapter 1: Hindsight

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep.

It started like any other day. The annoying alarm clock pulled me out of a deep and dreamless sleep. I practically had to force myself out of the warmth of my bed. My bare feet touched the cold, wood floor and I walked over to the window. As the shade lifted to expose the view outside, a huge sigh escaped me. It was a struggle not to feel depressed this time of year. On a typical New Hampshire winter day the color pallet consisted of varying shades of two colors: white and brown. The sun had just risen, but remained hidden behind a thick blanket of clouds. The trees had long lost their leafy cover and were now bare and exposed - shivering in the wind. The snow which had fallen days before had been pushed around to clear paths in the driveway and streets, mixing it with dirt and turning what was once pure, sparkling white into an ugly brown mess. On a day like that, simply *looking* outside invited the bitter cold to seep into your bones.

My feet found comfort in fuzzy slippers while a yawn overtook me and my arms stretched to the ceiling - cracking my spine from top to bottom. I was going to have to hurry in order to shower and eat breakfast before heading out for school. My reflection greeted me when I entered the bathroom. Not a pretty sight. My black, curly hair was all matted from a full night of sleep. The dark circles under my eyes indicated that one full night wasn't nearly going to be enough to make up for the recent late night study sessions. I remember thinking that this last term of my senior year just might do me in.

Shaking my head, I told my image, *"Ewww, Abigail, what a mess! Brad will never notice you if you show up looking like this - at least not in a good way!"*

My mind remained on Brad while showering and getting dressed. Not sure why, really - Brad Smith wouldn't have noticed me on a good day. Besides, it would

have been even worse if he did! Whenever I got within two feet of him, I turned into the biggest spaz - all tongue tied and uncomfortable. My equilibrium was off and confidence was thrown out the window. My normally porcelain-white cheeks would blush instantly - so not attractive. Brad was handsome and popular and smart - the captain of the basketball team, for the love of God. The guy **exuded** confidence. Everything seemed to come naturally to him and I admired that tremendously. Brad was everything I envisioned in the perfect boyfriend.

Don't get me wrong, although I didn't see myself in the same league as Brad Smith, I certainly wasn't a geek or social outcast - not even close. My mix of friends was eclectic and could be spread out amongst all the social classes that existed in my high school. I'm pretty easy going and friendly - if I do say so myself. It's just that being in the spotlight makes my skin crawl. I prefer to remain, well, unnoticed. As for sports, let's just say that I don't *get* sports. I truly do not possess one athletic bone in my body and have not found a sport that I enjoy - unless you count hiking - but that's really just walking around outside. My mom called from downstairs, completely interrupting day dreams about Brad.

"Abigail...clock's ticking. If you want breakfast, you best get down here."

"Coming, Mom."

I tucked the shirt into my school uniform and gave myself one last look in the mirror while rubbing on more lip gloss with my finger before heading down the stairs.

Mom greeted me with her standard, "Morning, sunshine." and a kiss on the cheek.

"What'll it be? Cereal or waffles?"

means: Gift

My Mom, Anna, has always been a stickler about sitting down together to eat breakfast. You see, my father, Jesse, died in a horrible accident shortly after they discovered my mom was pregnant with me. She's done an amazing job keeping the memory of him alive - considering I have no memories of my own. She has told me everything she knows about him and his pictures are all over the house. While other little girls were hearing bedtimes stories about Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty, I often fell asleep to the love story of Anna and Jesse. In fact, I've heard **so** many stories of my dad, it's easy to forget that I've never actually met the man. Her stories have become my stories. I can close my eyes and picture him as if he were standing in front of me.

Sometimes, it sort of feels as if my dad's ghost is still with us - but not in a creepy way. I'm not sure what my beliefs are about life after death. But, if ghosts do exist, I wouldn't be surprised if my dad still hung around. To hear my mom tell their story, my parents were soul mates. It's so romantic how they fell in love - and so tragic how he died. Mom honestly never got over him. In all fairness, she never even tried, despite multiple attempts from people trying to set her up on dates. She believed he was her one true love and wasn't interested in meeting anyone else. She's not a sad or miserable person still suffering from grief or anything. Quite the opposite. She's a pretty happy person. But, it's always been just the two of us - living in the same house in the same town all of my life.

I humored my mom and sat down with her to eat although I was running late and, quite honestly, wasn't at all hungry. I was feeling a little guilty these days. After all, I would be leaving for college in the fall and the thought of leaving her in this house all alone made me sad. Not sad enough to not go though - a part of me couldn't wait to break away from here and experience new things. Our small town felt smaller each year.

"Any plans after school?" she asked.

“Nope. Not today. Same old, same old.”

“Why don’t you stop by my office later and see about an after school job. You’re going to need spending money this fall.”

“Sure, Mom.” I rolled my eyes and dug in to my cereal. My mom was the Hermon Hills town clerk/tax collector. My grandmother worked as her deputy for years before retiring. They knew everyone in town. But I knew that she wasn’t sending me to a private, parochial high school so that I could carry on that family tradition. I had no intention of stopping by the office.

Little did I know, but that day would end up being anything but typical - and in no way would it be categorized as boring or same old. My days of remaining unnoticed had expired. If granted the gift of foresight, I may have crawled back into my warm bed, snuggled under the down comforter and sought refuge for a just few minutes more. Then again, if I knew how much my life would change after that day, I may have woken to a stomach full of butterflies, dancing in excited anticipation. Not able to see the future, at least **not yet**, I remained ignorant to the events that were about to unfold. My drive to school was extremely monotonous - I could’ve practically driven on autopilot at that point. The monotony ended abruptly with the sound of a car’s horn and subsequent crushing metal.

Chapter 2: Collision

The horn blared as a car slid straight toward me. The collision could not have been avoided. Feeling powerless, I held my breath and closed my eyes. Everything seemed to happen in slow motion as my car ricocheted off the other, spun around on the road and stopped instantly upon impact with a telephone pole. The deployed airbags simultaneously punched me in the gut, chest and face. The breath I had been holding was forced out of me. Slow motion turned into hyper-speed as a thousand thoughts ran through my head at once.

Oh my God...what just happened. My car. OH, NO! No, no, no! Not my car! OUCH - my arm - it hurts.

Pain snapped my mind into a state of clarity. A quick assessment of the rest of my body indicated that everything else seemed in tact. The deployed airbags left a lingering powder residue. Panic rushed over me - half from anxiety and half because I was choking on the powder. I couldn't breathe. I remember thinking that I needed to get out of the car - NOW. My door wouldn't budge, so I scooted over to the passenger door and tried to push it open. It opened only a couple of inches before I noticed blood dripping on the seat - it was coming from my arm. The sight of the blood scared me and my arm suddenly hurt much worse. I leaned over to kicked the door a few times, grimacing in pain with each kick, but managed to force it open just enough to climb through.

Outside, the only sound I could hear was my own coughing. There were no other cars to be seen. We were on a back country road - not exactly a high traffic area. I knew it could be a while before another car came to our rescue. The other car had settled on the other side of the road in a small ditch. The driver appeared to be in rough shape - his head was bleeding and he was slumped over. My car -

my poor, poor car - was twisted and mangled, practically wrapped around the telephone pole.

The coughing subsided as I took a few shallow breaths of the cool, clean air. With my uninjured arm, I checked my pocket for my cell phone. *Crap, it's in the other pocket*, I thought. Reaching across my body to fish it out, I had to lean against the car for stability.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency?"

"Hello? I - I've been in a car accident. Um, I hurt my arm and the I think the driver of the other car is hurt. He's not moving."

"What's your location?" Not entirely sure, I looked around, trying to remember landmarks I may have passed along the way.

"Um, I think maybe about half way down Old Ridge Road?"

"What's your name, sweetie?"

"Abigail. Abigail Vickers."

"Are you on a cell phone?"

"Yes. It's 603-555-2307."

"Stay on the line with me, Abigail. We'll do a trace to confirm. Help is on the way."

"OK. Please - please hurry." The blood was oozing through my jacket now - the pain was overwhelming. I wedged the cell phone between my ear and shoulder as applied pressure to my arm in an attempt to slow down the bleeding.

Remembered that technique from first aid class - good thing I paid attention that day.

The operator stayed on the phone and asked a bunch of unimportant questions. Small talk mostly, as if she was trying to keep me engaged until the rescue team arrived. Not a bad strategy considering I was starting to feel dizzy. Somehow, my body slid onto the cold ground in a seated position. The pile of snow next to me was speckled with red blood. Looking over at the other car again, it appeared the driver was awake and moving. The sound of distant sirens provided hope and a small boost of energy.

“Um, the other driver looks awake. I can hear the sirens. I’m gonna check on him.”

“OK, Abigail. I can confirm, the emergency crew is nearby.”

I walked over to the car and opened the driver’s door.

“Hey, are you OK?”

The man inside the car shook his head while trying to focus. He had a large gash on his forehead that was bleeding heavily. His attempt to get out of his car and stand had failed; he ended up stumbling to the ground. Despite my best intentions, I was too weak to be helpful. He looked up at me from the ground. He looked very familiar, although I couldn’t figure out why.

When our eyes met, the flash of recognition from him was undeniable. Just before passing out, he said, “It’s YOU!” Everything turned hazy and my knees gave out. I sank to the ground next to him and closed my eyes. It was cold. Warm blood seeped through my jacket and dripped onto the ground. I could hear the approaching sirens.

It was hard to stay awake. The sights and sounds around me kept fading in and out of focus. Two ambulances arrived as well as a police car flashing its blue lights. People in various uniforms swarmed around us. In one flash, I noticed that the man was awake and a paramedic with the name tag reading “Rafe” was bandaging the wound on his head. In another, a different paramedic was splinting my arm. A warm blanket was wrapped around me. I hadn’t realized I was shaking until then. Rafe seemed to crack a joke and everyone laughed. I was lifted onto a gurney and wheeled over to an ambulance. The man was talking to the paramedic and they paused when they saw me looking in their direction. Rafe tipped his hat, smiled and nodded. I could have sworn he had a green light shining over his head. The sting from a shot going into my arm distracted me. I drifted into unconsciousness before I could say anything.

nickname for Raphael, an archangel, healer, indicated by green light

Chapter 3: Hospital

The next time my eyes opened, I found myself in a bright room lying down in a very uncomfortable bed. My arms felt extremely heavy - one was covered in a cast and the other had an IV attached. There was an annoying plastic tube connected under my nose. The monitor beside the bed beeped regularly with each heart beat and I heard annoying whooshing sounds as pumps attached to my feet inflated and deflated. The overwhelming aroma of disinfectant and body fluids was far from pleasant. I remember that the simple act of turning my head sideways made me feel nauseated. My mom was sitting in a chair; she looked so worried. I tried to speak, but my throat was tight. An attempt to lift my arm and rub my eyes nearly blinded me with pain. Memories of the accident flooded back and the beeps on the monitor quickened.

“Abby! Oh, baby, thank God you’re awake!” mom exclaimed. She reached up to touch my cheek. “How do you feel, sweetheart?”

“Awful,” I managed to get out in a hoarse and raspy voice.

I remembered the man from the accident and struggled to ask about him.

“He’s fine, honey. Minor head wound. They released him before I got here. Shhh. Save your energy, now. You need your rest, baby.” Her hand felt refreshingly cool on my face.

“Yeah. OK.” I said before drifting off to sleep again.

It was dark when I woke again and Mom was no longer there. I knew that I was in the hospital this time and took a few deep breaths before trying to move. The beeps and whooshes seemed to have fallen into a rhythmic pattern, yet the tube under nose was no less annoying that before. I remember seeing a bottle of

water beside my bed - it was taunting me. I felt extremely parched and debated which might feel worse - the pain of moving OR my aching thirst if I didn't. Thirst won. I didn't get much further than lifting my head off the pillow before I realized that moving was not a good idea; everything started to spin.

Suddenly, light flooded into the room as the door opened and I heard a voice.

"Hold on, darling. Not so fast. Let me get that for you,"

It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the light before I could see the nurse standing in front of me.

"You might be a little weak and dizzy for a bit. How are you feeling?" she asked while writing on a chart.

"Not so good." The voice was barely recognizable as my own - very deep and raspy.

"Rate your pain on a scale of 1 to 10." She said while flashing a small light into my eyes, causing my head to spin even worse.

There was a lot of nausea, but not a lot of pain. Five seemed about right.

"My name is Barbara and I'll be taking care of you tonight."

Barbara took forever opening the bottled water before pouring it into a paper cup. When she handed the cup to me, she warned, "Now, take small sips...nice and slow."

Yeah, OK. I thought. I'm way too thirsty for nice and slow. But when the first sip burned all the way down my throat, I decided that maybe she knew what she was talking about. I continued to sip slowly; each swallow hurt a little less. After finishing the cup, my throat felt much better.

“My arm. Is it broken?” It was a relief to recognize my voice again.

“No, you were lucky. It’s just a fracture. You had a pretty deep laceration though and lost a lot of blood. Ended up with about 50 stitches. The doctors were also worried about a possible skull fracture, but it looks like you just have a concussion.”

“My mom?”

“She was here all day. You gave her quite a scare. She was worried sick about you - didn’t want to leave your side.” Not a huge surprise. Mom was a worrier on a good day. And that had definitely not been a good day.

She continued, “It’s good to see you awake. We were about to come wake you to check vitals. It’s been a few hours since you last opened your eyes. We assured your mom you would be sleeping most of the night and convinced her to go get some rest. I’m sure she will be here first thing in the morning. Since you’ve woken on your own twice now, we won’t need to bother you again until morning.”

Barbara handed me a remote with a big red button on it.

“Here. Push this call button if you need anything. And definitely let me know if your pain gets worse.”

I barely managed to nod and thank her before falling back into a restless sleep. The pain in my arm was enough to keep waking me up, but a repeating dream brought the most discomfort. In the dream, the accident played like a movie happening in front of me. The part about the man looking at me when he was on the ground - and his voice saying over and over again, “It’s YOU” rewinded and replayed over and over again.

Who is he?! Why does he seem so familiar to me?! I asked myself.

There were no answers in the dream. When I awoke the next morning, the lingering questions were as bothersome as my concussion and the injuries to my arm.



The time I spent in the hospital still isn't entirely clear to me. The concussion caused severe headaches. Pain for that and my arm was being controlled with demerol shots - one minute I felt fine, the next I was seeing ants crawling up the wall. Not fun. My mom stayed by my side almost the entire time. She only took a break to sleep at night or when friends visited. Of course, Ruth and Rebecca were the first. We had been friends since kindergarten.

Barely five feet tall, Ruth made up for lack of height with her effervescent personality. She was always typically happy and smiling, even when it might seem inappropriate. Although slightly overweight, she was quite athletic. She earned the starting catcher position on the varsity softball team as a freshman. She studied hard to get by with decent grades, but the sad truth was that she was never going to be a rocket scientist. She was hopeful a softball scholarship would get her into college. She was very saavy in social situations and prided herself in being *in the know* about school gossip.

Rebecca, on the other hand, was painfully reserved. When alone with the Ruth and I (or with her boyfriend, Justin) she opened up. The rest of the time, especially at school, she was extremely shy. She wallowed in pessimism - definitely a glass-half-empty kind of person. Coupled with her shyness, she came across a bit snotty at times. She was tall and thin, although not at all athletic; extremely book smart, yet lacked common sense. You know, the type of

person that could give you Pi down to 10 decimal places, but would forget to wear a coat in the middle of the winter. When it came to social situations, she was very naive and gullible.

If ever there was a ying and yang, it was Ruth and Rebecca. I'm not sure how we ended up a trio. I seem to remember it having something to do with 5 year old Ruth taking away Rebecca's toy and me stepping in to keep the peace. My role as their referee began way back then. It's a miracle we remained friends for so many years. I doubt they would have remained as close if I wasn't there to keep them in check. Their personalities were completely polar, whereas mine seemed to balance somewhere in the middle. Perhaps I was the glue that held us together for so long.

When Rebecca noticed the cast on my right hand, my writing hand, she offered "That totally sucks, Abby. How are you going to write?!"

Ruth chimed in, "Cool! At least you won't have to go to gym class for a while, huh?! We're playing volleyball this week."

Typical Ruth and Rebecca. Gotta love them though. Being an only child, they were the sisters I never had. They knew me - at the time. For instance, just when I thought I couldn't handle spending one more night in the hospital, Ruth snuck in the newest Saw movie on DVD. Even though Rebecca hated horror movies, she came along - and brought popcorn. During the gory parts I got a bit freaked out and had to cover my eyes - but I've always gotten a kick out of watching stupid people in horror movies. Anyone dumb enough to walk into danger instead of running the other way deserves their gory fate. Nobody would be that stupid in real life. Ruth and Rebecca knew how to cheer me up. They kept me

entertained and distracted enough that I didn't even think of the man from the accident while awake. Unfortunately, he continued to haunt my dreams.



On the last day of my hospital stay, the door to my room opened. I was expecting my mother to appear with discharge papers, so it threw me off to see a man standing there. Not just any man - but HIM. He was wearing a nice suit and looked handsome - in an older, distinguished guy kind of way. He looked nervous while he stood in the doorway, as if he was debating whether to come in - until I looked up and made eye contact.

"Hello. Abigail. May I come in?" he asked.

"Sure." I wasn't sure what to say to him.

He entered the room and sat down on the chair by the bed, never breaking eye contact. My memory had served me well - he looked identical to the man from my dreams. It was uncanny, considering I hadn't seen him for more than a few minutes at the accident scene. It seemed surreal for him to be sitting in front of me; I gave myself a little pinch to make sure I wasn't dreaming again. It hurt. Definite confirmation that I was awake and he was indeed sitting in front of me.

"I wanted to see for myself that you are alright," he said, "and to apologize for the accident. That was quite a stretch of black ice I hit. I am grateful you weren't injured worse."

"Yeah, I'm OK. Really. It all happened so fast. I - I don't blame you." Why would I have blamed him? It was obvious the accident was just a case of bad timing. If either of us had crossed that section of road a second or two later, we may have never collided.

While on the ground at the accident, he had quite the cut on his forehead and there was so much blood. But then in my hospital room, just a couple of days later, he only had a small bandage over his temple. He seemed to notice me checking it out because he reached up and touched his head.

“Yeah, just a couple of stitches and a slight headache. Pretty lucky.” He smiled reassuringly.

After an uncomfortable pause, the man who had been haunting my dreams cleared his throat and introduced himself.

“By the way, my name is Daniel. Daniel Cain.” He reached out to shake my hand, but the cast on my right arm kept me from doing the same. I awkwardly offered the other hand.

“I’m Abigail Vickers.” I remember thinking, *Daniel Cain. Nope, not ringing a bell.*

While still shaking his hand, I mustered up the courage to ask the important question.

“I’m sorry. I feel weird asking, but Mr. Cain, have we - met before? That is, before the accident?” My heart was pounding while I awaited his answer.

Daniel quickly pulled his hand away - looking surprised. He quickly answered, “Um, No. No. We’ve never met.” He shook his head. Not the response I was looking for.

“I’m sorry, I guess you just look familiar.”

He looked me in the eyes with his lips pressed tightly - as if he was keeping himself from saying something. He nodded once.

“Hmm, Abigail, how old are you?”

Huh, weird question.

“Um, I’m almost 18. Actually, my birthday is Friday.”

His eyes opened wide to show more white than color. He looked at me for a second before answering.

“Well, hopefully you’re feeling better and you will get to enjoy your big day.”

He stood up and quickly made his way towards the door.

“Abigail, it’s good to see that you are OK. You take care,” he said as he practically ran out of the room.

His exit was so abrupt, I was left saying “Um, yeah. You, too.” to an empty room.

It could have been that the concussion or the pain medication messed with my mind, but I suspected that Daniel Cain wasn’t telling me something. It wouldn’t be the last time I felt that way.