

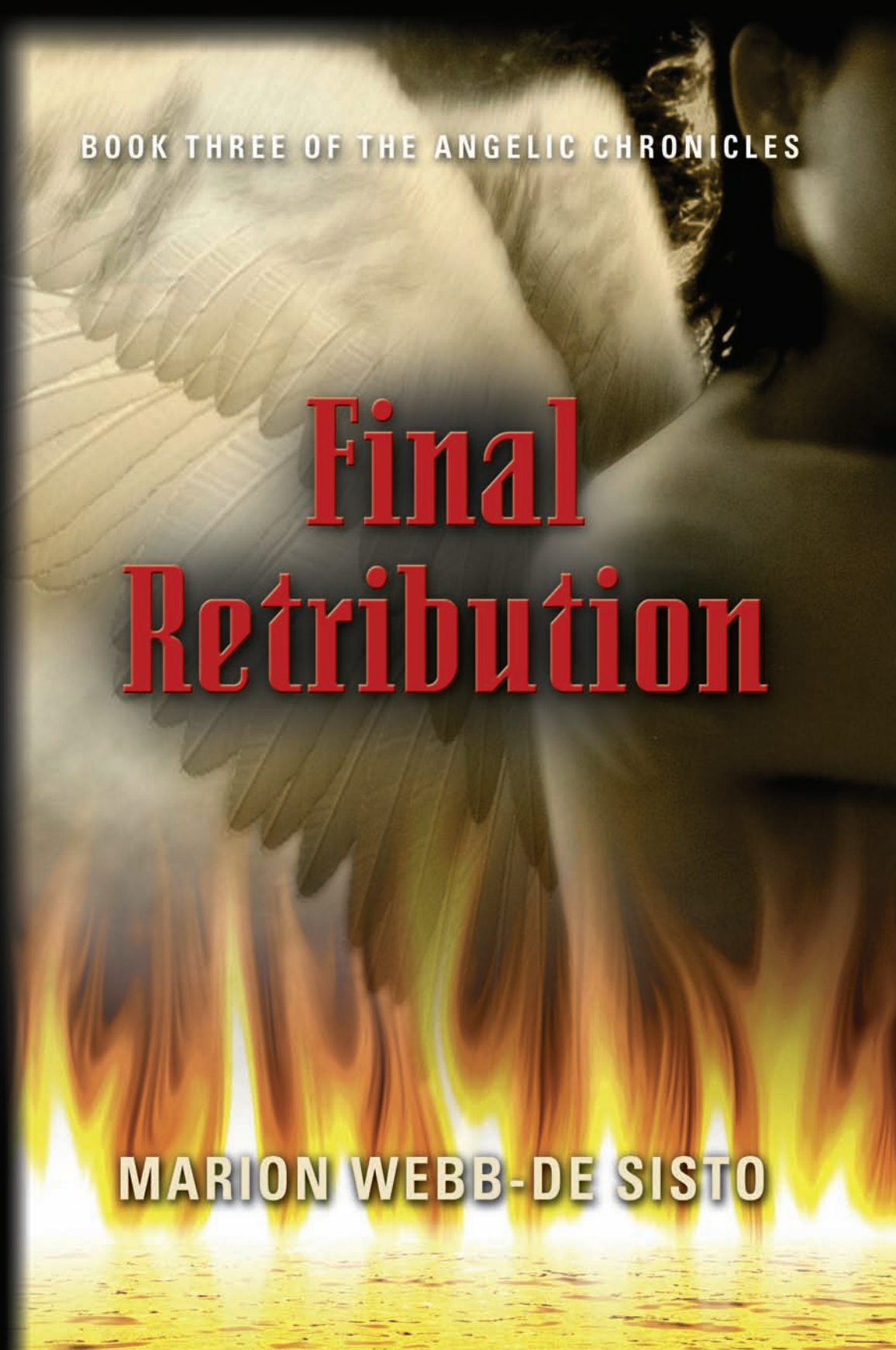
Life as the powerful ruler of Abbadon is becoming intolerable for Samael. The exiled archangel is lonely, embittered and bored. He has lost the ones he held dear and has only fallen angels, demons and tormented humans for constant companions. Yet into this hellish existence comes the beautiful and compassionate Angel Manah. Will she deny the increasing love she feels for this condemned soul, or can he persuade her to join him in endless damnation?

Final Retribution: Book Three of the Angelic Chronicles

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BOOK THREE OF THE ANGELIC CHRONICLES

Final Retribution

MARION WEBB-DE SISTO

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Chapter Six

The private chamber held little interest for Manah. Now that she was feeling fully recovered she had wandered around it, hoping to find something that would hold her attention until the first archangel returned. There was the sugilite bed with several plump cushions of various sizes and a small table was positioned next to it. The only other piece of furniture was a chair in the center of the room. It was placed on top of a thin rug-type covering that concealed a large section of the amethyst floor. The entrance archway was sealed by a door that she knew none but Lord Samael could open, thus, she was confined to the room during his absence. The one solitary object she had found in the chamber was a small obsidian mirror, placed on the bedside table. Manah knew the purpose of this viewing device. Lady Malkura had told her about it when she first discovered that the first-born archangel was using it to watch her. It was obvious Lord Samael was continuing to observe her mistress with the help of the mirror even though their close relationship had ended. The angel decided she should keep this information to herself when she returned to the inner levels of the life force spiral. Knowing the Lord of Abbadon had not abandoned his obsession for the one he loved would only further upset her mistress.

Manah settled herself back on the resting cot, sitting up and relaxing against one large cushion that she had positioned between her back and the wall immediately behind the head of the bed. She was bored and the room offered nothing to engage her attention. The seraph also had no idea when Lord Samael would return or what his mood might be. She trusted he would not continue to confine her to this chamber once he saw how her life force essence was fully restored. He would know she had kept her promise and should allow her to return to the boundary line. Perhaps he would send one of his angels with her to ensure her safety? Or would he accompany her to the boundary himself? Manah was uncertain whether she wanted that to happen.

She also suddenly realized that taking her leave of the first archangel would be difficult no matter when it took place. Having seen him again, the pure essence angel now knew she felt even more drawn

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to him and had missed being in his company. Oh, that was an unsettling thought. He was the evil Lord of Abbadon, who was proud, devious and cruel. Was she becoming enchanted by his charismatic nature, as many of his follower angels were similarly captivated? Manah gave a little shudder and told herself it was imperative for her to leave the palace as quickly as possible. On Lord Samael's return, she would demand safe passage back to the boundary. A wry smile graced her face. She could well-imagine his response to any angelic insistence, whether it came from her or another angel. No, ordering the proud archangel to do anything was futile; she would need to sufficiently rouse his anger so that he would want her to leave Abbadon. Yet how could she do that without making him so angry that he would attack her? The memory of her dream was ever present and she speculated whether Lord Michael might strike his brother as a consequence of harm being done to her.

Manah sat staring at the wall that was at a distance in front of her. It was similar to all the other walls of the palace, opaque white in color with beautiful jewels dotted here and there. It was obvious Lord Samael possessed a love of beauty; his home was constructed from magnificent quartz crystals and was filled with brilliant gemstones. The abode was a splendid edifice, created as an expression of his deep love for Lady Malkura. He had constructed it while believing they would live there together.

A rebellious thought entered the angel's consciousness. What if she adorned the room's walls with her own thought-paintings? Would that make the first archangel sufficiently angry to command her to leave? If, when he viewed her artwork, she stated that she considered her paintings to be an improvement on his creation, surely this would annoy him? With the power of her consciousness and without further thought, Manah began to sweep strips of color across the wall.

The colorful swathes masked the sparkle of the gems and she presumed this would also irritate Lord Samael. Yet she wanted to be certain his temper was aroused, therefore, Manah decided to create an actual image in her painting. A large likeness of the first-born archangel began to emerge within the many-colored bands. The face was scowling and the purple eyes blazed. The angel added the horns

and tail that she had seen him display when summoned to the council meeting. Now he resembled a less-than-light being, but something was not quite in keeping with the concept she was trying to depict. Manah realized it was his wings. They were magnificent appendages that belied his other demonic attributes.

With a thought she erased the angelic wings and replaced them with two expanses of scaly skin stretched across boney structures. The angel painted them smaller than his actual wings and gave them a decidedly unwholesome appearance. Manah had listened to the many times repeated descriptions of demons encountered by warrior angels, and she had also viewed their distasteful form when she recently saw the two flying in front of her. To make sure he would recognize the illustration as being of him and not of a demon, she detailed him holding his crystal wand with its three destructive light rays. Manah also daubed his innate colors of maldor and silver throughout the whole figure. Her artwork would surely anger the proud Lord of Abbadon.

Now she turned her attention to the wall in which the entrance to the room was located. She would decorate the door first with streaks of differing colors, and then cover the wall with other designs. Manah's thoughts aimed a splash of red across the door just as, to her surprise, it opened. A section of the bright color landed on the bare chest of the first archangel as he stood there and, being unable to stifle her amusement, she giggled.

Samael looked down at his chest and remarked, "Well, Angel Manah, if you prefer this color to my maldor hue, then I shall be happy to adopt it when I am in your company. Being Gabriel's color, it is not one that I admire, but I shall give way to your wishes."

"Oh, Lord Samael, I do apologize." She quickly expunged the thought-paint from him. "I was just in the process of decorating the door when you opened it."

The first archangel walked through the open archway, turned and closed the entry device while looking at the splattered redness on it. "You wish to change the appearance of this door that I created, angel?"

Remembering her need to make him angry, she replied, "I believe I am improving your handiwork, my lord. I consider myself to be gifted in the art of thought-painting."

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Samael's attention moved to the wall where his likeness was exhibited. He stared at it and Manah waited for his volatile response. She could not see his face because his back was turned to her. His body was rigid and she was certain his rage must be rising. Suddenly, a chuckle exploded from him. He swung round to face her and declared:

“Angel Manah, you are a delight. You see my true nature and yet have come back to visit me. I am enthralled by your perverse disposition.”

This was not the reaction she had expected. Lost for an appropriate answer, she could only offer, “I was also bored while waiting for your return and I decided to thought-paint the walls of this chamber to amuse myself.”

He walked over to the sugilite bed, sat down on the edge and leaned close to Manah. “You are, indeed, a gifted angel. Perhaps I shall allow you to thought-paint in the other rooms of my palace.” His beautiful eyes showed no hint of anger; his expression was purely one of amusement.

The archangel's closeness was most disturbing. His only attire was some type of clothing that Manah had never seen before. It encircled his waist, his hips and also covered each leg separately and downwards to just below the knee. His upper body was bare and she suddenly felt a strong desire to touch him. Lord Samael's lithe, maldor form was very pleasing to her and that was extremely perturbing. She looked away from the archangel, desperately trying to think of some other way to make him angry. The obsidian mirror came into her line of vision and a new idea occurred to Manah. She expressed:

“My lord, surely you know my mistress has given her love to Lord Seriel? You must abandon your fixation of her.” She pointed to the mirror to clarify her remark.

Samael's gaze moved to where she had indicated, and then he looked back at her. All sign of amusement was gone from his face. His eyes seemed to be penetrating right into her soul. He questioned, “What do you know about that object?”

Manah shifted uncomfortably under his piercing stare. “My mistress told me you use it to watch her.”

“I did, but that is of no concern to you.” He moved his body back from her, yet continued his intent gaze.

Should she push the matter a little further in the hope his temper would erupt? Yes, she must dare to do so. “You are being less than honest with me, Lord Samael. You did and *do* watch Lady Malkura. That is obvious.”

Finally, his unnerving scrutiny ended. He gave his attention to the mirror, picked it up and looked at it. An expression of utter sadness dominated his face. “No, Angel Manah, for once I am being honest. I used to observe Malkura, but I no longer watch her. I have no desire to see her and Seriel enjoying each other’s company and love.” He placed the mirror back on the table.

“They are not yet together, my lord, or at least were not when I began my journey here. So I can well-imagine you have continued to watch my mistress. You must accept the truth that the love you shared with Lady Malkura has now ended.”

Manah was, once again, subjected to the soul-searching stare. The first archangel positioned himself immediately in front of her and demanded:

“Are you trying to make me angry, Angel Manah? I have told you I do not use the mirror to look at her.”

Expecting one more remark would definitely achieve her intention, the seraph asked, “Then why is it here, Lord Samael? Surely you would have discarded the mirror if you no longer consult it?”

No raging response was made. Instead, a disarming smile and a quick shake of the head were expressed. The archangel grasped her hands and explained, “There is another who now interests me. The mirror shows me what she does and where she goes.”

Manah was frustrated and she was also beginning to feel even more disconcerted. Her efforts to make the archangel angry were failing and his closeness was very troubling. She tried to free her hands, but he held them tightly. In an attempt to break the sense of intimacy, which was building between them, she stated, “You must be referring to Angel Kokabel. She is your consort and, thus, you are interested in her actions when she is not with you.”

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The first archangel expelled a sharp laugh. He squeezed her hands, and then brought them up to his lips and gently kissed each one. “What is this game you are playing, my sweet Manah? Kokabel does not enchant me. I only keep her here to annoy Azazel. You must know that I am interested in you.”

Once more, Manah tried to retrieve her hands and this time he released them. She queried, “Then I am the one you watch, my lord? To secretly observe my mistress, myself, or anyone is most ignoble. Why do you engage in such a dishonorable activity?”

“I am the Lord of Abaddon and can do whatever I so wish. You may think it is shameful, but I choose to see with whom you are keeping company, to know whether there is an angel you hold dear. I wish to learn more about you.” He stood up from the bed and walked over to the wall that displayed his image. Indicating the painting with his hand, he continued, “You decorated this wall because you were bored. I frequently feel jaded, therefore, I watch you.”

The pure essence angel was lost for a reply. His final thought-words presented a reasonable argument even though she considered his clandestine viewing to be unsavory. She moved to one side of the bed and swung her legs over the edge. Manah needed to be gone from both the palace and Lord Samael’s unsettling presence. She stood up and trusted her inner turmoil was not evident as she informed, “I am fully recovered from the tree’s assault and I must return to Lord Michael’s level. Thank you for rescuing me and also for allowing me to recuperate in your home. I have kept my promise and now I wish to take my leave of you, Lord Samael.”

The archangel came back to her and placed his hands on her shoulders. Looking down into her face he revealed, “This has not been the exchange I wanted with you, Manah. I have frequently given thought to your return and have imagined us enjoying each other’s company and becoming close. Do not go, I have much to share with you.”

His request was tempting, especially while he was standing so near to her. Yet she must not succumb to this handsome archangel. His evil behavior had devastated her mistress and he had shown cruelty to two of his siblings and many angels. Once she was away from him she

would be able to ignore the attraction his closeness was arousing. Manah asked:

“If I refuse, will you hold me as a prisoner in the manner that you did before?”

Samael’s hands moved downwards from her shoulders and his arms encircled her waist. He pulled her close to him and answered, “I would be happy to imprison you forever if I thought it was what you wanted, sweet Manah. However, I know you think of me as being wicked, therefore, I shall endeavor to demonstrate a kinder disposition. If you wish to leave, I shall not prevent you, but I *will* try to convince you to stay. And be warned, my little angel, I can be very persuasive.” He bent down to her level and kissed her forehead.

Manah experienced a new emotion. Passion was stirring inside her. This was absolutely not what she wanted or needed, she must put some distance between herself and Lord Samael. She struggled to be free and demanded, “Release me, my lord. I cannot tolerate your attempts of false fondness.”

His arms fell to his sides and he stepped back from her. “Your thought-words are like daggers, Manah. I am deeply wounded by them.”

“I apologize, my lord, but surely you can understand that I know how deceitful you can be? I also have no desire to gain the affection of the evil Lord of Abbadon.”

“You may have no desire to do so, but you *are* becoming important to me. Is that of no consequence? You once told me you had not yet found love. Has that changed? Is there an angel who has stolen your affection?”

“Your questions are unseemly, my lord. Please allow me to return to the boundary line.”

The archangel stared at her and it was impossible for Manah to know what he was thinking. His facial expression was inscrutable and his unfathomable eyes held no clue. For an instant he maintained this impenetrable look, and then a beaming smile emerged. “Ah, my sweet Manah, I am your obedient servant, but let me first show you a gift I have created for you. Wait here!” He turned away from her and was

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gone through the entrance. The door closed behind him and the angel knew she would have to remain in the chamber until his return.

Before she had a chance to wonder where Lord Samael had gone, he was standing in front of her once more. His sheathed crystal wand was now slung across his bare shoulder and she knew he had transported himself back into the room by way of its power. He tapped the three crystal points and remarked:

“My trusty light wand was in the other chamber that is sealed by a door. Perchance you remember asking me about both inaccessible rooms? You now know what lies inside this one and perhaps I shall give you entrance into the other.”

Was he trying to delay her departure? There was no gift in his hand. The only item he had brought back with him was his light wand. An alarming thought suddenly overwhelmed her. She stated, “My lord, I see no gift, but you now have your crystal weapon with you. Do you intend to strike me with it if I insist on leaving? I know many angels have suffered from its burning rays.”

The first archangel looked shocked, but was his expression genuine or feigned? He declared, “Yet again you injure me, Angel Manah. I have no intention of harming you. The only reason my crystal wand is with me is because I wish to take you somewhere by means of its energy force.” He stepped close to her, grasped her arm and stated: “Close your eyes.”

She ignored him and he placed his hand across her face, blocking her sight. “It is a surprise so I do not want you to look until I tell you to do so.” His thoughts paused, and then to his wand he ordered:

“Take us to the new dome!”

They were going to a dome? Manah knew all about the one in which extracted souls were interned. Was there yet another one where he would imprison her soul once he had removed it from inside her body? Panic and fear seized the angel and she had to close her eyes as the crystal’s forceful energy surrounded her.

Instantly, the archangel informed, “We are here.” He removed his hand from her face and added, “You may open your eyes, Manah.”

She wanted to keep them closed, but her natural sense of curiosity was gaining control of them. If this place was to be her prison, she would at least know how it appeared before she no longer possessed eyesight. The angel peered through half-closed eyelids at first, and then opened them wide. What she saw in front of and all around her was nothing that she could have imagined. They were both standing on a ground covering of green that had clumps of flowers dotted throughout. At a distance and in front of them were gigantic structures that resembled jagged crystals and they seemed to be fused together. Toward the one end of this enormous wall-type object there was movement from something Manah had never seen before. A torrent of liquid was cascading down from the top and spilling into yet more liquid that lay in an expanse beneath it. She could hear gushing and splashing sounds. They made her feel exuberant even in the midst of her fear. To what unknown area had the first archangel brought her? She questioned:

“Where are we, my lord?”

He released his hold on her arm so that his hand could now close around hers. “This is my gift to you, Angel Manah. Does it please you?”

“I do not know. I have never seen such a place before.” She pointed to the enormous wall. “What is that structure? Is it crystalline? And what is that moving thing?” She stared at the tumbling liquid.

“Those are rocks, Manah, and they are similar to crystals. That, which moves, is water. Is it not delightful?”

“Your imagination astonishes me, Lord Samael. How did you ever conceive such a unique creation?”

“You flatter me, angel. This is just a semblance of what can be seen on Terra. That planet has plentiful rocks and a vastness of water. When it issues from the rocks in that manner, it is known as a waterfall.”

She bent down, touched the green covering and asked, “Is this also on Terra?”

“Yes, it is grass and, of course, you will recognize what is growing within it. I have watched you sit among flowers in the inner levels and I believe you enjoy looking at them. That is why I have

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created these for you.” He gently pulled her hand and invited, “Come and explore my gift. It is a place of tranquility and beauty.”

As Manah allowed herself to be guided toward the sparkling pool, which lay beneath the towering rocks, she replied, “I am surprised you would give any thought to such a setting, my lord. Surely it is much too peaceful for your lightning-swift curiosity?”

“My thoughts are not always darting incessantly. There are occasion, little angel, when I enjoy feeling relaxed and surrounded by exquisite items.”

This was certainly in contrast to his more prevalent moods of anger and aggression. Manah was now convinced the first-born archangel was an enigmatic being and the realization merely compounded her conflicting feelings toward him.

When they reached the point where the grassy bank ended, she was fascinated by the water’s pristine quality and movement. She stared at it in amazement.

“There are creatures in there.” Samael informed. “If you look closely, you will see them.”

The angel did as she was bid and quickly became aware of small animate beings that moved in all directions. They had narrow red, yellow and orange bodies, which possessed flowing elongations above, below and at the extremity. Their heads seemed to be part of their bodies with an eye on each side. She asked:

“Are they a type of daemon, my lord?”

“No, they are fish and they live in the bodies of water on Terra. Humans devour them.”

Manah put forward, “I have heard about demons doing that to daemons so surely humans do not behave like demons? They are merely extensions of angels and we do not devour anything.”

Lord Samael answered with a loud thought-laugh. “Humans are far inferior to angels. They are also quite foolish, believing my name is Lucifer.”

“How can that be?”

“Angel Lucifer has professed to be me, or should I say boasted that he is me, during his visits to Terra.”

“Have you punished him for that pretense, my lord?”

“No, I allow him to do it. I prefer to keep the humans unaware of my true identity.”

“That is most unfortunate for them, Lord Samael.”

“Do not waste your sympathy on those creatures. They do many things that would alarm and even disgust you, Angel Manah.”

“Yes, I have heard tales of violent conflicts between them. Of course, angels fight, but they can only injure each other, whereas I have been told that physical life will end when a human is greatly wounded.” She looked directly at the archangel and continued, “You appear to be quite knowledgeable about humans, Lord Samael. Do they interest you?”

Samael brushed a finger across her cheek and commented, “You ask too many questions, sweet Manah. I brought you here to please you and not to babble about the mediocre humans. It is sufficient for you to know that I have traveled to Terra on several occasions and I have replicated its rocks, grass and water in this dome for you to enjoy.”

“You have been to Terra? How is that possible, my lord?”

The first archangel grinned and asked, “Yet more questions, Manah? You will try my patience with your endless inquiries. I shall give you one more answer, and then the querying must cease. There is a portal within Abbadon, which gives me access to Avia and, once I have passed through it, I can journey to Terra or anywhere else in that universe.”

She wanted to ask questions about Avia, but decided that would probably enrage him. While she was in this dome from which only Lord Samael could release her, it was wise to heed his stipulation about any further queries. Manah replied, “I apologize for my questioning, I have an insatiable curiosity.”

“As do I and perhaps that is why I feel attracted to you. We both possess a similar trait.” He drew her close and thought-whispered, “If we should meld, we could discover all of our attributes, no matter whether similar or different.”

The inner turmoil returned to Manah. His intimate actions stirred feelings inside her that were powerful and engulfing, but she must remember he was the evil first archangel, born of the Source and

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yet cast out by it. She looked up at him and replied, “Pray do not make such a ludicrous suggestion, Lord Samael. I could never meld with you.”

He grinned wickedly. “Are you afraid my evil nature would taint your purity?”

“No, that is not the reason. The intimacy of melding should only be shared by those who are devoted to each other.”

His face moved close to hers. “Perhaps I possess such devotion for you, Angel Manah.”

She pushed herself away from him and stated, “As I told you before, I cannot abide your feigned displays of affection. What are you trying to accomplish? You must be attempting to manipulate me into doing something that you want.”

Samael nodded. “Indeed I am. Your companionship is what I seek and I intend to gain it. You are perceptive and I admire that quality, but be warned, I can be relentless.” He grasped her arm, again, and expressed, “Come! I have yet another gift for you.”

The first archangel led her to a low, flat rock. Two golden items of jewelry were placed on it. They looked identical except for size, one being larger than the other. He bent over the rock, lifted up the smaller piece and offered it to Manah, explaining:

“Here is an armband that I have fashioned for you.” He lifted her left hand toward him, slipped the golden band over it and moved the bangle along until he reached her upper arm. Samael positioned it there, stood back and asked, “Is it to your liking?”

The angel looked at the armband. It was created from a long, thick band of gold that wrapped twice around her arm and appeared to be a representation of a creature. There was a head with amethyst eyes and a long body that ended in a tail. Lines had been etched along the body and they formed an overall pattern. It was a stunning piece of jewelry. She replied:

“It is very beautiful, my lord, but now I have *more* questions for you. What creature does it represent?”

He smiled and replied, “I fashioned it to look like a snake, Manah. They exist on Terra and I am intrigued by them.”

She ran a finger along the golden body, feeling the indentation of the ridges. She asked, “Do snakes have this pattern on them?”

“I incised those lines to represent the scales that cover a snake’s body.” He picked up the other armlet, drew it over his left hand and placed it in the same position as the one that encircled the angel’s arm. “Now we possess matching jewelry, declaring our connection with each other.”

“Oh, if that is what they symbolize, I must remove it. I do not wish to have a connection with you, Lord Samael.” She began to pull the armlet back down with her other hand, but the archangel stopped her by covering her hand with his, and then repositioning the jewelry back in place. He stated:

“It is a gift, sweet Manah. I shall be greatly saddened if you do not wear it.” There was no sign of guile within his thought-words. He appeared to be sincere; therefore, she did not attempt to remove it again.

Samael drew his fingers through his long, maldor hair and stretched his arms above his head. He remarked, “Another resting phase is fast approaching. I am beginning to feel tired so shall we sleep here or in my private chamber?”

The thought of sleeping with the first-born archangel was definitely not to her liking even though she realized she was also growing weary. Manah suggested, “If you take me to the boundary line, I can sleep safely in Lord Michael’s domain.”

He shook his head and answered, “No, I am not yet ready to let you depart. We shall go to my room.” Before she could object, he stood close to her and must have silently instructed his light wand because she felt the rush of disturbing crystal energy. They were instantly gone from the dome and arrived back in his private chamber.

Now she was annoyed. It was obvious he intended to force her to stay. “My lord, are you going to hold me prisoner yet again?”

Ignoring her question he placed an arm around Manah and guided her toward the sugilite bed. “We shall sleep here together, and then decide how to amuse you when we awake. Perhaps I shall take you to view the universes. They are quite spectacular.”

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Manah's sharp reply was: "I have *already* seen them, Lord Samael."

"Yes, but you have not observed them from Abbadon. I am sure they appear different when viewed from Michael's level." He gently pushed her into a sitting position on the bed, took the holder containing his crystal wand from his shoulder and placed it on the table. Next, he stooped down and removed her sandals, stood back up and kicked off his own footwear. Then he sat down beside her and before she could stop him he had moved her and himself into a lying down posture.

Manah wanted desperately to get up, but the draw of slumber was already beginning to overtake her. She attempted a weak protest: "I have no desire to sleep with you. Please allow me to leave, my lord."

Placing an arm around her, the archangel informed, "It is too late to go anywhere because sleep is upon us. You must rest with me, sweet Manah."

"Cease addressing me in that manner. I do not like it... and I want..." Her remaining thought-words were lost as sleep claimed the pure essence angel.

Chapter Seven

As soon as Seriel passed through the disconnected crystalline barrier, he directed his light wand to take him to Na'ag's cavern. Immediately, he arrived in front of the crystal cave and saw that the entrance wall was firmly in place. He knew he could pass through it with the power of his wand, but he felt it was courteous to announce his presence and wait to be invited inside. The Lord of the Seventh Essence asked, "My dear friend Na'ag, are you in your home? It is I, Seriel."

There was this instant response from the dragon: "My lord, what a wonderful surprise. Pray enter my home."

Seriel passed with ease through the calcite wall and found Na'ag waiting for him. The creature looked just as magnificent as he had always done with his body encased in golden scales and crimson wings that were folded against his back. What could be considered a smile was dominating his otherwise fierce face. Na'ag declared:

"I am astonished to see you, but also extremely happy. What has caused you to return to Abbadon, my lord? I thought by now you would be within the inner levels and reunited with Lady Malkura."

"That is what I was hoping to do, yet it would appear there is an act I must perform before I can be with her."

"Come sit down and tell me about that act." The dragon indicated a raised section of crystal, which was shaped roughly like a chair. "I am also curious to hear all about your adventures in Lord Michael's domain."

Seriel sat down and felt warmth penetrating up through his body. He remembered the comfort of this bright warm cavern. It eased the memory of the freezing environment that was just outside the dragon's home. He offered, "I am certain you will find satisfaction in what I have to tell you, Na'ag. *You* are the one who made me aware of how I was not completely true to my nature."

Na'ag settled in front of Seriel, resting his head on his front clawed feet. "I did, indeed, point out your reluctance to fully express your feelings, but what bearing does that have on your return to Abbadon?"

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“Let me explain, Na’ag. I was in the Gateway of Forgiveness, reviewing and eventually forgiving all of my misdeeds, and then I expected to move into Uriel’s level. However, certain transgressions, which Samael had perpetrated, kept displaying themselves in front of me. I could not understand the significance of these scenes, therefore, I asked the Source to give me the answer. Our parent told me to remember what you had put forward, and I eventually realized I must come back here and fully express to my brother my anger at, and disgust of, his cruel and evil actions.”

“Ah, I understand. It will be a cathartic experience, but why have you come to see me before confronting Lord Samael? Do you want my help? I would be happy to singe the proud Lord of Abaddon.” A growl rumbled in the dragon’s throat.

Seriel leaned forwards and patted the skin between the two large horns near the top of Na’ag’s head. “Oh no, my trusty friend, I must face Samael alone, but you *can* be of help to me. I am here to consult your knowledge of minerals. When fighting in Avia, I have frequently used a shield for protection. However, a crystal wand can cut through any such metallic object so I have not brought one with me. I could, of course, ask my wand to place an energy barrier around me, but it is cumbersome to have it repeatedly in place, and then removed. My light wand cannot be discharged while it is projecting a barrier.”

“Then you intend fighting with Lord Samael?”

“I do not wish to fight him, but we will surely do battle. When I last saw him he stated that he would challenge me on our next meeting. So I have come to learn whether there is a stronger mineral than our quartz light wands. Is there one they cannot pierce?”

“There is more than one. Topaz, corundum and diamond are all more durable.” The golden beast paused in thought, and then continued, “I believe corundum would serve you well and I can provide you with such a shield.”

Seriel expressed, “I have always meant to ask how you create crystals. We archangels do so by touching Source tears, but I have seen you reveal them with your fiery breath.”

Na’ag stood up and explained, “Being formed from an archangel’s essence, I also have that power, but I do not need to touch

the tears. As you know, I came into existence when Lord Gabriel's light wand burned you and spilled your essence. The power of his crystal weapon gave me the ability to manifest minerals by merely exhaling and projecting the intention of producing them."

The seventh archangel observed, "A dragon is truly a remarkable creature."

Na'ag inclined his head and expressed, "Thank you, my lord. Now watch while I create your shield." His mouth opened and expelled a blast of fiery breath away from the archangel. A large red shield formed in front of Na'ag. It was oval in shape and its depth of color was even deeper than the dragon's wings. This crystal creation shone brightly, reflecting the cavern's calcite walls. Then Na'ag projected a laser-like beam from his mouth and it etched a design in the center of the shield. It was of a dragon rampant. He grasped the shield and handed it to Seriel. "Here is your ruby shield, Lord Seriel. No quartz light wand can penetrate it."

The archangel took the shield and gazed in wonder at it. He turned it over and saw that it had a sturdy strap at the back with which he could hold it. "It is magnificent, Na'ag." Seriel linked his arm through the band and positioned the shield against his body. "Look how well it protects me. It covers all of my body."

"It is exactly what you need to overthrow Lord Samael. The light rays from his crystal wand cannot breach its density."

A sudden thought occurred to Seriel. "It gives me an advantage over him, but that is not what I want. If we must fight, it should be on equal standing. Is it possible for you to create a second corundum shield?"

Na'ag closed his eyes and shook his head from side to side. "Why does that question not surprise me? You have always been fair-minded, my lord, but when dealing with your fist-born brother you should lay aside that noble virtue. Lord Samael would not hesitate to have the advantage over you." He turned his body away from Seriel and stated, "I presume you want it to be just as large as the other one?"

"Yes, Na'ag, I do. It must give the same protection as this one."

The dragon blasted a second shield into existence. It was similar in size and shape to the ruby one, but its color was a deep blue. Na'ag

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suggested, "If this shield is for Lord Samael, shall I draw a demon rampant on it?"

Seriel grinned. "You are incorrigible, Na'ag. No, it should have the exact same design as the first one." He placed the ruby shield down on the calcite floor next to him.

The laser-like beam shot from the creature's mouth and a replica of the original dragon rampant etching appeared on the blue shield. Na'ag stated, "There, it is done." He took hold of his second creation and gave it to the archangel.

Seriel inspected the shield and asked, "Why is it blue and not red? Are both shields formed from corundum?"

"Yes, but this one is made from sapphire, my lord. I thought you would prefer yours to appear slightly different from the one for your brother. I am quite sure Lord Samael would wish to own something that was unique."

"You understand him well, Na'ag." Seriel put the blue shield on top of the red one and added, "I am uncertain which of these two protective items Samael would prefer to have because neither of these colors are what he favors. If I let him choose the shield he wants, that should solve the matter."

"That will only be possible if he gives you the opportunity to offer him the choice. He may just aim his light rays in your direction as soon as he sees you." The dragon sat down, facing Seriel and stared intently at him. "I know you do not want my help, but will you at least allow me to watch what happens? I can hover above and remain invisible. Then if Lord Samael gains some unfair advantage, I can come to your aid."

"I am reluctant to agree, but your offer may prove to be fortunate." Seriel gave a rueful smile and explained, "If I am greatly injured, I may need you to carry me back to the safety of your cavern."

"And as that is a real possibility, I insist on observing what transpires between you." Na'ag stood up and asked, "Do you wish to confront Lord Samael now? If not, I am certain Belu and Toa will want to exchange thoughts with you."

"I am feeling ambivalent about when to face Samael. A part of me wants to do it immediately. Once done, I can journey back to the

Gateway of Forgiveness, and then be with Malkura. However, knowing that a fight will ensue between us, I would prefer to confront him after the next resting phase. In that way I should be well-rested and fully alert for doing battle.” The seventh archangel rose to his feet and added, “For now, I would be happy to meet with the humans. Are they here?”

“Yes, they remain in my home in order to keep them safe from the demons. I extended this cavern so that they now have their own living space. We frequently meet and exchange our thoughts. I tell them what is happening in Abbadon and they entertain me with stories of what their lives were like on Terra. Let us spend a while with them until the resting phase approaches. You can delight us with an account of what you have done and where you have been while journeying through Lord Michael’s domain.”

“That sounds pleasing to me, Na’ag. I shall go to Samael’s palace after the resting phase has ended.” Seriel followed behind the dragon as the creature led him through passageways of creamy white calcite. They were on their way to the section of the cavern where Belu and Toa were sheltering.

When Samael awoke he discovered Manah nestled against his bare chest. She felt pleasingly warm and an unusual sense of peace enveloped him. He knew that on waking she would pull away from him, but at least while she remained this close he could enjoy her presently submissive posture. Holding her reminded him of being with Malkura, yet there were differences. The Shekinah had the ability to steady his quicksilver temperament, but this one seemed to excite it. He had rarely felt anger against Malkura, but Manah could quickly send him into a rage with a forthright remark. Just like her mistress, the angel abhorred the actions he had taken, and yet he felt certain she could understand his motivation. Malkura could not comprehend it.

Both the Shekinah and her seraph possessed the same eighth essence, but they aroused dissimilar feelings within him. He believed Malkura needed protection from almost everything; she was too gentle

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and peace-loving to withstand conflict from others. He had begrudgingly realized that Abbadon was not an appropriate place for her even if she had been willing to stay with him. In contrast, Angel Manah appeared to be much more able to confront adversity. She was not intimidated by the powerful Lord of the First Essence and had faced the dangers of Abbadon in order to keep her promise. This pure essence angel carried no weapon, but he knew her thought-words could cut deeper than any sword or dagger. Of course, being unarmed she could not prevent his domain's sinister plant life and demons attacking her, yet he would make certain she never traveled alone while in Abbadon. Her curiosity was also a trait to which he could relate. He imagined them having discussions about matters that intrigued him, such as what lay beyond the Abyss of Chaos. Since the life force spiral was contained within the Abyss, then surely Chaos must also be confined inside something else?

Manah stirred, slightly shifting her position away from him. Samael gently eased her back against his chest and she sighed audibly. He wished they could remain this close indefinitely, but she would soon be wide awake and wanting to leave his palace. If he could delay the angel's departure, that would give him the opportunity to offer more gifts and use his charm to persuade her to stay. His previous suggestion of a visit to the universes might prove helpful. While there, a thought exchange about what existed in Avia would surely interest Manah and postpone her return to the inner levels. Then they could go back to the palace and he would further ply, with jewels and beautiful gowns, his desire to keep her with him. Perhaps he should offer some wine? That would be something new for her to experience and might also arouse her curiosity about other items that he had brought back from Terra. Yes, he was sure he could occupy Manah's attention until the next resting phase. Afterwards, he would attempt to meld with this intriguing angel, and then he should fully understand her nature and know exactly how to keep her with him. Samael closed his eyes and imagined they were two beings who held a deep affection for each other.

The archangel's romantic thoughts quickly ended as Manah moved, once more, and opened her eyes. She stared at him for an

instant, and then thought-muttered, “Oh, no.” Her hands came up to his chest and she pushed herself away from him. “My lord, you should not hold me when I am asleep, it is most upsetting.”

“Well, Manah, while asleep you chose to snuggle against me. When I awoke I found you resting close to my body.”

“You cannot be certain I was the one who moved. Perhaps, while sleeping, you drew next to me.”

Samael smiled. “You have an answer for everything, my little angel.”

“I am not your little angel.” She sat up and moved to the side of the bed. “I must go now to the boundary line. Will you send one of your angels to accompany me so that I can be protected?”

“I do not want you to leave. You are my guest and I would have you think of me as a generous and accommodating host. We shall go and view the universes.” Samael got up and in place of his breeches he manifested a tunic, a heavy cloak and calf-length boots. Then he retrieved his sheathed light wand, walked around the bottom of the bed and stood in front of Manah. “It is exceedingly cold in that area, thus, you will need these.” A pair of warm boots and a luxurious cloak appeared in his hands. The latter was composed of a white fur-like material. It was the archangel’s representation of animal skins he had seen on a planet in Avia.

The angel stretched forwards and touched the cloak. She asked, “What is the substance of this cloak, my lord? It feels so soft and warming.”

Samael silently congratulated himself on having already distracted Manah from her intention of leaving. “It is similar to the skin of some animals on a planet named Gomothe in the Andromeda galaxy within Avia. This covering is known as fur.” He grasped the angel’s hand and pulled her into a standing position. Then, placing his hands on her shoulders, he turned her around so that her back was facing him. He slipped the cloak under her wings, up and over her shoulders and fastened the clip below her neck. “There, it is one more gift from me.”

Facing him, once more, Manah expressed, “Thank you, Lord Samael, it is a wonderful gift, but now I must...”

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The archangel interrupted her with: “Sit down and I shall fit these boots onto your feet.”

The angel remained standing and replied, “I am capable of dressing myself and I do not need your help.”

Samael gave her a gentle push and she involuntarily sat back down on the edge of the bed. He reached for one of her legs and she kicked out at him. He grabbed her foot before it struck him and, bending down, he kissed her toes. Next, he picked up first one boot, and then the other and slipped them onto her feet. “Now you are ready to view the universes with me.”

“My lord, I have told you that I wish to go back to Lord Michael’s terrain. As I previously explained, I have seen the universes so it is pointless for me to view them again.” Manah stood up and it was obvious from the expression on her face that she was angry.

“But you have not seen them while in my company. There is much that I can tell you about them.” The first archangel put his arm around the angel’s waist and silently ordered his crystal wand to take them to the edge of the universes.

Immediately, they were standing in front of the vast spheres that were filled with light and movement. Manah broke away from him and declared:

“Please do not do so again. Your light wand gives an unsettling sensation when transporting us. I dislike it, especially when you have not warned me that we are about to be taken somewhere.”

“Apologies, sweet Manah, I was just in a hurry to bring you here.” He moved next to her and, pointing to first one universe, and then another, he indicated, “That one is Qor and is comprised of anti-matter while that one is Trandel which is similar to Avia, but its energy is projective. Over here we have Rixx and next to it Cam and, of course, that one is Avia to which I...”

The angel interjected, “Lord Samael, I want to go to the boundary. Please take me there.”

Ignoring her request, the archangel continued, “The size of the universes is deceptive. From here they appear to be quite large, but once inside you realize their vastness is incomprehensible. Even for me it would be an enormous task to traverse the entirety of one.” He turned

to look at Manah and discovered that she was no longer standing beside him. Instinct prompted Samael to look up and he saw her rapidly flying away from him. He rose up after her and, being an archangel, his wings were more powerful than hers. Samael was soon able to reach her. He positioned himself in front of and facing Manah, causing her movement to change from flying to hovering. She attempted to dart to one side of him, but he grasped her arms and thought-yelled:

“Have you no sense of danger? Demons can pounce upon you if you travel alone.”

“I am well-aware of that, my lord. Once more, I am asking you to take me to the boundary, but if you will not, then I must journey there by myself.”

Samael’s lightning consciousness gave the angel a ready answer: “If I take you there, the sentries will presume you are now in league with me and they will refuse to give you entry.” He was able to convey this thought with sincerity because he knew it held some truth. “Let us return to my palace and I shall direct Belial to escort you to the boundary. He is brave and would attack any demon that came close to you.” The archangel hoped the catalyst angel was somewhere other than near to his home so that he could take Manah into the palace and offer the pretence of sending Semyaza to look for Belial.

“If I agree, do not tell your crystal to take us there, I cannot abide its disturbing energy. I also do not trust you to direct it to set us down outside the palace. You would order our destination to be somewhere inside your home and you would keep the entrance closed so that I could not leave.”

“You already know me too well, Angel Manah, and are a real challenge to my devious thinking.” He released his hold on one of her arms, but continued to grasp the other as he moved to her side. “We shall fly back there and land on the portico.”

The two angelic beings began to wing their way to the crystalline palace.

Life as the powerful ruler of Abbadon is becoming intolerable for Samael. The exiled archangel is lonely, embittered and bored. He has lost the ones he held dear and has only fallen angels, demons and tormented humans for constant companions. Yet into this hellish existence comes the beautiful and compassionate Angel Manah. Will she deny the increasing love she feels for this condemned soul, or can he persuade her to join him in endless damnation?

Final Retribution: Book Three of the Angelic Chronicles

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