

Chapter 1

The colors of the watercolor painting started to blur together in front of Lisa. Brown hair waved in the air. Jade eyes looked down. The woman's white robe just needed some finishing touches. Her wings expanded over floating castles. *Hopefully the public will like this at the gallery.* Unlike Lisa's last painting, which didn't even get a glance. It was an abstract painting of many colors; she'd thought it was good, but the public had other opinions. *Funny how I dreamt of this woman few nights ago,* she thought, writing a name below the angel. *Celestina*

Lisa stood back to admire her work. Lisa's body tingled just looking at the angel's pixie face staring down at the city she was charged with. *I'm so tired, I should stop for tonight. But I only have a few touch ups left.* Taking her thin paint brush and dipping it in the brown paint on the pallet, Lisa hovered over Celestina's hair when a child crying next door made her hand jolt. She scrutinized her apartment wall. Lisa shook her head and went back to her painting. A few moments later there was a knock on her door. Lisa stopped painting, left the bedroom and went downstairs. *That time already?*

Lisa crossed the living room to the front door and opened it. There stood her sister, Sara, soaked through from the rain. Sara's gold bangs stuck to her forehead and water dripped from her straight long hair onto the balcony.

Sara stood tall and slim. Her eyes were accentuated with dark blue mascara that now ran down her face.

"Hey, sis," Lisa said, while Sara gave her a hug.

Sara turned toward the stairs. "Come meet your aunt, Kristy."

Lisa looked around the door to see a young girl, around fourteen climbing the steps, dragging a suitcase. When Kristy stopped at the door, Lisa saw a young Sara that reminded her of herself four years ago. Kristy's brown hair was tied back in a ponytail. Her sparkling eyes made her skin light up, If only she didn't have a crease on her face.

"Hi, Kristy. I'm Lisa," she held out her hand.

"Hi," Kristy said solemnly, without extending her hand.

"Don't be rude, Kristy," her mother said.

"That's okay. Why don't you come in?" Lisa said.

"Could you just watch TV or listen to your ipod while I talk to your aunt?"

"Sure." Kristy sat her suitcase down then plopped on the couch.

"Can I get something to drink for you two?" Lisa asked.

"I'll have a Sprite," Kristy said, putting her headphones on.

"None for me," Sara said, looking at the painting of a park hanging on the wall .

Lisa handed Kristy a can. "I made some tea. I was hoping it would keep me awake." She told Sara.

"Sure." Sara sat at the kitchen table and Lisa handed her a cup. "Did you paint that?"

"I did," Lisa said, looking at a multi-colored painting on the wall, sipping her tea. "I tried to sell it at the gallery where I work but no one seemed interested so my manager had me take it down."

"I'm sorry."

"It's okay. I'm working on something better."

“I shouldn’t ask you to do this. Especially when I haven’t seen you in years. I’m sorry I haven’t called. I’ve been moving around. I just don’t know who else to turn to. I don’t think our parents have forgiven me yet.”

“That was eight years ago. Now you’re getting help,” Lisa said. “They will.”

“I’m surprised you said you would take in Kristy for me,” Sara looked down. “Especially after the things I’ve said to you.”

“That’s what families do. We forgive.” Lisa held out her hand and her sister took it.

Something doesn’t feel right.

“About Kristy staying for six months. Um, well...it might be longer.”

“Longer?” Lisa whispered. “How much longer?”

“Er...let’s say a year or longer.” Sara swallowed and tried to avoid Lisa’s glare. “I just need time to put my life back together.”

“Your life...what about my life?” Lisa spat.

Sara wiped an eye. “I need someone to look after her. I don’t want her following my path.”

“Doesn’t she have any other place to stay?”

“I trust you. I don’t want her to go into the system or to our parents. I don’t know what they’re like anymore.” Sara rested her hand on top of Lisa’s.

Lisa’s eyes softened. She sipped her tea then sighed. “I’ll do it for her.”

“I’ve already enrolled her in school. I’ve also slipped in an envelope that has money and a letter to her. I can’t bear to tell her now.”

Sara hugged Kristy and told her she’d return in six months.

“Why can’t I stay with my friend Holly in LA?” Kristy whined.

“Your friend isn’t an adult. She is,” Sara said pointing to Lisa.

Kristy gave her mother a hug. She looked at Lisa then shook her head. “Thanks, you’re an angel, sis.”

Lisa had a queasy feeling as she watched her sister descend into the darkness. Like she wasn’t coming back. Thunder boomed overhead, off in the distance, approaching fast.

Lisa put Kristy in the bedroom upstairs in her painting room. “That’s a nice painting,” Kristy said.

“Thanks,” Lisa said while cleaning up her paintbrushes. “Why does my mom have to go out of town for her drug treatment?” Kristy asked putting her purse down.

“Because New York has the best drug program,” Lisa said, unfolding the couch that became a bed, she put Kristy’s suitcase on it.

Kristy stared at a framed picture on the dresser of the two sisters. “Were you close?”

“Not really. She moved out with our father at sixteen when I was seven.” She coughed.

“Well, everything in this room is yours.”

“Can I take a shower?”

“Of course. It’s your pl—place too,” Lisa replied, swallowing. “Just don’t touch the paintings or supplies, please.”

While Kristy was in the bathroom, Lisa wondered if she should do what her sister couldn’t and tell Kristy the truth. Lisa searched for the envelope. Five hundred dollars and the letter along with papers to sign for permanent custody.

Lisa’s hand began to tremble. *How am I going to tell Kristy?*

“I haven’t been here for five minutes and you’re already going through my stuff?” Lisa turned around to find Kristy at the doorway wrapped in a towel.

“I—I don’t know how to tell you—”

Kristy grabbed the letter from her and read it. She stood frozen, the paper shaking in her hand. She collapsed onto the bed. “Why?”

Lisa sat next to her and rubbed her back. “Your—your mom is just trying to do what she thinks is best for you.” She didn’t know what else to say, but she was sure more needed to be said.

Kristy’s tears flowed. “What did I do?”

Lisa wiped her own eyes. Definitely more needed to be said. *Now it really is your place.*

* * *

The next morning, neither one knew what to say to one another, so Lisa dropped Kristy off at school. Looking at her clock, she knew she’d have to learn to wake up earlier. *Kristy takes more time in the bathroom than I do. At least it gave me time to finish up my painting.* After getting her painting out from the trunk of her car Lisa entered the small building across from the other shopping malls in the promenade. She never thought she would be late for work. Never thought she would have a roommate. *Can’t believe my sister would do this to me!* She wanted to scream and hit something. Lisa pushed opened the door with her back, causing the entrance bells to ring.

“Morning, Maggie,” Lisa said.

“Hey Lisa,” Maggie said, she wore a black vest jacket and suit pants to match, and she came out from around the cashier counter to hold the door open. After Lisa brought in the panting she leaned it on a wall and unveiled it. Maggie gasped. “That’s so beautiful!” Her blue eyes sparkled in the fluorescent lighting. Maggie looked around on the fabric walls that gave the gallery a cozy feeling. Paintings of huge sea ships that came out toward you. Cities lit up at night. Lisa followed Maggie around a corner under some darkened art lights. On the wall hung nature paintings, the lights highlighting certain areas of grass and trees. She found a blank spot. “I think this would be good. People will see it when they walk in so maybe it’ll have better luck.” Maggie took the panting of the angel and hung it up. “I like it.”

“Thanks,” Lisa said, “even my niece liked it.”

“You babysitting?” Maggie asked.

“No. She’s fourteen. Last night my sister asked me to take in my niece for a few months.”

“A few months?” Maggie asked. “Now that’s a commitment.”

“That’s why I was late. Waiting for her to get out of the bathroom. It’s going to be tough times ahead.” Lisa looked at her panting with her arms crossed. “I have a good feeling about Celestina.” *Not to mention a strange one as well.*

Lisa and Maggie proceeded to open up the store. Lisa pinned her gold nametag onto her vest pocket. People were starting to come in and look around while some others looked in the window but kept walking. A couple with a child asked Lisa if there were paintings of ships and she pointed them the way. While the parents looked at the paintings the child roamed around while Maggie watched her every move. *I don’t know why she doesn’t put up a keep an eye on your kids sign.*

A tall man in a trench coat strolled by the window. His collar turned up against the wind. He stopped and looked back at the window with his shades on. It seemed he was staring right at Lisa. He stepped inside and strolled up to the counter. She considered herself tall, but she had to crane her neck to see his Adonis-like face. “How may I—” The man removed his shades, revealing jade green eyes. Lisa forgot what she was going to say.

“Um, is there a restroom I can use?”

She pointed him toward the back. She eyed his short black hair above his broad shoulders. *Where did he come from?* Lisa began to put files in a drawer. Lisa saw the girl had started to trowel around while Maggie kept an eye on her while trying to look busy. When the guy with the shades returned, he walked up to the desk. “Can I ask you something? Who did that painting of *Celestina*?”

“That would be me,” Lisa said.

“Lisa Gale,” he read off her nametag. “Very elegant. Looks so real. I’m Joe. I just moved here.”

Lisa held out her hand. “I hope you like it in our little Haven City.” She smiled. *Can I be your personal tour guide?* “And what do you do?”

“I’m a mechanic. I work out of my garage for right now. I was just getting some spare parts when I needed to stop. I’m glad I did because I wouldn’t have gotten to see your panting. I need to go, but I’ll be back to see what else you’ve panted.” Joe’s trench coat swept the brown carpet and headed toward the door. “I like your red hair by the way, it means you’re a fighter. You can take life when things are rough.” Then he slipped out the door. *He felt so familiar when I touched him. Like I was someone else.* A shatter from the back made her spin around. Lisa grabbed the broom and dustpan then entered the back to find a small snow globe in pieces on the floor with a small painting that was inside. As she picked up the pieces she glanced at the mother talking to the girl, who apologized to Maggie. Next to the girl Lisa saw a glowing cloud of an orb. It vanished instantly. Lisa stared in awe, then shook her head. Coming out of it, she finished her job. She’s never seen anything like that. A few minutes later the customers gave Maggie some money and left.

Lisa dusted off the artwork in the store. “So, um, about that girl...” *Did you see anything strange?* she wanted to say. “I mean globe, at least we have more, right?”

“Of course,” Maggie said.

“The painting inside the globe is a popular item by a local artist, isn’t it?” Lisa asked.

“Yeah. He’s gotten huge everywhere.”

Lisa’s heart raced. *I would love to be like that someday.*

At midday, Lisa called Kristy on her cell phone to see if she needed a ride home but she said she’d walk. Hanging up the phone, something caused her heart to stop cold. From the doorway, someone in a black hooded, robe gazed at her. She hadn’t heard the door chime at all. The few customers in the gallery did not seem to see the robed figure either. She looked back at the spot but the figure was gone. Had she really seen the ghostly image? Maybe it was stress from everything. Not getting her painting sold, her sister leaving her with Kristy and on top of starting a new job.

After work, she headed to her car. Stepping outside, a chill crawled up Lisa's spine, and it wasn't the cool air. Four men emerged from the darkness.

“The Master wants you dead,” a man in the middle said. He was dressed in black with a silver hoop in his eyebrow. One man behind him wore ripped jeans while another had a knife in his hand, grinning. All were tall except the last man who was medium build. He had gold chains dangling from his scrawny neck.

A foul stench filled the air. “What?” Lisa asked stepping backward. She gripped her purse in one hand and made sure her keys had the sharp edge sticking out. She had two weapons ready. Her ears started pounding.

A man appeared in front of them blocking her path. It looked like the guy she'd met that morning, in the shop.

"Jo—Joe?" Lisa asked, swallowing.

Joe glanced at her. A glance that told her to run, but she froze.

"This doesn't concern you," the guy with the earring said.

"It does now," Joe said, with a poker face.

"Get him."

Lisa watched in horror. It looked like a film playing out in front of her. A blade materialized in Joe's hand as the guy with the knife rushed him. Joe stabbed him in the chest instantly killing him. The second guy with ripped jeans came charging from behind. Joe kicked backwards, causing the guy to slam onto the ground. Joe yanked the knife out of the dead man before him as he fell, spun and kicked the approaching man who wore the chains, then turned and threw the knife into his neck.

Lisa felt her breath catch in her throat. *Have I finally snapped?* Then she heard Joe's voice.

"Behind you!" He stood inches away, sliding his bloody knife to her on the ground. Lisa picked it up, turned around and slashed the side of the guy's face, adrenaline coursing through her veins.

The man in black flinched, touching his face in pain. "Bitch! Kill her!"

A fifth man stepped out of the shadows. He had spiked hair. Running up to Lisa about to strike, Joe appeared in front of him.

Lisa dropped the knife and backed up on stumbling legs. Her hands were beginning to shake. She clenched them together forming fists. *Must have been something I ate*, she thought, trying to remember to breathe.

"You think you're going to kill me too, do you?" the man with spiked hair taunted, circling Joe.

Joe slipped his hand under his long coat. "I don't think," he said. "I know." Before the man could do anything, Joe brought his hand up holding a sword and slashed the man's neck. Joe looked at the sheen of blood dripping off his weapon. "Made me ruin a good sword." Joe looked at the last guy standing, whom Lisa had cut. "Your turn."

"You don't get it," the guy in black said. "When we get the Heart there will be nothing but hell, and you can't do a damn thing about it." He merged into the darkness.

Lisa stood there, unable to say anything. She wanted to run but couldn't. Joe's sword dissolved into the air. He then waved his hand over the ground. The bodies seeped into the pavement along with the blood. Lisa gasped. He had erased the nightmarish scene. No sign that any fighting had ever taken place. Not even a drop of blood.

"What?" Lisa felt like her mouth couldn't move along with her body. "Who are you?"

Joe waved his hand across Lisa's eyes.

Lisa blinked, feeling like she had come out of a daze, not remembering anything of the strange men or Joe's quick rescue. How long had she been standing in the parking lot? She thought she smelled sulfur but couldn't determine the source. She got in her car and gripped the steering wheel. Turning on her high beams, she merged into the heavy traffic of Haven City and drove off. She hoped this sort of staring episode didn't occur around Kristy. *I'm supposed to be taking care of her. I can't let her down.*

* * *

Lisa fixed spaghetti for dinner. Kristy was quiet, slumped in her seat, moving her meatballs around, occasionally eating her noodles. Lisa's chest tightened. She had never had to console anyone before. "How was school?"

Kristy shrugged. "It was okay."

"You have any favorite classes?"

"Science, I guess."

"At least it's the weekend. Any boyfriends?"

"Not really. I just hang out with this one guy." Kristy let some noodles drop from her fork. "He has no parents either."

Lisa licked her lips. "I'm not used to having anyone around but..."

"May I be excused? I have a lot of homework."

"Of course. I have painting to do anyway," Lisa said.

Kristy placed her plate in the sink and slumped onto the couch.

Lisa heard her digging through her bag as she put the few dishes in the dishwasher. *Maybe she isn't ready to talk about it yet.* Lisa heard Kristy sniffing behind her. She turned to see her niece dabbing at her eyes. *She needs me.* Lisa headed to the couch when the room warbled before her. She shut her eyes to calm her head, the next step she took her legs collapsed underneath her. She opened them to an unexpected sight.

Lisa was outdoors, wearing a blue bell dress standing on a marble walkway. Many castles hovered in the distance, hanging in the sky among the clouds, sparkling, looking like a city. A harsh wind brushed the grass around her, then a shaft of darkness burst through the clouds disrupting the beauty. "Mother! Joe!"

She blinked and saw Kristy bending over her. "You okay?"

"Yeah...yeah. My legs just went to sleep." Kristy helped her up. *What was that?* Lisa stopped thinking when she saw tears shimmering in her niece's eyes. She hugged Kristy. "We'll get through this," she said, rubbing her back while Kristy let tears flow onto her shoulder.

"You're not going to give me away? I thought you said you're not used to having someone here?" She asked drying her eyes.

"I'm not, but it doesn't mean I'm throwing you out. I'm glad to finally get to know my niece."

Kristy's shoulders shook. "I won't be any trouble."

Lisa smoothed her hair. "I know you won't be." *I'm more afraid I may be the trouble,* Lisa thought.

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Lisa drove to the store to pick up some items with Kristy. She had called her mother last night but couldn't bring herself to tell about her older daughter's rash decision. Lisa only said her sister went on vacation and needed a break, which was kinda true. Going into the Fluffy's grocery store in one of the two entrances, Kristy grabbed a basket while Lisa started scanning the aisles. The aroma of fresh bread drifted from the bakery. As she took in the variety of food, another basket slammed into Kristy's. The woman clutching the basket had long hair, the color of a raven.

"I'm sorry. I'm looking for my son. He's fourteen, short brown hair, a red t-shirt with a soccer logo."

Lisa looked into the woman's light coffee eyes, magnified by her glasses. An image of a tall teen with unkempt brown hair wearing a red shirt appeared in her mind, showing him outside

the store bouncing a soccer ball off his head. Lisa shook her head in astonishment. *What was that?* It took her a moment to answer. "I think I saw him," Lisa said slowly. Turning around Lisa led the way toward the other entrance outside while Kristy and the woman followed.

Just like in her vision, a teenager, Kristy's age with brown hair wearing a red shirt, bouncing a soccer ball off his head. "Tommy!" the woman with glasses barked. The one named Tommy picked up the soccer ball. "I told you I would pick you up at the videos. Why didn't you wait?" Lisa could only stare at the teen whose image she'd seen in her mind. *That can't be possible?*

"Sorry," he said to the woman. Then he turned to Kristy, "Hey, what's up, Kristy?" Tommy asked.

Kristy smiled. "Just hanging out with my aunt. This is who I told you about from school," she said to Lisa.

"Well maybe you can learn something from her and not wander off." The woman thanked Lisa for her help, and stepped back into the store with Tommy in front of her.

As they walked away, Lisa saw a feminine figure at their side for a brief moment. The girl had curly ginger hair, wings folded down her back, and wore a lily white robe. She faded into celestial light. Lisa stared after them in disbelief.

Trying to shake what she had seen, Lisa picked up some chips and soda for Kristy. She passed by the frappuccinos, causing her to think of when she and Maggie were Kristy's age a few short years ago. When they downed tons of those and talked about all the things they wanted to do. Have a career, get married, have kids. But she had hoped to be older when she had a fourteen year old to care for. Her and Kristy stood in line.

"Tommy seems nice."

"Yeah," Kristy said.

Lisa turned to see the woman in glasses and Tommy behind her.

"I'm Rachel, thanks again for helping me find him," Rachel said to Lisa.

"Not a problem." Lisa tried not to look too hard for the woman with wings. "I'm Lisa and this is Kristy."

Within moments Lisa saw more winged women and men in white robes standing next to kids and families. No one else seemed to notice or care. Lisa squeezed her eyes shut then opened them to find the winged people still there. In moments all the people in robes turned into orbs and vanished in thin air.

"You okay?" Rachel and Kristy asked together.

Lisa forgot Rachel was right there. "Uh, yeah." Lisa squeezed her eyes shut. "I must be tired," Lisa said, setting the bags of chips and box of Coke on the counter.

"I hope you get some rest," Rachel said, after Lisa paid for her groceries.

"I hope so too. It's nice to meet you, Rachel." Lisa said, putting couple of bags into her basket. Stepping outside into the sunlight, she pushed the basket to her car while shaking her head. *I must be losing my mind*, she thought. With a sigh, she mumbled, "No more watching reruns of Twilight Zone."

"You okay, Aunt Lisa?" Kristy asked. "You're not going to go zany, are you?"

"I'll be fine. The last few days just been hectic is all." *I think I'm already zany.*

Chapter 2

Down an abandoned alley Joe stood in front of a black robed figure, his face hidden underneath a cowl. "So, how's the Underworld?" Joe asked.

"He's got demons searching everywhere for the Heart. No telling where the pieces landed." Ben paused. "How's the girl?"

"She is safe for the time being," Joe said. "You don't know why the demons attacked her, Ben?"

"No. Dakon confides in his master alone. No demon is present. You think this girl has something to do with the Angelheart? Maybe she found a part of it by accident?"

Joe shook his head. "I don't know." Looking at the pale, sapphire sky, he remembered erasing Lisa's memory.

"Is there something else troubling you?"

"I walked into her gallery and saw a panting of the Queen. Then when I fought Dakon she could see me."

"Maybe she's a soothsayer?" asked Ben.

Joe thought for a minute. "Could be. Maybe the demons want to use her to find the Angelheart?" Ben's dark eyes gazed at him from beneath the hood. He had a feeling Ben was thinking the same thing. "I need to talk to her, find out what she knows."

"I'd better get back to the Underworld," Ben said.

"Sounds like our mission isn't as easy as the Queen thought it would be. Keep an eye on her," Ben said. "Oh, yes. And the demons are growing from infant to full grown in no time at all. Dakon will do anything to find it this time."

Joe nodded his understanding. "I'll see you later friend. Report when you have more news." He hated his friend stuck down there around that awful stench. He also knew that a half demon could enter all three dimensions; the Underworld, Earth and Heaven. He had hoped they would have been home by now.

On his way to his apartments, among the streets, a foul odor swept through the air. Joe ran into a young lady with long copper hair, dressed in dark clothing. Her frozen blue eyes stared at him. Her hands had lost their color. Her fingernails were black with decay. Not at all like he remembered her. "What are you doing here on Earth?" she asked.

"The same as you, Keera," Joe said. "You know you can't tune in on it anymore."

Stepping closer to him Keera licked her cold lips. Her breath smelled rotten when she spoke. "I can tune it in a lot better now with the greater power." She whispered into his ear. "Come join the winning side Joe, Earth and your kind are doomed. Besides, don't you want back what we used to have?" she said, running a long nail down his face.

"What I want is you monsters burning alive just like..."

Keera socked Joe in the gut. "Your skills could have served him well. No matter. We will find the Heart. When we do the one thing that will burn alive is the Earth with all the humans in it." She walked away.

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Keera ducked into an alley. Looking around to make sure she was alone, Keera turned her palm toward the ground. A hole with a crimson outline appeared. She jumped in.

Landing on a rigid rocky surface surrounded by water that looked like ink, the whole place smelled of sulphur and death. In front of her a sable boat sat with a skull on the bow. A sharp high fork in the stern.

She climbed in and the boat started moving toward the other side of the water. Reaching the other side it stopped.

Keera got out, walked up three steps to enter a huge cavern area. A lot of dark and scarlet robes with hoods hiding their skinless, pale faces swept through the cave silently, going toward their destinations. She came to a swinging bridge with flames crackling and spitting up underneath. Strong choking ashes filled the dead air while fire shot up on both sides.

After crossing the trembling bridge she continued until she reached two large doors. Opening the doors she stepped into a big dark chamber. A walkway leading to a low platform with a tall, throne chair sat in the middle.

A shadow sat in the chair. Keera stepped across the walkway with her head held high while geysers of fire shot up on either sides of her. "Master, I didn't find one segment, however, I did see Joe. He is searching for the Heart as well."

The Master wore a black robe with a voluminous cape. He removed his hood to reveal a deep slash on his pale face.

"Joe? He is no concern to us. Joe will die along with Earth when the Underworld rules. And that human will pay for what she did." His heated eyes burned.

"Now leave, I must speak with my Master." Keera bowed, then left.

An image of a figure that wore the same color robe as Dakon emerged. Underneath his hood, it looked like he had no face. "You have failed at killing the girl," a deep voice said.

Master Dakon stood in front of Master Alastor. "Master, Joe got in the way. He is also searching for the Angelheart."

"I know," the Master said. His hands hidden in his sleeves. "We will defeat these Angels this time." He nodded to a corner. An image of Lisa's face appeared. "First I want her dead."

"How could a mere human ruin the plans of the Dark Lord?" Dakon asked.

"Ours is not to question," he boomed. "There is something about this human the Dark Lord does not like. Don't get too focused on her you forget about the Angelheart. When we get it, the Angels in Heaven will fall. Then Hell will prevail. Now kill her and find the Hearts!" The Master ordered and disappeared.

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Joe stood surrounded by fog so thick he wanted to gasp for air. In the distance a light got bigger until it was right in front of him. A woman wearing a gold dress that matched her wings floated in mid air. Her face hidden by a sea of clouds.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The woman didn't say anything, only held out her hands, in a cupped shape. Four objects appeared. Two slanted lines. The other two hook shapes. The four objects came together to form a heart that shone with such golden, radiant light that it caused Joe to shield his eyes.

"The Angelheart," Joe said. He looked at the glowing angel. She disappeared. Another woman stood in her place with suntan hair wearing a blue dress. Her pixie face parted the fog.

"Princess?" he whispered.

Joe sat up in his bed breathing hard.

“It can't be her!” Joe went downstairs into the half kitchen catching his breath. He got a glass of water. “It just can't be, I saw her...”

He saw a succession of image flash through his mind; A woman with long jetty hair wearing glasses. Then two men. One with long black hair and dark olive eyes. The other one had pine net hair and light heavenly eyes. *What does this mean, who are they?* He stared out the window in wonder.

Chapter 3

Lisa pulled into the little parking lot of the shopping promenade. Getting her huge painting out from the trunk, she held the piece, her arms on either side of the canvas. As she shuffled toward the gallery, her purse slipped off her shoulder and dangled at her elbow. She stumbled forward, almost dropping it, when a loud Honda motorcycle roared into the parking lot. *Who the hell rides a bike this early!* Lisa's arms were throbbing as she grunted, waiting for traffic to pass.

"Can I help you with that?" someone asked.

Turning her head she saw Joe, standing next to a motorcycle. He took off his helmet and hung it on the handlebar. "Please," she said. He took the painting from her. Lisa sighed. "Thank you." She put her purse back on her aching shoulder. "I didn't know it would be so heavy. It's Joe, right?"

"Sure is. And you're Lisa." He gave a big grin when she looked at him.

"What are you doing here so early?"

"Have to pick up some things for my shop. I like to be prepared for my customers."

"Expecting a lot?" Lisa asked, holding the door for him to enter the gallery. "You can set it on the ground."

Joe did just that. "I'm still new but just in case I like to be well stocked. And this is the closest shopping center near me. Have you worked here long?"

"I started about six months ago. I graduated high school last year and couldn't find a job, so my best friend Maggie hired me. She's been helping her parents with the shop since she graduated. We've been friends since we were kids." Lisa looked around. All the lights were still off in the gallery. *If Maggie isn't here why would the door be unlocked?* Lisa went to the back and opened the office door. She wasn't there either. Lisa went back to the front desk. "Guess Maggie went to get something," Lisa said. But then, Maggie stepped through the front door.

"Where did you go?" Lisa asked, turning on the lights.

"A customer came early for a painting they reserved and I carried it out for them," Maggie said. She turned to look at the fabric covering Lisa's art while pulling her chocolate-colored hair into a ponytail. "So, is this your new painting?"

"Just finished it last night. Luckily Joe showed up, because it is heavy."

"You know, after you left, a lot of people made comments on your painting, but no takers yet." Maggie rubbed her hands together. "Well, let's see it!"

Lisa unwrapped the fabric from the painting. She could tell it drew Maggie in. Joe's eyes gave away his surprise even though his face tried not to show it. *That good, huh?* Lisa wondered as she looked at the scene. She felt her body tingle.

"Wow," Maggie breathed. "So beautiful and yet so dark."

The painting was of a small woman standing on a white walkway. She wore a blue dress that came to a bell around her legs. Her long brown hair blew against an invisible wind. Although you couldn't see her face, the woman looked as if she were shouting something by the way she held her hands to her face. In the sky above the woman were castles, some whole and intact and others split apart by beams that were black as night. Even the pinnacle castle was shattered. Lights in the building reflected off the silver of the castles and the trimmed grass around the woman.

Bells chimed on the door, startling Maggie, Joe and Lisa out of their trance. A few customers walked in. Among them, a woman with braids in her hair and she wore a long black coat. Maggie attended to the customers.

Lisa looked at Joe. "I see you couldn't take your eyes off it."

"Well, it's magnificent. You're a wonderful artist," Joe said. "Where did you get this idea from?"

Lisa crossed her arms. "I dreamt it." *Why did I just say that?*

Joe's green eyes caught the light from overhead when he turned toward her. "You've dreamed this? Do you dream of your paintings a lot?"

"I dreamt of that angel." She moved over to the door and propped it open, hoping to invite inside a few more customers. *Why am I telling him this? Now he's going to think I'm boring.* "I better get to work. Don't want to get fired after only six months."

"Of course. I'll be going. Great work though," Joe paused and stared at her. "However you do it." Joe was about to leave when the woman in the black coat looked at Lisa then at Joe. "I can tell you two have a very strong connection."

Joe laughed. "I don't know what you're talking about." Then he left.

A strange sensation washed over Lisa. *There's something about this guy I can't put my finger on.* Maggie's voice brought her out of her thoughts.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" Maggie asked the customer.

"I just love that angel painting," the woman said.

"It so happens our very own Lisa Gale is the artist," Maggie said, gesturing toward Lisa.

The short woman scanned Lisa. "I would love to take the painting but something tells me you're going to need it for the journey you're just starting out on." Her coat swooshed as she spun around and walked outside.

A chill slithered up Lisa's spine. *That was strange.* Lisa stared after her. "What did she mean by that?"

"I guess someone let the kooks out early." Maggie rolled her eyes, then turned toward the painting. "So, Angelic Falls." She read on the plaque. "Mmmm, it's like you really can feel sorry for the woman. Her home is being destroyed by these dark forces."

That afternoon, Maggie's Mom took over Maggie's and Lisa's shift letting the girls take off and do some shopping. "Have you started painting anything else yet?" Maggie wanted to know while they strolled around the promenade.

"Somewhat. Mostly I've just been helping my niece with homework a lot and trying to help her deal with her mom leaving her with me. I only wish my sister wouldn't have done it this way."

Maggie nodded. "Sisters can be tough."

You don't even know what I'm talking about, Lisa thought. "Maybe come summer when she's out of school I'll have more time to paint."

Maggie's heels clicked on the sidewalk, eyeing every guy that walked by. "Come summer more gorgeous guys will be out," she said, swinging her purse. "Want to go to a party tonight that my friends hosting? There's going to be lotta booze."

Lisa laughed. "I would love to but I can't be tipsy while helping Kristy with her homework."

"Lost my best friend to a kid. How is it with a teen in the house? She's only four years younger than you, right?"

Lisa laughed and nodded. "It's really hard sharing the bathroom. She takes twice as long. I've been using the time to get started on a painting of a woman." Lisa shook her head. "I don't

know if it will get very many looks.”

“Well, at least that kooky woman wanted your painting today. For a second, anyway.”

Lisa spotted someone staring at them from a rooftop.

“What do you see?” Maggie asked looking the same direction.

“Don’t you see that person on the roof?” Lisa asked.

Maggie shook her head. “What person on the roof?”

Lisa shook her head. “You don’t see him?” she asked.

“I don’t see anyone,” Maggie said.

Lisa pulled her attention from the roof and continued on. “Oh, yeah, I don’t know why that woman said Joe and I have a connection. I’ve just met him.”

“Maybe she means you two will have one?” Maggie asked, elbowing her.

“Come on.” Lisa looked again and the figure had left the rooftop. She glanced around.

“Who you looking for?” Maggie asked. “Ah, looking for what’s his name?”

She looked among the people but didn’t see anyone that looked like the figure she had seen. *Who was that?* Then across from them in an alley she saw someone in a red cloak, gazing at them. A knife flew from the figure’s hand toward Lisa but before she could react, a fast, thin arrow struck the knife making it vanish in mid air. Lisa gasped and glanced up toward the roof above her to see a guy standing armed with a bow and pulling back on an arrow. Lisa recognized him at once. “Joe?”

“That’s his name,” Maggie said snapping her fingers, she glanced the same direction as Lisa. “What is it now?”

Joe pulled back on the bow. The arrow zoomed toward the person in the red cloak, striking him dead. Then Joe disappeared.

Lisa glanced at Maggie. “Did...you didn’t see them did you?” Her heart pounded now.

“See who?”

“It was...It was Joe shooting an arrow striking a knife thrown by a...” Lisa looked toward where the figure had been and saw no one there. She spun around to see that none had stopped to watch the scene that had played out. Everyone kept walking along minding their own business. *Did I see what I think I saw?*

Maggie looked at her. “Mmmm. Seems like you’re overworked with your niece and all. Maybe you don’t need a drink. You need to rest. I’ll see you tomorrow.” Maggie walked toward her car.

A chill ran up Lisa’s spine when she saw Joe as she approached her car. Joe opened the passenger door for her. “I think we need to talk,” he said.

Lisa hesitated and looked around, but Maggie was know where to be seen. Lisa looked at him and swallowed.

“Please,” Joe said, sliding into the drivers seat and dangling her keys, started her car.

Lisa searched her purse. “How...?” Looking at him again, his emerald green eyes lured her into the passenger seat. She took a deep breath, trying to get her heartbeat under control. *He obviously isn’t here to hurt me because he...saved me.* Joe pulled out of the parking lot. Lisa felt her body and legs shaking but hoped Joe didn’t notice. Lisa looked at Joe and wanted to speak but her tongue felt heavy.

“That woman in the gallery was right you know. We have a connection, you and I. Just don’t know what it is though.”

Lisa ran her hand through her hair. “Who was that you shot?”

“A demon. He tried to kill you.” Joe pulled into the parking lot of her apartment. Taking a

parking spot he shut off the engine. "Have you've seen other invisible things before me?"

Lisa tried to remember and shook her head. "I...I don't think so." Lisa looked around. "How did you know where I lived? And who would want to kill me?"

Joe turned in his seat. "A demon from the Underworld. But we still have to find out why. Figure out why I feel such a draw to you. And until then it's best if you forget this."

Lisa felt a numbness of her head as Joe looked at her. Then her eyes felt heavy. When Lisa came to, she found herself in the passenger seat and the drivers seat empty. Lisa blinked and quickly glanced around her. *What's going on? How did I get here?* Lisa's heart sped up and she felt herself sweating as she tried to remember the last few minutes. *I was walking with Maggie, then I walked to my car.* Lisa dug deep to wonder how she could have gotten home. Her car keys were in the ignition still. *So what am I doing in the passenger seat? Did I black out again? Maybe I did go to the party.* Lisa sighed *Not again. If Sara knew I was blacking out she never would have left Kristy with me.* Lisa grabbed the keys and got out of the car on shaken legs. *I have to stop doing this. Kristy's counting on me.* Lisa wiped her eyes as rain began to fall.

* * *

That evening, a Ford Escort pulled up to a one-story, blue house. Rachel grabbed a folder then got out of the driver's seat and Tommy stepped out of the passenger's side with a soccer ball. Rachel headed for the front door while Tommy followed, kicking his soccer ball between his feet. Crickets sang out as Rachel unlocked the door and stepped in after Tommy. The teen began bouncing the ball on his head.

Rachel went to the kitchen to prepare a cake. "Well, now you legally have a home. How does it feel?"

"Bitchin'," he said, standing in the mid-sized living room, keeping the ball on his head with tight, little bounces.

"I don't like that talk mister." Rachel sighed watching him bounce the ball. *It's not the time to be scolding him.*

"Did you see how I kept scoring for our team?" His blue eyes were intense.

"I saw. That was awesome. I see you've been working on your footwork."

Tommy plopped down on the huge sofa against the wall, causing the oval mirror that hung above to stir. He clicked on the TV.

Setting the burner she asked. "Would you like a soda?"

She reached into the refrigerator and got a coke, placing it on the counter.

"I already had one today. Why are you giving me another one?"

"To celebrate your custody," Rachel said.

Tommy stared at the can, looking suspicious at it. "It's not like it took a year. Only a couple of months."

Rachel smiled. "Because instead of just visiting a few times a week. You get to live here all the time."

Tommy stood and opened the coke. Taking a drink he set it down. "It will be different not having to live in a trashy house, and not breathing in smoke and smelling booze all the time."

"I'm glad you love it here."

Tommy touched an item on the kitchen counter, a glass heart with wings on either side. "Did you say you found this in the closet?"

She stared through the glass door that led to a wide elevated porch. "Richard gave it to me

when we first were going out.” She glanced at it longingly. “It’s a symbol of hope.”

“I’m hoping to meet some people after school tomorrow,” Tommy said.

“Would one of these people be that girl that we met at the store with Lisa?” Rachel asked, pulling out a mixing bowl.

“Her name’s Kristy. And yeah, she’s coming.” He downed his soda again. “What of it?”

“Just asking. You better get to your homework. Dinners almost ready and Richard should be home in a bit.” *How did I remember Lisa’s name. I don’t remember people I meet only once, much less their names. Why was Lisa looking at me like she’s seen a ghost?*

After dinner, while Tommy worked on his homework in his bedroom, Rachel fell asleep on the love seat watching TV. Her hands gripped the edge of the seat, her knuckles turning white. When a hand came to rest on her shoulder, Rachel gave a jolt.

A tall, broad chested man with curly brown hair to his neck, and a beard around his face looked down at her. “Are you okay?” he asked, putting his suitcase down and removing his suit coat.

“I didn’t hear you come in,” Rachel said, taking her husband’s hand. Richard sat next to her.

“Was it a good meeting?” She felt her heartbeat slow down again.

“I think so. I didn’t know it would be so long though. We might be able to take that trip to Bermuda like you wanted.” He paused, staring at her. “Honey, are you listening?”

Rachel lifted her eyes from the tan carpet to Richard’s turquoise eyes. “Uh, what was that?”

“Bermuda, we might be able to go after all. What’s wrong?” he asked, brushing her hair lightly with his finger.

“Just a busy day at the restaurant, then picking up Tommy after soccer for the courthouse.”

“I wish I didn’t have to run back to work afterwards so we could have gone out to lunch.”

Richard said. “I know we’ll be a better home for him than that Jack. He never was much of a brother.”

“I just wish we could have had him sooner than this.” Rachel laughed. “Only twenty four and I already have a teen. Oh, I saved you some dinner in the oven and I made a cake.”

Richard stepped into the kitchen. “Thanks. We only got to eat some little sandwiches.”

Maybe I should just tell him about my dream.

Richard looked at the chocolate cake. “So, looks like things are going well for us,” Richard said, sitting at the table while Rachel brought him his food.

I pray you’re right, Rachel thought. “I’ll see how close Tommy is to being done. So we can have some desert.” Giving him a kiss, she moved down the hall to Tommy’s bedroom. She found Tommy asleep on the bed with his book opened. She set the book aside and put a blanket on the sleeping teen. *At least he’ll have a new life here.* Closing the door, her mind filled with visions of Lisa and her talking at the supermarket. *Why am I thinking of Lisa all of the sudden? I’ve only met her once.*

That night, Rachel didn’t want to sleep. She didn’t want to dream that dream again. So she stared at the darkness toward the ceiling. *I should tell Richard,* she thought. *He’ll know what to say to make things better.* But she kept silent. Within minutes, her heavy eyelids closed.

Rachel stood next to two men, both with wide wings and long swords. A woman in a blue dress stood next to her, shrinking back, holding her arm. Her long hair brushed against her face due to a strong wind. Instead of being black, it was bushy red, and she realized she wore no glasses. A robed man hang in the air before her. She felt her body heat up while flames swelled around, trapping them.

Rachel jerked awake and sat up, struggling to catch her breath.

Her husband put his arms around her. "What's wrong?" he asked, groggily. "Sweetie, you're shaking." Richard sat up and reached for the glass of water from the nightstand to hand to his wife. "Must have been some dream." He rubbed her back. "You want to talk about it?"

Rachel's trembling hands brought the glass to her lips. "A dream?" she asked. "Yes, a dream," she mumbled, hoping she could believe it.

Chapter 4

That evening, Lisa was left to close up the gallery so Maggie could run errands. Lisa worked on her painting in the back office while Kristy did her homework at the front desk, looking out for customers.

Lisa used a blow dryer to dry her latest painting. Shutting the dryer off, Lisa heard Kristy laughing through the cracked door. *So much for it being dead in here.* Lisa moaned. *Guess I better see if she needs any help.* Stepping out of the office, Lisa slowed her pace before rounding the corner to listen to her niece talking.

“Yeah, my mom dumped me at some stranger’s house,” Kristy said. There was a pause. “She can only think of herself and I’m in the way.” Kristy huffed. “Tell me things are better in California.”

I can’t believe the way she would talk about me. Lisa stepped into the store front to find her niece spread out on the display couch, talking on a cell phone. Luckily Kristy was facing the other way. Lisa snatched the phone away while Kristy gasped in shock. Holding the phone to her ear, Lisa said sweetly, “Kristy has to do homework now.” Turning the phone off, Lisa gave her niece a stern look. “I’m not just some stranger, I’m your Aunt!”

Kristy’s eyes were huge. “I’m talking to my friend Holly. It took me days to reach her!”

“Then she’ll call back at an appropriate time.” Lisa noticed Kristy’s papers were all over the counter but didn’t see the book she was suppose to be reading. Lisa spotted it on the floor across the room. Lisa picked the book up. It was *“To Kill a Mockingbird.”* Lisa sat down next to Kristy, flipping through it. “I’ve told you I’ve read this before if you need help. Why didn’t you come to me?” Lisa asked, putting her arm around Kristy.

“Because you were busy,” Kristy said.

Going with the guilt trip? “I will never be too busy for you. But you need to ask for help when you need it and not get on the phone or throw your work across the room.”

“I hate essays,” Kristy griped.

“I’ll help you,” Lisa said. “But I never want to be called some stranger again, got it?”

“Okay,” Kristy said.

The door chime rang out and Lisa turned to see Joe. Big drops slid down his jacket from the rain.

“Hi Joe. How’s business going? Coming to get some supplies for tomorrow?”

But he just stood there and looked at Kristy. “You busy?”

“I’m helping my niece out with her homework, Why?” Lisa asked. Joe walked up to her. *What’s with him?*

“I remember reading that book,” Joe said, looking at Kristy.

“You read this before?” Kristy asked.

“It was a hard read at first but it got better,” Joe gave a wink.

Kristy picked up her book.

“Can we talk in private?” Joe asked Lisa.

“Uh, sure. Kristy, I’ll be back.” Lisa led Joe to the back office.

Joe eyed the little paintings on the wall of landscapes, with angels hidden in the pictures, like waves crashing upon a beach, with an angel laying across the waves. “Must be a fan? I see more out there.”

“Yes, he used to be a local artist,” Lisa said, picking up her paints off the chairs. “So, what did you want to talk about?”

“You don’t remember but I’m the one that drove you home last night. I said that we have a connection together,” Joe said, closing the door.

Lisa sat down in the chair. “You what?” Even with the door closed, Lisa still felt at peace.

Joe walked over to her latest painting of a woman with red curly hair cropping her narrow, serene face. Light-brown eyes pierced through Lisa and Joe’s very soul. But her body still needed to be completed. “Is this another one of your dreams?”

Lisa nodded. “I haven’t thought of a name yet.”

“Looks just like her though,” Joe said, stepping back.

“Looks like who?”

“Your mother’s servant,” he said.

Lisa laughed. “What are you talking about. My mother never had a servant. You don’t even know my mom.”

“I did when we first met. That’s a good panting of her by the way, Celestine.” Lisa stood moving about, keeping an eye on Joe. “Angelic Falls is just how it happened on that tragic day.”

Lisa fixed him an icy stare.

Joe hesitated. “These paintings you said you’ve been dreaming about. They’re more than just dreams and paintings.”

“What are they?” Her arms began to tremble.

“They are memories,” he said. He paused. “Do you remember a tall man with a red cape? Or a huge bedroom and a nice four-poster bed?”

Lisa’s throat tightened. She tried to remember to breath. *It can’t be! I’ve dreamt of both. But how does he know?* “Mem...memories of what?” She finally got out.

“They’re memories of your past as the Princess of Angelic City, in Heaven.”

Lisa felt as though her legs would give out. She tried to speak but couldn’t.

Joe held out his hand. “Close your eyes and you’ll understand everything.”

She moved her hand toward his. *Do I really want to know the truth.* Then took his hand before she changed her mind. She squeezed her eyes shut. Blurred images flooded Lisa’s mind until a crystal, clear picture came into focus.

Lisa entered the dream, knowing she was still awake.

She moved down the walkway towards the suspended castles in the distance. Her blue dress and long copper hair blew in a powerful wind. A blanket of clouds blotted out the sun’s warmth and turned the air ice cold.

She looked up to see demons floating in the air by a shaft of darkness.

Not again. Have to save Joe. Lisa ran headlong toward the castles.

Terrified angels scattered everywhere. Smoke rose from the burning castles where the dark beams had penetrated.

“Mother! Joe!” she yelled.

A person in a scarlet robe shrouded in a hood hovered above her. They held a gold, crystal heart, in their hands. The demon removed the hood, causing Lisa to gasp.

“Dakon,” Lisa said.

He grinned. "After years of searching I finally found where the Angelheart is. Your mother's guardians were very useful with providing the information."

"What do you want?"

"To destroy your kind. No better place to start than with you, Princess." Giving a wicked grin he raised the Heart above his head.

Two men jumped in front of Lisa, their wings making a massive shield.

One man had long, thick, scarlet hair that hung in long graceful curves; a ponytail lay between his broad shoulders. The other man had dark curls that ended around his collar. Bringing his weapon up, he spread his feet into a wide stance.

Then a lady ran to her. She had long, bushy, dark maroon hair.

For an instant, Lisa thought she recognized the woman's light-brown eyes but couldn't place where from. Lisa touched the woman's arm and cowered.

A flash of gold sparks zipped around them. Flames closed in on Lisa and the three angels. They all cried out in terror as the smothering smoke and crackling flames closed in.

Lisa trembled on the ground. "What was that?" she gasped. Her chest felt like a balloon. Joe helped Lisa to her quivering feet.

"Are you okay?" Joe asked.

Inside she was shaking. "I'm...I'm not sure. What did you do to me?" Lisa breathed.

Joe led her to the chair where she composed herself.

"I re-awakened your memories," he said.

"Memories of being an angel?" *That would explain why church felt like home.*

"Yes, you were Princess Lisa of Angelic City."

For a moment, she didn't say anything. She clenched her stomach while tears formed in her eyes. "Joe. I remember everything," she said, squeezing his hand.

I hope I don't throw up on him.

"What happened after we died?" she finally asked, choking the words out.

"After your flesh was gone all that remained were your ashes." Joe's face lit up with awareness.

"I saw a faint glow outline around the ashes, then it was gone. Then the Angelheart disappeared in Dakon's hands. The Angelheart must have reincarnated you." Joe paused. "Do you remember what the Angelheart is?"

Lisa thought for a moment. "Vaguely. Isn't it a power that we protect?"

"We know it's a power source that your mother, the Queen protects. If it falls in the wrong hands we will all be doomed."

"And it's this Angelheart that brought us back?" She paused after Joe nodded. "But what are you doing here?"

"Your mother sent Ben and I down here to search for the Angelheart. We discovered the Heart divided into four pieces and fell into separate locations on Earth, but we do not know where. I thought I sensed a piece of the Heart covered in ice so I searched in Alaska, but once there I could not feel it."

Lisa ran her hand over her face.

"I'm sure it's a lot to take in." He grinned.

“How did you know I was one of you?”

“When I first went past your work I sensed a energy coming from you. Then you saw me when I fought off Dakon and his demons. Ben and I thought you were just a soothsayer but now I know it was your powers awakening.” Joe looked at the ground scratching his chin. “I had a vision of you and three others while sleeping the other night. That means if you’re alive, they are too. If you had brown hair, but now it’s red, that means the others have changed as well.”

Lisa shook her head smiling. “There are more angels to find.” Lisa sighed and leaned back in the chair. “A lot to take in one night. Finding that you’re not who you thought you were.” A silence filled the room. “Why, or even how would the Angelheart divide itself? Isn’t it solid?”

“It is. At least it was. We must find the Heart before the Dark Lord does,” Joe said. “Ben is down there now trying to keep track of their progress. He says they have demons searching everywhere, and more grow at a faster rate,” he sighed. “I fear for him.”

“It’s getting late. I think I better get Kristy home.” Lisa opened the door and they went toward the front. Lisa saw that Kristy had the book closed and listening to her ipod. Lisa sighed as she and Joe went through the gallery. “She probably didn’t even try. It’s going to be a long night.”

“I can’t wait to see what you paint next,” Joe said, glancing at the painting of the castles being destroyed. “So much exciting stuff happened before that tragic day.”

Lisa shook her head while holding the door open for Joe. “I don’t know. I think it’s going to be a rough few months with Kristy. She’s mad because I wouldn’t let her go out with her friends ‘cause she has homework.” Lisa sighed. “My sister couldn’t take care of her so it falls to me.” *I just want to cry.* “Maybe come back tomorrow and we’ll talk more if no ones around.”

Joe soar high into the night sky looking like a star.

Lisa felt her legs began to buckle. She grabbed hold of the door, trying to steady herself.

Is this real? Am I alive?

Thoughts and emotions were spinning through her head. *Can I tell anyone? No, who would believe me?* Dizziness overwhelmed her. Pulling herself together, she stepped back inside to attend to Kristy. Now she had two battles to deal with. Not only her rebellious teen but demons as well. *This should be fun.*

* * *

Lisa stood on the parapet, closed her eyes and spread her arms. She shuffled her feet forward. Lisa opened her eyes to notice the ground coming toward her rapidly and a horrified scream came from her lungs. Someone caught her. Lisa blinked and saw that it was Joe. His large wings drumming the air. He landed on the ground, then set her on her feet. “Are you okay, what happened?” he asked.

“I was just sitting on the ledge and I slipped,” she lied. They stared at each other. “Thank you so much.” She blinked tears from her eyes. “I better get going. My Prince is waiting for me.” Lisa hurried away, then glanced back at the handsome angel.

Lisa’s eyes were wild when she opened them to find someone watching her from her bedroom window. She sat up in bed causing her head to whirl. Once her vision cleared, she saw who it was. “Joe?” she almost screamed. “What...why are you here?”

“I think I know where the piece of the Angelheart might be. I was looking in the wrong

direction.” Joe was no more than a shadow on her windowsill until Lisa clicked on the lamp on her nightstand.

“You want to go at this time, right now?” Lisa asked, squinting against the light.

“Get dressed. I’ll wait downstairs.” Before Joe reached the door Lisa stopped him.

“I can’t leave Kristy.”

“Ben is here. He’ll keep an eye on her.”

When Lisa came out of her bedroom she overheard Joe talking to someone downstairs. “She is still so beautiful. Like she never changed. You’ll see.”

Lisa reached the bottom of the stairs and stopped short. Her heart sped up and she gasped at seeing Joe talking to a demon draped in a dark robe. The demon pushed its hood back to reveal a human face with white whiskers along his chin. She wrinkled her nose at the foul odor he gave off.

“Ben, you remember Princess Lisa?”

Ben took Lisa’s hand and kissed it. Her hand burned from his icy touch. “A pleasure seeing you alive.”

She jerked her hand away quicker than she intended to. Ben’s brows raised beneath pale blue eyes. *Is that due from being in the Underworld for so long?* Lisa wondered.

“Can’t say the same for Master Dakon. They’re going to be hunting you now. They don’t care about the other three. The Dark Lord fears you getting to the Angelheart the most,” he said. “So be careful. They see everything.”

“I know you. You dated Maggie for a month then disappeared,” she said.

“Yes. For a time, I thought she was you. Then when we discovered that it wasn’t we decided my abilities would be better at spying in the Underworld. It was you that I felt but I couldn’t sense it at the time.”

“Why would The Dark Lord fear me getting the Angelheart?”

“Because you can control it,” Joe said.

“So now they want to kill me, but why before?”

Ben folded his arms together. “The Dark Lord sensed something about you, but wasn’t sure what it was.”

“Where’s the Heart?” Lisa asked.

“It’s in the Arctic. Demons are searching for it now,” Ben said. “I would go but you’re more in tune to the Heart far better than any of us.”

Lisa hesitated. “Okay.” Lisa swallowed looking at Ben. “You’re not really a demon, right?” “Of course not, Your Highness. Your niece is safe with me,” Ben said.

“Okay, thanks for watching her. She’s upstairs sleeping.” She turned toward Joe while throwing on a jacket. “Anything I can do to help. Let’s make it fast before Kristy wakes.” They stepped out onto the balcony. “What do we do?”

“If it was a short distance away we would simply appear. For long distance we must fly. Wings help us move faster.” Large cream wings unfolded from between his shoulder blades. They flapped, testing the air. “Now your turn. Just concentrate.”

Lisa folded her hands together like she was praying and closed her eyes for a few minutes. “It hurts!” she screamed. Pain ripped through her back, down her spine. She felt something force themselves through the back of her skin. Lisa gasped. Opening her eyes she saw large feathers outstretched on either side of her.

“You haven’t used your wings in a long time,” Joe said, then jumped off the railing. He hovered in the air flapping his wings and held out his hand for Lisa. “Come with me.”

“I’m not sure,” Lisa said.

“You’ll be fine,” Joe assured her.

Lisa took his hand, stood on the railing, then shoved off. “No one can see us?”

Joe smiled. “Wonderful, isn’t it?”

Lisa, wrapped in the early morning chill, flew above the city lights that winked up at them. She gripped his hand really tight. It felt strange to be floating on the air. *No one can see us? Using this invisibility might be fun.*

* * *

Below them, mountain peaks were covered with snow and ice. The air felt a lot sharper than in the city. She was vaguely aware that her grip on Joe’s hand had loosened. They landed on the frozen ground. Lisa sheltered her body with her wings. Joe did the same.

“Wow, we’re already here and it didn’t seem like we were going that fast,” Lisa said, looking around. “I was afraid I wouldn’t remember how to use my wings, but I figured it out. What a cold place for the Heart to be.” The angels moved sluggishly through the snow and ice.

“I had another dream,” Lisa said.

“And?” Joe asked.

“This time I fell off the castle and you caught me.”

“I remember that day. You didn’t just fall though, did you?”

“I jumped. Because I couldn’t be with you.”

“Yet here we are.”

They both stopped and looked at the frozen area surrounding them.

Lisa felt a tug somewhere in the back of her mind. Lisa moved from spot to spot following the invisible line until she stopped. “I think I’ve found it,” Lisa said.

Lisa stepped back so Joe could aim his palm toward the ground. A burst of ice and snow was driven forth by his power. In the hole they found a gold, slanted object. Joe picked it up. “The first piece of the Angelheart,” he said.

In the distance they saw a dark robe figure gliding up the ice plain. When the figure came closer they knew it wasn’t Ben. The demon held two sickles in its hand swinging them in a wide circle. Lisa spread out her wings and so did Joe. Swords appeared in their hands, ready to fight, Lisa gasped. The cold metal stung her palm for a second after gripping the sword. The demon charged at her. She tried to block the demon’s blows, but the demon flipped Lisa on the ground. Lisa stood up with the help of Joe. Her back throbbed.

Joe then threw the piece of the Heart up toward the sky and pointed his fingers at the item. “You’ll never get your hands on the Heart.”

A blast of ice shot from the demons hand toward Lisa and Joe, covering them in a block of ice.

Chapter 5

Rachel woke with her body sweating from the flames of her dream, yet again. She went through the living room and out onto the porch where the cool wind gave relief to her burning skin. She watched the sun on the horizon begin to erase the darkness from the sky and turn the lake below into a sapphire blue with white sparkles catching the sun's rays. Rachel rubbed her arms making sure there were no blisters. *Does this dream have a meaning?*

Two hands massaged her arms from behind, then wrapped themselves around her. She felt her husband's hot breath against her skin that had just started to cool down. The last thing she wanted was anything hot against her body.

"Never seen you up this early. Was it the dream again? Want to tell me about it?" he whispered in her ear.

Before she could answer they both heard a loud crash from the living room and spun around.

Tommy picked up his soccer ball from the counter and made for his room. Richard opened the door and stopped him in mid track. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"I was going to fix something to eat," Tommy said, "I didn't think anyone was up."

Rachel's face grew red as she looked at the shattered glass. The heart with wings statue were in pieces all over the carpet. She tried to breathe, tried to calm herself. She squeezed her hands into fists. "You were bouncing that ball in the house, weren't you? I told you to stop it!"

Rachel took a couple steps forward with every intention of taking the ball away but then she felt her blood freeze. She wrapped her arms around herself.

Rachel vaguely sensed Richard right by her side.

"What's wrong?" she thought he asked, but her ears felt like they were plugged.

Richard touched her arm and immediately recoiled. He told Tommy something, and Tommy went straight down the hall.

"It's so cold. Like death surrounds me," she muttered. Rachel trembled on the couch as she tried to warm her frozen arms.

* * *

Joe couldn't feel his body. It was so cold he felt like he was in a tomb. However, he did hear something cracking and popping all around him. Within a minute his eyes fluttered open. A blurred image stared at him. Letting his eyes adjust, he saw a woman with black hair. Black nails, talon-like, tipped her long fingers. She held twin sickles in her hands and raised them above her head.

"You," Joe said through clenched teeth. Joe noticed the Heart lay upon his chest, Joe grabbed it and entered a black void. Then he reappeared in the air in time to see her strike the frozen ground. "I should have known it was you, Jin." Stuffing the fragment in his coat pocket, he landed on the ground gracefully, sword in hand.

"I want that Heart."

"I'll never give it to a satanic creature like you," Joe said.

She charged, sickles raised, and swung for Joe's head.

Joe spun away from her deadly blow, and slashed his sword across her back as she dove past him. Jin collided face first into the snow. She stood gazing at him. “You should join us. We could use a warrior like you at our side.”

“I’d rather be dead.” Joe deflected Jin’s sickles easily.

“Keera enjoys being one of us. In fact, she’s become like a sister to me. I’m sure she misses you.

“How do you know about us?”

“There’s nothing kept from the Underworld. Keera loved you, but you always had eyes for another. Why keep trying when you know you’re destined for failure?”

She was right. *My heart had longed for the Princess, but we kept it from everyone. Maybe this time Lisa and I... Where is Lisa?* Glancing around he spotted a block of ice, with Lisa inside, in the distance and sighed when he saw it wasn’t smashed. Jin glanced at the Princess as well, then smirked. “Give me the Heart, and I’ll let your love live.”

“How about I cut out your black heart instead?”

Jin ran toward the block of ice. Joe aimed a palm at her. Unleashing his divine power, he slammed her into the mountainside. Chunks of ice and snow flew in a heap as she dropped to the glacier. Jin raised her head. “Is that all you’ve got?” she challenged.

Joe glanced at the imprisoned Lisa. *I will save her this time.*

Joe held his ground as Jin staggered up on her feet. Angel and demon faced one another for a long moment, then Jin began to move forward, weapons raised. She’d taken two steps when a booming crack sounded from the slope behind her. Jin turned.

“No!” She stared up in terror at the wave of snow and ice roaring down. Just as she raised her arms across her face, the torrent struck. Huge chunks of ice and stone tumbled through the chill mountain air, and snow crystal cracked, spraying everywhere. The snow tumbled toward Joe.

He held up both hands and stopped it from going any further.

The cascade ended as abruptly as it began, leaving boulders and ice strewn across the glacier.

He waved his hand and tons of rubble exploded away, driven forth. He sifted through the mounds of debris, but did not see Jin’s body anywhere. He turned away, and headed to where Lisa lay encased in ice. Joe took the piece of Heart out of his pocket.

The fragment must have landed on the ice block I was imprisoned in and melted it.

He sat the piece on top of the ice. Within minutes the block turned to water.

Lisa blinked a few times. “J—J—J—Joe?” she asked, looking around. Her body shivered from being in the coldness. “What happened? Is the demon gone?” Her teeth vibrated, sounding like marbles knocking against each other.

“Yes,” he said, holding her up, “and we have the first piece of the Angelheart. You ready to go home?” She gave a slight nod. Unable to move Joe helped her into the air.

Joe couldn’t feel Lisa’s hand at all while they flew through the morning sky, which turned from midnight to pale blue. It was like a dream come true for him. *Please don’t let the dream slip away.* After all these years of wanting to hold her hand, it had finally happened. Lisa was staring ahead of them and Joe knew she was thinking about Kristy. *If she didn’t have to take care of this human we could be searching for the other pieces,* Joe thought.

Joe and Lisa soared through Heaven City looking down on the streets that were active with busy people. When they reached her apartment Lisa rushed in. “We have to move. Only a half hour before Kristy school starts.” Lisa stopped, seeing Ben on the couch watching TV with Kristy next to him, asleep.

“What’s going on?” Lisa asked.

Ben stood. “She came down stairs and started freaking out when she saw me. So I put her back to sleep with a touch.”

Joe smiled at the thought of Ben trying to deal with a confused teen.

Lisa sat next to Kristy and tried to wake her.

“What took you two so long?” Ben asked.

“Jin was there waiting for us to find the Heart. Then she froze us into blocks of ice using the weather,” Joe said.

“I thought we were dead,” Lisa said, as Kristy started to stir awake.

“Luckily the Heart landed on my block and melted the ice,” Joe told Ben. “I thought I covered Jin in a mountain of snow, but she vanished before it landed on her. On a good note though, we have the first piece of the Heart.” He held a curved shape object in his hand that sparkled.

“Will you put that away,” Lisa ordered.

Joe put it back in his pocket. Kristy’s eye’s opened to see her aunt. “What’s happening?” she asked.

“Come on. We only have thirty minutes to get you to school,” Lisa said.

“What—oh.” Kristy sat up and eyed Joe. “Did you go on a date in the middle of the night?”

“It’s not what you think,” Lisa started.

Kristy stood. “After you said I couldn’t go out?”

“Kristy, I need you to get ready...”

“And you left me with a stranger?”

“You have school,” Lisa started.

“And you don’t have work?”

Lisa stood abruptly and balled her fist. *Who does she think she is?* “Now! We’re running late!” Kristy marched upstairs.

Ben slipped his robe back on that smelled worse than rotting flesh. “Looks like you have a lot cut out for you, Princess. At least we have one piece of the Heart, that’s good news. I will return to the Underworld and see what the Dark Lords next move is. Be prepared for him to come after you,” he said to Lisa.

A black hole formed in Lisa’s floor and Ben, covering his head with his hood, jumped in. The hole faded back into the rug.

“Whenever he goes in, I pray Dakon won’t find out about him.”

Lisa rested a hand on his arm. “I’m sure he knows what he’s doing.” Joe met her eyes in gratitude.

“Ben’s right, you have your work cut out for you with Kristy,” Joe said. “You sure you can handle doing both?”

“Why?”

She looked at him like he lost his senses.

“We can use our powers to go unnoticed. Why not continue looking for the remainder pieces of the Angelheart?”

At first he was met with silence. He wondered if he shouldn’t have said it a different way?

“And what about Kristy? I made a promise to take care of her. I’m not going to break my promise so we can find the Heart faster. No, Joe. I’m not just going to leave her with other people. I made a promise to my sister. Also, I have to help Maggie at the gallery. She’s always been there for me.”

Kristy came down stairs, dressed and ready.

You could make her forget. Instead of saying it, Joe simply held the door open for them.
Better not make things worse.

* * *

Lisa drove Kristy to school while the coldness still ebbed from her hands. “So, who’s your boyfriend?” Kristy asked.

“He’s not. We just had something to do that took a little longer than we thought,” Lisa said.

“You can go out at all hours with your friends but I can’t with mine?” Kristy crossed her arms.

Lisa tightened her grip on the steering wheel. “You had homework. When you’re out of school, then you can hang out with friends.”

“That will be forever,” Kristy mumbled. Lisa pulled up to the school. “I would have had more freedom with Holly,” Kristy said, grabbing her pack and getting out, then slamming the door.

“Watch it, young lady,” Lisa called through the window. Lisa drove off, shaking her head. *Maybe Joe was right. Is taking care of Kristy and finding the Heart too much for me?* Lisa gripped the steering wheel again.

* * *

At the gallery, the coldness finally faded from the warmth of the overhead lights by midday. Unfortunately the thought of what Joe said lingered in the back of her mind.

“Do you want to finish your painting since it’s been slow?” Maggie asked.

Lisa looked up from dusting the paintings. “Uh, I don’t feel like it today.”

“What’s wrong?” Maggie came out from behind the counter.

“Just Kristy. I’m wondering if I can really take care of her.”

Maggie rested her hand on Lisa’s arm. “I’m sorry. I wish I could give you some advice.”

The door chimes rang out and they looked to see a customer step in. Lisa couldn’t believe who it was. It was the same woman that Kristy and she had met at the super market. *Rachel... she’s never come in before.* She gazed at the paintings. Looking a little confused. “You can get this. I’ll be back,” Maggie said, heading toward the restroom.

“Hi, can I help you? It’s Rachel, right?”

She looked at Lisa for a moment. “Oh, yes. You helped me find my son. Lisa, right?”

Lisa nodded. “I’ve never seen you in here before.”

“I’ve always been wondering what you have but never had a chance to get in. The diner’s slow today, so I’d thought I check this place out,” Rachel said, taking in the artwork.

“How is your son?” Lisa asked.

“He’s good. My husband and I just adopted him...” Rachel said, stopping at a painting of castles being destroyed by dark beams.

“Congratulations,” Lisa said, but she could tell Rachel wasn’t listening.

“It can’t be,” Rachel mumbled.

I know it’s good, but come on, Lisa thought. Lisa touched Rachel’s arm, startling her. “You all right?”

“Yes. That painting is so amazing,” Rachel said. “I almost really feel sorry for that woman.”

“You’re talking to the artist,” Maggie said, coming out of the back.

“You... you did this?” Rachel asked, looking at Lisa.

Lisa nodded. "I also painted that one over there," Lisa pointed to the Celestina painting. Rachel looked at it for a time, mesmerized by its beauty.

After a minute, Rachel pulled away. "She's beautiful. Something must have really inspired you. Was it your daughter?"

Lisa dusted the picture. "No. I don't know where I got it from. And Kristy's not my daughter. She's my niece. I'm taking care of her while my sister's out of town."

"Tommy was disappointed when she didn't show after school," Rachel said. "I think he likes her."

"She had tons of homework last night. I wonder if I can do this though. She's getting an attitude. She threatened to go anyway, so I had her do her homework here while I watched the store and did some painting."

Rachel laughed. "When that happens you just need to remember who the parent is. You get used to it. They really get a 'tude when they don't want to do their homework. Just keep stepping her into the ground. She'll learn." Rachel checked her watch. "I've got to go, but it was good talking with you and I love your paintings." Rachel took out a business card and handed it to Lisa. "Feel free to stop by and talk anytime about Kristy. The diner's just up the street." Then she left.

"Thanks for the advice," Lisa called. She looked at the card that read "Peggie's Diner" *Rachel's right. I have a responsibility now. I have to be there for Kristy.* Suddenly she felt like finishing her painting. *I felt something strange when Rachel looked at those paintings.*

* * *

Heading to her car, Lisa found Joe waiting for her. Lisa sighed. She didn't know what to say to him. "Ben said Master Dakon is really furious at Jin."

I should be furious at you. "I bet he is. He's furious at her because the Dark Lord is furious at him."

Joe laughed, obviously trying to lighten the mood. "I'm sorry about what I said this morning."

In the distance she saw Kristy walking up the block toward her. "Aunt Lisa," Kristy smiled, acting like she hadn't made a single comment that morning. "Can I have some money? My friend's invited me to go to the mall."

"And you have no homework?" Lisa asked.

"Kristy, come on!" Lisa heard a group of people from a car. She saw Tommy in the back.

"Mmmm, not that much. I'll stay up late and do it."

"No you won't. You'll wait till the weekend to go out. You have school tomorrow. They should be waiting too."

Kristy was about to protest when she thought better of it, stomped her foot and waved her friends on. "Happy," Kristy snarled and headed toward Lisa's car.

Lisa sighed and opened the passenger door for Kristy and Kristy slammed it. *Here we go again,* Lisa thought. The air turned colder and Lisa felt she was frozen in the block of ice again.

Demons appeared in front of them. Lisa narrowed her eyes. *This is not a good time.* "What do we do about Kristy?"

Joe ran to the passenger side, threw the door open and rested his hand on Kristy's shoulder. Before she could turn to shout at him, she went unconscious. "She'll be safe now," Joe said, getting in the drivers seat.

Lisa outlined a sword in the air with her finger. A sword appeared.

The demons charged at her. Lisa blocked up and down then pointed her palm toward two of them. One flew back into a car across from her, and she sliced the other. She was surprised how easy it was.

I don't even know how to use a sword.

More demons appeared.

"Get Kristy home," Lisa said, "I'll hold them off because if I go their follow us home."

She watched Joe get in the drivers seat.

"We will get that Heart, one way or the other," one of the demons said.

"After him," the demon said. "One of these two must have the Heart."

"We don't have it!" Lisa shouted.

"I'm sure." The demons started attacking her. Lisa blocked their steel each time they struck down. The swords sparked every now and then. With every move she felt her sword become lighter and lighter.

Lisa stared at the car to see demons standing in the way. She heard the car stall. Lisa's heart gave a flutter as the demons advanced. Joe ran the demons over with the car, turning them to dust. She tried to keep an eye on them while she counterattacked the demon's steel.

If anything ever happened to Kristy, I could never forgive myself.

Her sword flew out of her hands landing with a clang far away on the ground. "You're dead," the demon said.

Lisa looked at her sword. "Not yet."

A blade came close to Lisa's head. Lisa found herself in a dark void for a moment. She felt her body return to the parking lot with sword in hand. She gutted the demon.

She stood there, her sword dripping blood, and looked at the bodies. *Please let this work.* She waved her hand over the bodies but they were still there. "Oh, no." She tried a few more times. She took a deep breath and tried again. The bodies began to seep into the ground.

* * *

Returning home, Lisa found Kristy laying on the couch. "Are you okay?" Lisa asked, looking Kristy over.

"We're fine. She started to wake so I put her to sleep again. How about you? Are you all right?" Joe asked.

"I'm okay. A little shaky from using the sword. I had trouble sending them back to the Underworld, I thought I was going to have to come back and get you but on the fourth try the portal opened." She took a deep breath. "I thought you knew how to drive?"

"Not when I'm in a hurry," Joe said.

Lisa sat down next to Kristy. "I guess this means the demons will attack me more when I have Kristy around. That's going to be fun."

"The demons are cruel. They don't know anything about compassion. They'll even hurt a child to obtain what they want. They've got that for an advantage."

"At least Kristy won't remember." Lisa's heart slowed from anxiety. "Thanks for getting her out of there."

"I'm just sorry you had to deal with the demons by yourself."

Lisa ran a hand through her hair. "About what you said this morning, I understand you're in a hurry to find the other pieces of the Heart, but I have a responsibility to Kristy; not to mention I

made a promise to my sister. I need to do this. I need to make sure she's taken care of." Kristy began to stir awake. Lisa brushed Kristy's bangs while Kristy opened her eyes.

"What happened?" she asked while sitting up.

"You fell asleep on the way home," Lisa said.

"I better get going," Joe said.

Lisa walked Joe out. "You're right about your responsibility. I guess I am in a hurry," Joe said. "I'm just afraid the Underworld will get their hands on the Angelheart, but Ben will keep us informed of their progress." Joe paused. "I'll see you tomorrow then?"

Lisa nodded.

Joe went down the stairs. Lisa swore she heard a longing in Joe's voice.

Could it be for me? He must have been over that by now.

While Kristy did homework at the kitchen table, Lisa tried not to doze off while watching TV. *I wish I could have gotten back to my painting.* It was the last thing she thought of before dozing off.

* * *

In the main castle, down a long hallway decorated with banners on the wall, Lisa and Joe were talking in a familiar bedroom. "You know I can't," she whispered to Joe, who sat with her on her four-poster bed, "I can't be with you. Maybe if I wasn't born into royalty—"

"Who says you have to be?" Joe interrupted, as he got closer to Lisa's lips.

"We can't, this isn't—" But before she knew it they were kissing. Joe had begun unbuttoning her dress when the doors started opening with a knock, and Joe stopped his advancement on her.

A woman no older than Lisa opened the double doors and stopped in mid stride.

"Am I intruding? I can come back." The woman had dark red hair.

"No, Rachel. Come on in." Lisa looked at Joe for a few seconds. "Thank you. That will be all." Her voice changed to a commanding tone. Lisa then looked at Rachel, her page, whose autumn eyes looked at her knowingly.

Bowing toward Lisa, Joe turned and marched out the double doors.

* * *

"Rachel?" Lisa's eyes fluttered open. She found herself staring at Kristy.

"You okay, Aunt Lisa? Who's Rachel?"

How long have I been out?

She looked at her clock. Only thirty minutes.

Lisa stood and looked at Kristy. *What should I do?* "Uh, Kristy. Do you mind staying here? I've got to run to the store."

"To see Rachel?" Kristy asked.

Lisa didn't know what to say. "I must have been dreaming. But I don't know what it meant," she whispered. Lisa grabbed her purse. "I'll be fast." *I hope*, she thought, walking out the door. Her wings ripped through her back and spread out. But it didn't hurt this time. Lunging off from the railing with her foot, her heart gave a tug when she realized she was on her own. *I hope the energy that I sense stays up.*

* * *

Rachel loaded dishes in the dishwasher. Turning around, she studied the spot in the corner that Lisa occupied within her home, unseen, where'd she followed the energy to. A man came down the hall. Lisa could tell he worked out by his broad shoulders. "You feel all right? Having another cold spell?"

She kissed him. Rachel's frame looked small, leaning against him. "No. Not at all. You look tired."

He nodded.

"I'll tell Tommy it's time for bed." With another kiss he turned and strolled down the hall.

Rachel glanced back at the wall where Lisa stood.

Can she see me?

After Rachel gave him a stern talking to about something he broke, Rachel moved to the next bedroom. Before Lisa followed, it dawned on her that he was Rachel's son, Tommy, the one she had helped Rachel find in the grocery store a couple of days ago. Rachel, who sat on the queen size bed, had her eyes closed.

The bearded man put his hands on her shoulders and started massaging. "You'll never see another glass heart like that."

Rachel didn't say anything. It looked to Lisa like she was concentrating on something.

"I wish you would go to the doctor. It's not right your body to freeze like that."

"I told you I'm fine."

Soon they both fell asleep. Staring at Rachel Lisa moved closer, pondering about what she was about to do. Pushing her long hair back from her cheek, she watched Rachel twitch like she was having a dream.

Her features looked like the woman *Rachel* in her dream. Her skin was white as cream, and she too had a small nose. She also remembered how Rachel looked at the paintings. Like she was remembering something.

Now that my dreams are at ease, I hope I can ease your dreams as well.

Lisa took a deep breath, put her hands on Rachel's side, and closed her eyes. In minutes Lisa felt herself merge within Rachel's body.

* * *

Jin stood at the edge of a cliff face that dropped off into the abyss below. Wisps of smoke came from her hand, and she threw it out before her. The white threads came together forming a picture of Dakon sitting in his chair, the caves only light. "How dare he talk to me that way."

"I've never heard him talk like that to anyone," Keera said, sliding into the shadows. *There she goes, getting into her rant again.*

"He called me a mindless insect. If he thinks he can do better, then why does he just sit there? He's the insect!" Jin crossed her arms.

"What do you plan to do sister?" Keera asked.

"I will be in charge of the Underworld someday. Someone will kill Dakon. But until then ..."

"Until then, we move forward."

The image turned from Dakon to Kristy, who was asleep in her bed.

"Yes. The perfect way to get the shard of the Heart from the Princess." Jin craned her neck to see Keera.

Lavender eyes floated in the darkness. She knew what Jin was thinking. “We will use the thing that is most precious to her.”