

1<sup>st</sup> October Cola

“All Hallows Eve” didn’t that mean something to him? It used to. When he was younger, he remembered, he’d been so afraid he slept by his mother on that same night every year. Now he realized the fatal flaw in losing that all-encompassing fear.

He should have taken heed of the old woman’s ramblings. "In the year of Sabnock, the forty-third Spirit -- and that year be fifth after the millennium -- he and all his armies will rise and destroy the earth. Take heed and seek your salvation in the Lord."

His wife had laughed. And now she was gone too, his beautiful Annie. He had watched her being mutilated then destroyed, helpless to do anything but to try and fight the seemingly unstoppable.

He looked around. Only nineteen left. Nineteen people in the town he had called home. This morning his life had been perfect: wealthy businessman, beautiful devoted wife. And then the storm came. The animals had gone crazy -- birds, deer, squirrels, all the forest animals fled. Obedient, domestic animals turned on their long-loved masters.

Then the unspeakable (demons?) had dissipated the town. There was no other word for it. Now, sitting here with the others, he could hear them outside the walls, scratching at the roof of the church.

How did it get this far?

2<sup>nd</sup> October Rick

Daniel Waters turned his head, saw Father O’ Riordan in the first pew, next to the Conway girl – Shelly, Shirley? She was one of Annie’s fourth graders. Something had bitten her left leg off just above the knee. The tourniquet was a good one, and someone produced a bottle of painkillers, probably Emily Crane, to calm her. It was no secret in Alma’s Cove that Emily Crane popped pills. And why not, given the routine visits Harry Crane’s knuckles paid to his wife’s jaw? Harry was three pews back, drunk, and brooding.

Daniel looked for Emily. Was she still in the vestibule, he wondered. He wished she’d stay closer, its dark back there. A whimper was heard from the child. First aid notwithstanding, she might not last the night. She was gray, and her breathing was bad. Her folks had been pulped in front of her—jellied, in fact. The thing that did it -- shaggy, bear-like, fifteen feet tall -- looked nothing like the hunched gargoyle that killed Annie. Sabnock, his mind whispered.

"This is God’s house."

Daniel looked up. Father O' Riordan stood, raising his voice to be heard over the screeching noises. "God's house," he repeated. "They can't get in here."

Daniel waited to see who would laugh, curse or concur.

3rd October Milly

"'God's house', Father? What do these creatures care about God? And how do you know this so-called 'Gods house' will stop them?" Nick Jackson loudly asked. A mere teenager of fourteen, or fifteen years, Daniel couldn't remember.

Father O' Riordan's face turned red. "Do not doubt God's power to protect his home, Nicholas. Do not speak of such things."

Nick only sighed.

"You know, he has a point, Father." Daniel found himself saying. "What if they know no God? To not know of something, they cannot fear it."

"Exactly my point," Nick agreed. But no such theory had actually entered his young mind. Nick's public speaking skills has not yet caught up with his problem with authority.

"Besides, these things were fifteen feet tall, this church will not make much of a difference." Daniel added.

Gregory Brenson, a forty-nine-year-old farmer began, "Have you no ears, Father?" he gestured toward the Conway girl. "Have you no eyes? See these children? Shelly there, yes, that's her name. Shelly here has no leg?! No leg, Father! This girl saw her parents torn into smaller pieces than a duck could tear bread! And you claim a house of prayer could stop them?! Be logical, Father."

Then something struck the ceiling.

4<sup>th</sup> October Born To Sin

The noise was deafening, and someone screamed, "They are trying to get in!"

Father O' Riordan calmed everyone down momentarily saying, "It will be alright. I have told you they can not get in the House of God."

Heads turn, and several brief moments of eye contact later, there are growing doubts of their safety. The sound of breaking glass from above can be heard throughout the church. Nick lowers his head. Daniel notices how quickly 'resentment of authority' becomes

‘take care of me’ when decisions are necessary. With an upward point and a quick nod, Daniel and Father O’ Riordan decide it a good idea to investigate.

"Everyone stay calm. Father and I will be right back." says Daniel. They briefly huddle together as not to upset the rest of the people.

"We need protection," Father O’ Riordan whispers.

Daniel looks around for a weapon; no weapon presents itself. "How are we to protect ourselves? Do you even know what we are dealing with?" Daniel asks.

Father O’ Riordan hears, and ignores the question. "Let’s go check out the upstairs," he says.

Daniel and the priest walk up the stairs. Wind howls through a broken window. Shards of glass are scattered around; some even stuck into the opposite wall.

"What do you think came though?" Daniel asks but doesn’t expect an answer.

5<sup>th</sup> October Melanie

With a sigh, Father O’ Riordan replies, "If I knew that, maybe I’d feel better."

They tentatively look around; both men ready to run. Father O’ Riordan tilts his chin upward, extends his arms slowly, palms up, asking his Higher Power aloud, "And what do we do now?"

Without taking notice of who is being asked, Daniel replies, "We should first try to repair the window to prevent something from coming in. Yeah. There." He points at several pieces of wood. "We can use these and I think there are also some nails and a hammer. The workmen forgot it when they finished work yesterday." Daniel begins to take action.

After the repairs, and while on their way towards the office, a scream is heard coming from downstairs. Two stairs at a time, they quickly descend.

"What happened?" Daniel shouts.

No one answers—only Carol Smith slowly raises her hand and points to something outside. Daniel and Father O’ Riordan go to the window.

"Can you see anything?" the priest asks.

"No, but wait...there..." Daniel wasn’t able to finish his sentence. He stared out the window. The sky was dark, darker than ashes. But that wasn’t everything, not far from the church a horse, mighty and strong, appeared. On its back a man (was it a man?) that

looked like an animal (which one?), maybe a lion. It screamed something, but no one could understand what. It was no human language.

Father O' Riordan stepped back and almost collapsed.

"What?" Daniel screamed.

"That's the l-l-language of Death an-and of the Demons." Father O' Riordan stammered.

6<sup>th</sup> October Dana Jean

The horseman's piercing shriek sliced through what little sanity Emily had clung to. The purse she had clutched and rocked back and forth like a child fell to the floor with a muffled thud, spilling the contents. And, yes, there were plenty of pills for everyone--if it came to that. Emily prayed that God would intervene and take them all, but apparently there is no negotiating suicide by Savior.

She dug at her face with the chewed and bleeding stubs of what once had been strong and capable hands, and let her own agonized sounds mingle with that of the demons. If this had been a different time and place, Daniel would have laughed, because the harsh caterwauling sounded very much like Courtney Love meets Yoko Ono. But, he didn't think the demon wanted Nirvana or to "give peace a chance."

This odd thought didn't strike Daniel as bizarre under the circumstances. He moved forward to embrace Emily as a loud and dangerous warning was issued from the back of the church.

"Shut that bitch up." Harry said in a slur as slobber oozed from his drunken lips. "I swear to God, shut her up or she's out with them." And he jerked a thumb towards the window where the stench came in on the breeze.

7<sup>th</sup> October Angie

Daniel couldn't believe his eyes or ears. After all they had been through. Harry was still being a drunken asshole. Well, he had had enough! He tried to get his anger under control...and couldn't. He charged him, totally forgetting they were in a House of God, but the sanctity of the building it seemed didn't bother what they were up against either.

Harry must have seen that he meant business, and stood up. Daniel froze. What in the hell was going on? As Harry stood, he started changing... first a cat, then a toad, and finally back to the same old drunk. As Daniel stood there, he changed again. He had three heads!

Daniel froze in his footsteps, tried to speak, and couldn't. "Harry..." he squeaked.

“You idiot! I am BAEL! King of the East!”

Emily started crying again, even louder this time. "Nooooooo...not again!"

Harry/Bael looked at her and said, "I told you to shut the hell up!" With a flick of his wrist, Emily went flying.

When her head hit the wall, Daniel heard the thump, and knew Emily would never have to worry about any more beatings. The sound broke his temporary paralysis, and Daniel charged again, only to have Harry/Bael disappear. Father O' Riordan could only watch, as his House of God was breached. There was screaming from everyone, and sounds of pounding on the floor as everyone fled into different parts of the church.

8<sup>th</sup> October Jen G.

Shelly's eyes fluttered open. She knew she was alone in the room. It was the commotion of screaming, things breaking, and the sounds of running feet that had roused her back to consciousness. In their terror, the grown ups had forgotten the gray-faced little girl.

She should have been scared, but she wasn't. She merely focused. Don't cry, she thought, only babies cry. Remember what Mom said before the creatures came. She said, you'd live, it would be hard, but you can cry when it's over.

Later, she thought, yes, she would cry. The pain was clear and sharp now, flooding her mind with the memory of the day's horrific scenes. She would cry for her parents, her friends, and her missing leg. But she wouldn't do it now. She sat up on her elbows to look around. Everything was spinning, but she took a deep breath and waited for it to pass.

She would have to get up. Well, maybe not all the way, up enough to crawl somewhere safer than here though. The need to pee was overwhelming, but there was no way she would make it without help. She would have to hold it. Rats, she thought, that's all I need - another distraction.

9<sup>th</sup> October Jo Noonan

It was dark in the room, and Shelly never liked the dark. Her mother told her there wasn't anything in darkness that wasn't there with the lights were on, but Shelly knew, in this church, this night; that wasn't true. She wanted to get out of there as fast as she could, but in her weakened condition, she moved like molasses in January.

She began to crawl with both arms, dragging one leg and one stump behind. She wore herself out before getting to the doorway. She rested a moment, and then began moving

again toward the little bathroom in the lobby. I'll be safe once I get in there, she tried to convince herself.

She paused to catch her breath a second time when there was a thud sound from behind her. She craned her neck, squinted her eyes in the darkness to see what she thought was Harry standing behind her.

"Harry, could you get me to the door?" she asked, gesturing toward the bathroom.

He gave her a cold stare.

"Bael!" he corrected as two more heads emerged. When his mouth opened, little sparks of fire flew out, along with the funk of forty-thousand years. Shelly buried her nose into her shirt, fighting off the rising flood in her eyes, and slowly began to crawl.

Bael stepped in front of her.

10<sup>th</sup> October    Carrie Ann

He blocked the door. He appeared larger now, his glaring eyes cutting through the darkness searching for Shelly's next move.

Panicked and dazed, Shelly stopped crawling, and lay tummy down on the floor.. She placed her chin on the tightly woven carpet, bringing both arms up around her head in a self-protective position. Her breaths were coming in shorter jabs now, her chest burning with each one. Her heartbeat seemed to slow as everything around her sped up.

Then she remembered. She painstakingly reached into the pocket of her torn, blood crusted sweatshirt and desperately searched with her slightly numb fingers. Her bladder was burning and the painkillers were beginning to fade, inviting the horrific pain and nightmarish memories into her consciousness.

The entire time, Bael stood over her watching, like prey.

Where? Where was it? She knew she had it in her pocket. Her mother had reminded her to bring it with her before she left to meet Brian in the field that morning.

Bael was coming closer now, almost stalking when Shelly's bladder finally gave up. The hand in her pocket grasped the small object, which had nearly escaped through a tear, and she brought it out before her. Bael recoiled in shock for a moment and began to back away.

11<sup>th</sup> October    John

The priest looked toward the altar at the far end of the church from where he stood several feet from where Daniel looked out the window. How they could get inside he did not know. He suddenly felt a strong presence; a presence bolder than evil. With the corner of his eye he saw movement further back and toward the children's room, the Congregation settled their babies to veil crying there.

As he focused on the dark room he saw a human figure within which looked like an apparition of sorts stirring a large brew of herbs and animal-parts in a cauldron. The ghostly figure wore a black hooded robe and showed kind of a hunch in its stance.

As the priest cautiously approached, the creature turned its head toward him while the face of a skeleton shone through wearing a clenched smile. Father O' Riordan stiffened for a moment then began to tremble as the smell of something awful like that of rotted flesh reeked from under the closed door of the glass-faced room. The smell slowly grew stronger as the priest quickly pinched his nose, holding in the urge to vomit.

In the midst of this horror he felt an overload of adrenaline, barely able to breathe as the pewter crucifix around his neck began to smoke, and then slowly melt...

12<sup>th</sup> October      Angela

The skeletal creature slowly raised its hand toward Father O' Riordan and he felt heat begin to radiate from his chest. A heart attack? Now? No, not a heart attack, but something else. Suddenly, he heard the sound of running footsteps behind him, but dared not turn to see who was there. Then he heard the familiar voice of Brigitte Fitzpatrick behind him.

"Father O' Riordan, what . . ." her voice trailed as she too stared at the apparition behind the glass. When her green eyes locked with the twin glowing coals that served as eyes for this creature, the ghostly creature's skeletal mouth opened emitting a shriek. From behind a glass wall, and twenty feet away, the shriek caused Brigitte's autumn colored hair to fan out from a breeze.

Brigitte's eyes did not waver as she reached out and grasped Father O' Riordan's hand. He felt warmth emanate from her, imbuing him with strength and restoring his faith. The creature slowly backed away, bowing slightly as it faded back into the shadowy recesses of the room.

After a moment, Brigitte loosened her grasp of Father O' Riordan's hand. She looked to him as someone coming up from the velvety blackness of a deep sleep. A glance over her shoulder and Father O' Riordan could see her four children, Tara, Maeve, Quinn and Kavan, standing there clustered with their father, Donal.

Looking back into the room, Brigitte said, "Hurry! We must hurry. There's still time."

Brigitte turns, and steps off toward the main body of the church in the direction of the altar. She instinctively reaches for the hand of her closest child as she sets into motion. Donald, her husband, steps up forming a tight family circle as they begin to move through the church with their children in the middle. Father O' Riordan was reminded of how early television westerns circled up the wagon train for safety. He watched this, forgetting the apparition that had disturbed him so, and then followed the moving unit.

As they crossed the open area of the pews, Father O' Riordan caught the hint of music filling the stale air. It was not the organ pipes normally heard during Sunday mass. It sounded like several children, perhaps a small part of a larger choir. They seemed to be in the choral area of the overhead loft. Father O' Riordan moved along with the Fitzpatrick clan while trying to catch a glimpse of who was upstairs casting down such a tune as this...

13<sup>th</sup> October      Mark Marino

The melody, both hypnotic and ominous, echoes...the words sung in rhyme:

“From the book the word is spoken--whispers from forgotten psalm.  
Gather all around the young ones. They will make us strong.  
Reach above your dreams of pleasure--given life to those who died.  
Look beyond your own horizons. Sail the ship of sign.

Bodies burning in red ashes, on the hill the church in Ruins--is the scene of evil doings.  
It's a place for all bad sinners. Watch 'em eating dead rats 'inners.  
It's the same where'er you go. To black Masses people go.  
Oh lord yeah.

The devil and the priest can't exist if one goes away.  
It's just like the battle of the sun and moon, night and day.  
Force of the devil that's we're all told to fear.  
Watch out for religion when he gets too near too near.

We're disturbing the priest. Won't you please come to our feast?  
Do we mind disturbing the priest? Not at all, not at all, not in the least.  
Follow me now and you will not regret. Living the life you led before we met.  
You are the first to have this love of mine--forever with me 'till end of time.”

14<sup>th</sup> October      Follow The Beam

"Time? Time for what? I don't underst..."



"Not now Father, there is much to be done. It's best to leave the questions for later," Brigitte whispered. "We've already been wrong about them not being able to get into the church. We can't afford anymore costly mistakes."

"Do you know what they are, or where they're from?"

"Yes to both, my great grandfather, Pdraig, thought that he and the other deacons had taken enough of the proper measures to ensure that this wouldn't happen again."

"Again?" Father O' Riordan had been in this parish for forty years and had never heard of anything like this.

"Yes, again. Now, no more questions. We have a lot work ahead of us. Father, I'll go with you into the rectory. We need as much of the holy oils as we can carry. Donal, I need you to take the children into the sanctuary and have them start preparing."

Brigitte knelt, tousled Kavan's unruly red hair, kissed each of them on the forehead, and said, "Go with your daddy, you know what you have to do. I love you and I'll join you soon." She knew the children would be alright. She could feel their power pulse through them harder than she could feel her own.

15<sup>th</sup> October James S.

Brigitte turned to the priest, pointing at his chest saying, "It's not only about spirituality, Father." She tapped his chest to emphasize her point. "It's about trust," *tap* "love," *tap* "and benevolence." *tap*

She lowered her arm, squinting her eyes, and said, "And, Father - it's about being true to what you believe in." The priest, still listening to the music filling the air, dropped his eyes from searching the choral seats, and felt humbled by this mother of four. She was right, he thought, he had had doubts.

She moved forward toward the altar, Father O' Riordan followed, as she continued to speak. "These creatures were sent this day to gather and cultivate all the hatred and evil that humankind has fostered these past 50 years, Father. And there's been a lot of it. With it, they intend to lay waste to all of humanity. Sabnock himself must be stopped, Father. We must defuse the strength and power mankind's inhumanity has already given them."

Father O' Riordan could now see the entranceway to his church. What had been Bael was now merely Harry, abusive husband of slain Emily. Harry stood, holding his forehead, grimacing at something which lay on the floor. Shelly, he thought, and began to sprint toward the lobby, screaming "Daniel!" as he ran.

16<sup>th</sup> October Christina Doran

They reached Shelly's limp body and pushed Harry dumb-foundedly away. The blood trickling from her mouth was not a good sign. Father O' Riordan felt for a pulse, there was none. As he prayed for the child, "Our father who art in Heaven..." Daniel saw an object poking from her clenched fist. He bent down and pried it from her hand; she had clutched it so tightly that it left a beaded imprint upon her palm. "Faith," Daniel whispered.

Bridgette glanced at Father O' Riordan to signify a further confirmation of what she had said as true. It may have not been enough to save the girl, but her innocence and faith were enough to save them. They all looked at Harry with the same thought. He was slumped in the corner, no signs of a toad, cat or any added head. Daniel screamed, "Look what you've do..." he trailed. Unable to finish and shocked into silence from what he saw out the window; a lion's glowing yellow eyes glaring at him

17<sup>th</sup> October Joanne Tolson

Father O' Riordan felt a newly bestowed vigilance swelling in his steps as he walked to the altar, knelt, and began to pray for the small girl. Brigitte approached and gently squeezed his hand. The temporarily confused Bael sensed this simple, open and intimate display of affection as a challenge and began to regain some of his composure. Harry stood, and began to walk in small circles, pulling at his ears, rubbing his forehead with expressions of anger ripping across his otherwise placid face; his inner turmoil ripping his sanity to shreds.

Father O' Riordan and Brigitte continued to pray. The church began to shake as forces outside sensed the growing strength of purpose uniting inside. Harry clamped both hands over his ears, shrieking, "What is this?" Bael emerged, flying into a rage; wings flapping for take off. It seemed now Harry did not have a snowball's chance in hell. From outside, Sabnock bellowed curses in gothic demon speak not far from the shattered window.

18<sup>th</sup> October Mrs. Heather Todd

"Our Father, who art in Heaven...." Father and Brigitte prayed. They became joined shortly thereafter by Daniel, Nicky and Greg. Harry/Bael began to writhe and change forms quickly so that they seemed to melt together as one. The prayer circle, with hands joined, now began to chant loudly to be heard over the yells and untranslatable chatter.

The prayers echoed resoundingly the children's intensity grew loud and melodious, a more beautiful sound the adults could never remember hearing at Sunday mass. The skeletal figure that had been using the children's room as his demon-diner disappeared, leaving without a trace of ever having been there.

From outside, loud stomps and noises could be heard, although muted by the group of believers within. Sabnock was obviously pissed about the prayer service that had started inside. Daniel carried Shelly to the alter area joining the circle. The prayer group placed her into the middle, forming around her becoming a human shield. "...but deliver us from evil. Amen"

As the circle ended its prayer, a small, faint shimmer emitted from the girls' hand. Daniel carefully opened the unconscious girls hand and gasped at the sight. The rosary beads the girl had held up to Bael in self-defense were pulsing. The small plastic beads she used every Sunday since her first communion for prayer appeared to be filled with blood, and the crucifix, once just metal, was now a beautiful sparkling white crystal.

"Blood of Christ, Father?" asked Brigitte

18 October     Bob

On hearing those words spoken, Harry/Bael, who was now more Bael than Harry, roared laughter so loud the very ground beneath everyone trembled as if in fear itself and a stinking, swirling heat emanated throughout the church.

"You think you can stop the fate that awaits you all?" Bael asked mockingly and gestured towards the window where outside a scene of apocalyptic fury roiled like a bucket of worms. The lightning crashed as his hand passed over the window as if to mock them further and all that looked saw hordes of unspeakable creatures laying siege to the church.

Nicky Jackson stood silent, his face growing as pale as the body of the little girl that lay at his feet, losing all hope. He had seen more today than a boy his age should ever have to witness and it had been unraveling his grip on reality and he was past the point of breaking. Tears streamed down his face as he clenched his fists and ran towards Bael.

"NICK. NOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!" Father O' Riordan screamed.

Nicky didn't hear anything but the pounding of his heart in his ears. Bael shifted his gaze toward the boy as Nicky closed the distance with fear and rage in his eyes and let his form change to that of his true self and with one quick movement ripped out Nicky's throat.

19 October     Darxa

The church grew silent save for the ever more monotonous scratching and tearing sounds outside. Bael grinned, blackish blood seeping through his pursed lips, "Another life, another death."

The lifeless bloody clump, that lay there on the ground, barely recognizable as Nicky at all, began to twitch in large jumps. Its arms began to move, its head turning from side to side. The others in the group (now all moved towards the back of the church) stared, too disgusted and terrified to do anything. The priest shook his head in awe as Nicky's body began to rise next to Bael.

"You all think you have seen death! You all believe you have seen the worst of hell!"

Nicky's body stood upright a few feet beside Bael.

"None of you have seen hell! But you soon will!" Bael thundered, making the entire church shake with every word.

In the darkness Father O' Riordan stepped forward, a mere silhouette in the dark church. As soon as he could see what the priest was about to do, Daniel reached his arm forward and grasped the sleeve of the priest's now disarrayed jacket.

"No father, you can't do this. Look at these people father!" O' Riordan craned his neck toward Daniel and the lost group, his face was blank. His hair, now in untidy mats. But the priest only looked at him for a second before letting the jacket slide off, and began to walk towards Nicky and the demon. Daniel only stood there, the jacket held loosely in his grasp.

Nicky, now a minion of Bael, or quite possible a part of Bael himself approached the father with an uncanny speed. Blood flowed down his shoulders, pieces of meat and skin hung off in tattered clumps. Creatures began to issue through the windows, creating holes for themselves in the walls and ceiling. Winged demons looked on with the utmost pleasure and gratification pasted upon their distorted faces. Their teeth like rusted white talons glowing in the darkness.

Father O' Riordan stopped in his steps, almost losing balance and looked around in what would have been his last few seconds of life, if Daniel had not stepped in the way, tackling the lifeless Nicky to the ground.

What remained of the group watched as the winged demons tore through the church from everywhere. Bael laughed, and was joined by his faithful minions as Daniel struggled with the recently deceased Nicky.

23 October    Scotty

The demons surrounded the tiny group cowering in the church. They swooped down, gnashing their vicious teeth but waited to attack. Their intent was clearly to prolong the terror, enjoy it, and feed off it.

Daniel continued his struggle with the demonically possessed Nicky but he knew he had no chance of defeating him. Nicky had the strength of pure evil running through his body, and Daniel's faith was no match. Nicky grabbed Daniel at the throat with a powerful right hand, lifting him off the ground.

"I'm so sorry I couldn't save you Nicky," said Daniel, while struggling to breathe.

"Bring him to me!" roared Bael, who now had Father O' Riordan by the throat, squeezing, and crushing slowly. Nicky carried Daniel, feet dangling in midair, toward Bael, dropping him at his feet like a rag doll.

"Did you really think you could beat me, pitiful Christians? Where is your savior now?" Bael laughed.

Then suddenly, Nicky leapt onto Bael and dug his thumbs into his eyeballs, gouging at his eyes. Bael screamed in pain and dropped Father O' Riordan. Outside Sabnock screamed in rage. The winged demons took flight out of the church.

Daniel looked up from the ground, "Thank you, Nicky," he said. With that, Nicky fell to the ground with a slight smile on his lips.

23rd October      Traci

"Daniel!" Brigitte screamed.

Daniel sat up and stretched out his arm, pointing at the priest. "Save us, father. Save us! It must be now... Do something!" he urged.

With redness from where Bael had nearly crushed his windpipe, Father O' Riordan knelt, and began to pray. He closed his eyes and prayed to his God for those who had perished. He prayed to his God for the courage to do what he must. He prayed for strength in his faith. And, with echoes of laughter rising from outside, he mostly prayed for his God to help.

Then, with renewed strength, he stood up, and shouted, "You are an abomination to God! Be gone devils! I order you in the name of the Lord to be gone!"

One of the winged demons perched on the edge of a ragged hole in the church roof became still, and tottered. Its balance apparently lost. Then its body jerked violently; its wings constricting tightly to its emaciated body. Its head twisting upward as it tumbled into the church plummeting to the wooden floor. Its contorted face slammed sideways onto the floor first, cracking one its horns off. A puss-like jelly splattered in an arc across the back of the nearest pew. The rest of its body followed landing squarely onto its own neck, snapping it in two places. It momentarily convulsed on the floor, and then moved no longer.

Bael, upon seeing Father O' Riordan's small victory below, beckoned his legion of demons. They stopped and stared, awaiting Bael's instruction.

Brigitte eyed the rosary and crystal that had escaped Daniel's hand, and then met Father O' Riordan's gaze. They nodded together; a silent agreement between them, knowing it was up to them, to end it, and to end it once and for all.

24<sup>th</sup> October Kim

Greg, alone at the altar with Shelley, also began to pray. He felt awkward and the words, not flowing smoothly, sounded empty and hollow in his mind. The singing of the children in the choir loft seemed far away, and barely audible. Others of their little group glanced toward him, but no one came to the altar. They were looking at Bael.

Bruises would later form on Father O' Riordan's neck and he drew painful, rasping breaths. He crouched near Nick. Brigitte came to their side, bringing the sacred oils. He reached for the oil of the Anointing of the Sick.

"Not that one," she whispered. He stared at her.

Bael continued to stagger back and forth, crashing into pews and roaring in pain and fury. From his eyes, blood spurted obscenely onto the fallen pews and hymnals scattered about.

"Nick's not dying, Father, he's alive," Brigitte said quietly. "The oil is for you."

He had been ordained 43 years ago, his hands anointed by a bishop. What was she talking about?

"Sabnock cannot be defeated by ordinary measures. You must be anointed before you can destroy him."

"But, who?" he croaked.

She looked at him wisely, patiently and said, "I will."

28 October Cola

Bael staggered toward the small group, intent on destroying them even in the throes of agonizing torture. Why did the human turn on him? He was controlling his every move. Once possessed, humans had always followed orders until they were of no more use. It must have been the bitch. The one with the sickening bright white aura surrounding her, she must have interfered. If he could kill her to please Him, Bael/Harry thought, he would be rewarded in death.

As he moved closer he saw she was anointing the holy one. No, not now, it can't be the Underworld has waited far too long for this opportunity. Just when mankind had sunk so low and evil was ripe throughout the world. Now was our chance to rise and take what was rightfully ours. The prophecy was being fulfilled.

“Noooooo!” he screeched. In a final act of desperation Bael threw himself at the group. The bitch turned. Her glow grew brighter, fueled by that of the holy man and another standing beside her. What was that she held in her hand?

“Be gone, minion of Sabnock! Return to your rightful place in the fires of Hell!” And with that Bael knew of this world no more.

The demons on the church top began howling as their master was destroyed. They were now controlled by another force—one which could not be reckoned—Sabnock. With a quick gesture his instructions were clear, destroy the humans.

Brigitte knew that there was not much time as she anointed Father O’ Riordan as she had been taught. The prophecy was being fulfilled.

“We can stand together, Father. We are strong enough to take him. I knew it the minute I met Daniel. I was once told that a holy man, a lady and a knight would stand together and destroy Sabnock. Now is our chance.”

“Your children, Brigitte. Where are they?” asked Daniel.

“They are safe with their father. Have no fear, they have inherited their mothers gift.”

As she looked past Daniel she saw Greg gently place his coat over the young girl, Shelly, who was now at peace with her savior. He wiped a tear from his eye, and asked “What can I do Brigitte to help?”

“Bring everyone to the farside of the church. And when there, pray together and remain there no matter what you see, and hear. Tell my children and husband I love them. Go quickly, before it is too late.”

He moved quickly to the back of the church ushering them all into a vestibule. Please, God, he was thinking, let your will be done.

Sabnock knew Bael would be destroyed, he was weak and it was expected. The time had come to begin the end. It must be now before they grow strong. He entered the church through the gaping hole in its rooftop, casting eager minions aside. Sabnock came down hard and fast.

Father O’ Riordan’s wavering soul was overwhelmed from the sight. The beast was bent on destruction, and his own mortality eclipsed his feeble mind. If psychosis made a sound an echoing SNAP could have been heard by everyone in the church as the priest watched, frozen, as the final moments of his life unfolded. His faith had never been strong and in the end it served him not at all.

Sabnock descended, plucking Father O’ Riordan’s head neatly off his shoulders in one clean swoop. The fear Sabnock had come to grow strong upon did not flow from the

others. The reliance upon their faith was growing faster than expected. Without the empowerment of hate and fear, he must regroup.

Daniel could not believe what he saw. His feelings were numb. Shouldn't he feel horrified, sick, upset, or even angry? All he felt was calm. Standing along with Brigitte his inner peace had grown. He gripped Brigitte's hand harder and knew she was feeling the same. They were feeding off one another's serenity just as Sabnock was trying to feed from human fear. Together, they walked down the steps of the altar through the blood of the priest who had preached many sermons from this very spot. They held hands, and raised their arms in unison, approaching the beast.

Sabnock could not understand, these humans wanted to die? Why did they not run? Where was the fear, the hate, the anger-all the emotions he needed to be strong. It was the fear that made the kill so sweet. He would kill them anyway, he decided, such foolish humans. He stood at full height, and swooped in to finish them.

Daniel and Brigitte were lifted by a higher power protecting them as they ascended into the air on a collision course with Sabnock. If Father O' Riordan had been alive to witness the impact he would have never again doubted the purity of faith. With their hands held, and arms outstretched the couple steadily rose to meet the rapidly dropping Sabnock.

Bright white rays filled the church at the moment of impact. The remaining jagged edges of stained glass protruding from window frames reflected blues, greens, reds brilliantly streaming outward.

Carol shielded her eyes and uttered a cry. A low guttural scream was heard, hollow and distant. The unholy sound small compared with the white glow cast in all directions. She turned to Greg, who was shielding his eyes with a forearm and put her arm around his waist.

The children began to chant. Their father, aware of what was happening, started to run toward his wife. Greg caught his arm as he stood, "If you go with her, who will they have to raise them? You must be strong, they are doing this for you, for them, for all of us." They squinted toward the now dying light, the outstretched arms of the couple at the center no longer visible.

Daniel and Brigitte were at peace, and felt nothing. Sabnock had raced toward them, and then, at the moment his swipe should have cut them each into halves, a force stronger than his own stopped his deathblow mere inches from its delivery. At that very instant, an overwhelming radiant glow from an intense white light engulfed him, engulfed everything, and he was powerless to change it. With an unholy growl, Sabnock was gone.

For Daniel and Brigitte, the church was gone too. They had become one with the brilliance of the white light and ascended upon it.



The prophecy had been foretold. Sabnock and his armies had risen and destroyed the earth. But, they hadn't destroyed humanity. They could rebuild that which was lost. And they could start again, Greg released Donald's shoulder, Carol stepped up to embrace Donald. And, they would remember.