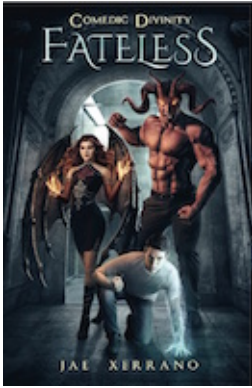


COMEDIC DIVINITY

FATELESS



JAE XERRANO



Kayen Smith is Fateless.

Invisible and ignored by the universe, unable to affect anything of significance, it's not just the melodrama of teen angst – the forces of destiny truly have no clue what to do with him! But a persuasive argument from a Duke of Hell offers him the change that he so desperately wants.

In a journey that takes him through Heaven and Hell, and the worlds between, will he accept control over his own life, or finally get the fickle harlot a chance to do the dirty work for him?

From obscurity to front and center, this young man without purpose or hope is given the spotlight he so craves, but at a terrible cost. Now can the Fateless One, a Succubus, a Rage Demon, Michael Jackson, Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack change events set in motion, resulting in a deal with a devil?

Comedic Divinity: Fateless

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8892.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**

Enjoy your free excerpt below!

COMEDIC DIVINITY: FATELESS

Jae Xerrano

Copyright © 2016 Jae Xerrano

ISBN: 978-1-63491-801-5

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2016

First Edition

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this book to...
My Family, My Mother and Father,
My Grandparents and Friends,
But mostly I want to thank my
Stepfather
Without whom,
I would never have discovered the joys
Of reading or writing
P.S. Keep fighting to end ALS

PROLOGUE:

He lived a perfect life. Every morning a stunningly handsome young man, rolled from out of his bed seconds before his alarm sounded, as if being given a head start on life, by a universe going out of its way to help him succeed. Bounding from satin sheets, he stretched, looking at his fine physique in one of the many mirrors strategically placed around his bedroom. Momentary disappointment washed over him as he thought it a shame there simply wasn't enough time in the day to express his satisfaction and contentment with his existence. Even with a world spinning at speeds approximating seven hundred thirty miles per hour, he felt like all that chaos was happening around him, but never to him.

He shined so brightly that his name was fitting well beyond even his parents' predestined expectations. Where being named Beam would have been a curse for any other, for him it was simply what he was. Beam Smith was the first born of twins, which doctors claimed were Mirror Image Twins, but he never saw the resemblance in his younger brother and in truth his mirror was a more remarkable sibling. Where he could not be more ready to take over the world with his looks and

charm, his younger brother, by a chasm spanning thirteen hours, was not really a loser or misfit, but instead he was just unmemorable and immaterial.

Beam shined so brightly, the idea of no one seeing his radiance was more terrifying than anything else he could imagine. There are some people able to go about life without adoration, but Beam could never be one of them. He never remembered anything his brother had succeeded at doing, except maybe being humble and admittedly he excelled at that, but humility seemed a complete waste to Beam. Even when they were in the same activities, his brother was always in a support role, which no one could recall, though anyone helping Beam to look even better couldn't be all-bad.

Family and friends worshipped him for so long he just assumed that the world must be his by divine proclamation. Even strangers appeared to bow at his feet making offerings and paying obeisance as if he were their personal savior. Even his car was bestowed upon him by the kindness of chance. The car he had christened, Beam's Laser, was a beautifully restored 70' GTO Judge that was a fitting steed with which his princely posterior paraded around town. After staring at himself for a little while longer, Beam got into the shower making his reflection jealous by pulling the shower curtain closed. Thinking back to how he had procured this fittingly flashy conveyance, he smirked to himself.

Skipping breakfast at home and giving his mother a ‘day off’ Beam grabbed his stuff and slid into the molded leather seats of BL, at least that was how he referred to it for short because three syllables wasted too much of his precious time. BL came to him at a charity event held yearly at the local Veterans of Foreign Wars grange. The routine event gimmick was set up so the revered warriors turned classic car buffs of Brookemont, PA could display their project cars at show quality in front of the whole town and then “auction” them off for better additional medical and housing services through the Veterans’ Administration. However, it was all a deceptive, illusory and very clever ploy, since after driving the car around the block the winner would hand the keys back to the old timer and make some comment about how it still needed a tad more work. They would tell them that once it was all finished up, to let them know and the “owner” would return to take it off their hands.

This ‘mocktion’ as participants lovingly referred to it, was a time-honored tradition in the township of Brookemont and his father, being someone of import in the community always made time to parade out the entire Smith family. It just so happened, Beam’s father won the drawing the previous year and due to the rules, could not perform in the mocktion charade again, so having been a previous winner, as well as the coincidental fact Beam had just received his license; his wise father offered the honorary drive and expected subsequent rejection to his prized son to further honor of his greatness.

Since both coincidence and fate absolutely adored Beam, it so happened that upon completing his leisurely circuit around the block, he pulled up to a host of emergency lights accompanied by the offending ambulance and his thoughts were annoyingly disturbed by a momentary twinge of concern. The owner, whose name Beam could not be bothered to recall, as it didn't pertain to him, lay dead on the sidewalk. Without a single recorded health problem, the EMT concluded it was apparently, 'just his time' and with keys to the beautiful car grasped firmly by Beam's ego, he assumed that they must have been referring to 'his' time, and not that of the unfortunate victim.

An announcement boomed over a loudspeaker relating the events to those not gathered next to the body, not yet achieving room temperature. The omniscient voice from above, in order to keep the mood from degrading relayed the events with the craft of a politician. Instead of focusing on the man's death it announced that, obviously the car as it was finally 'ready' for its new owner to take possession. Everyone celebrated and Beam was positive he saw the body give him a quick, thumbs up from beneath the shroud of sterile white. It of course could have been a nerve spasm in one last electrical display of defiant function or an unpleasant pooling of blood causing various body parts to stiffen unashamedly, but Beam chose to believe in the post-mortem pat on his back.

His memories fading back to the present as the midnight black, beast of a muscle car, roared to life chewing the asphalt carrying its master forth to the 'CaffieNation' coffee kiosk drive-thru. He was gifted his usual caramel mocha and breakfast sandwich, 'on the house' of course, Beam rarely was asked to pay for anything. A friendly, yet physically bland, junior from his high school was manager of the modest establishment. She provided the offering of free food and drinks, just so he would return and allow her stare at him, while fanaticizing about what would never be. His side view mirror caused him to wonder if permitting others to gaze upon him could make his reflection jealous. Of course there was no real concern since it always forgave him in the end, smiling back at him anytime his true twin and he locked eyes.

Checking his phone, Beam sent a text to his evening's enthusiastic distraction, though her name was eluding him at the time. A quick message saying he would not be there on time, but she should just wait outside for him as Beam hated to get out of his car unless it was to applause or for a function of some sort. In addition, chivalrously he mentioned, she should bring a jacket since heavy rain was in the forecast for later on. Beam did feel it paid to be considerate when dealing with other's feelings at times, though what those times were, still remained a bit of a mystery.

Beam pulled off the road to eat his breakfast while savoring his beverage, knowing that once at school he wouldn't have a moment to

himself. This would be due to all of the high-fives from unworthy guys, hoping what he had could rub off. If it wasn't from his own gender, his time would be occupied by desperate, supplicating embraces from the girls, praying for their shot at becoming his next momentary queen. Beam was blatantly aware of his status within the pantheon and as a Titan; even the Gods should fear his rise.

Per usual, all traffic lights were a uniform green when he pulled up to them, although Beam still slowed on occasion to flash both his and his cars' grill at the girls, who would soon vie for his attention. They could be like circling sharks encroaching upon a wounded seal. It was his undeniable burdensome duty to spread his grace unto those beneath him and give them at least a false hope in their simple and boring little lives. Beam knew that he had to be careful to not let his gaze linger in their general direction, as he didn't want to give them too much and have them implode from the weight of his praise. Out of the kindness of his heart, he did send a look that said, 'Thank you my subjects. Your adoration is accepted. Now kneel and kiss the ring before I grow too impatient and order your beheading!'

Somewhere out there was the girl of his dreams, but Beam truly hoped he wasn't destined to meet her anytime soon. The hunt and kill had proven far more fun than raising captive livestock. So far in life, Beam became a renowned trophy hunter of massive reputation and accolades. In fact, he held a kill count rivaling most mass murderers

and East African warlords. Sometimes he ate the kill, but mostly he just stuffed and mounted them, sometimes two or three in a single day.

Pulling into the parking lot of his school, he saw his usual spot open, as it should be. The parking space was marked Vice Principal, but since his car was, so much nicer, Principal Hadler offered Beam the spot, relegating Vice Principal Mann to parking in the general lot and riding the shuttle over with the other lowly teaching staff. His morally oppressive sister Cimera had said that he should have refused the parking space, stating something to him about it being unjust to take it from someone else, but Beam figured that if he wasn't meant to park there, then he wouldn't have been offered the opportunity.

Two sophomore girls named Kim, nearly tore each other apart vying to be first to open the door for Beam. Finally compromising, each took a side of the double doors and opened them wide for his much-anticipated grand entrance. Beam breached the threshold giving a brief nod to his morning valets serving him. While many were nearly faint from the attention, he found that he was fleetingly concerned for their welfare should no one be there to catch them when they began fainting from the excitement. However, since that was already in the past it didn't matter anymore and Beam proceeded, unhindered by such silly, trivial thoughts.

His locker was actually twice the size of the other students' and Beam, was the only one who did not have a locker partner. Entombed

within his steel treasure chest, lay the countless notes and missives of devotion that awaited him every day; still never tiring of opening his locker to the cascade of praise which poured forth. Of course, he also never responded or even read them. Beam would simply collect them once a week and leave them in a plastic bag outside his locker for the janitor to pick up for him. Although, he did occasionally wish he had more time to devote to those who wished for his time; it still was not something he wanted bad enough to make happen by any means.

While pushing the scrap paper, presents and an occasional undergarment back into his cavernous scholastic vault, he caught a glimpse of an out of place adult walking his hallway as if he belonged. As the stranger approached looking like a senior advisor rather than general staff or a parent, his manner seemed off-putting and arrogant, so Beam concluded he must be from an ivy league college. He was probably here to tell Beam, how University of Blah was the right choice for him. Ever since his junior year, Beam received a visit from every local school and institution and a few out of state colleges already, as with obtaining appointments for a few more within the month. Perhaps he was scheduled for one and merely forgot. Beam once more contemplated his need for a secretary.

Turning to face his locker and preparing himself for the endless flattery and praise that would be thrown at him. Upon his well-rehearsed spin move used to electrify his encounters, one which Beam

had performed a hundred times, waited with his back turned for dramatic effect. On his locker door someone had written $B + J = 4$ Eva, leaving Beam to wonder who J was and why he wanted to ‘plus’ her and was he supposed to be doing it for someone named Eva or for all eternity, because none of these things seemed to be ringing any bells.

“Pardon me young man,” The regal looking man cleared his throat to gain attention. As Beam spun about casually, he immediately noticed the sheer intensity that this man wielded so effortlessly it caused him to stumble ever so slightly. It was not just his look, but also his presence which bore down upon Beam’s monolithic ego. The man exuded charisma and was flushed with charm. It made Beam feel something unknown to him, but he assumed it was a sensation akin to what he had read about called ‘self-consciousness’ or perhaps even more ridiculously, ‘jealousy’. Though that could hardly be the case because Beam was all about his ‘self’ consciously and he knew how great that ‘self’ was. Certainty there was no other ‘self’ above him to envy or admire. “...are you K-N Smith?” The man paused awaiting a reply as silence fell, enveloping the halls.

“You’re kidding, right?” It was not Beam’s fractured ego asking so astounded, but Beam himself responding out of a genuine sense of confusion and disbelief.

“No, my young man, I am quite serious in all actuality. I am looking for K-N Smith as I have a proposition for him. I wanted to take

the opportunity to lay eyes upon him before committing to making my proposal. Size him up, so to speak and see if it's the right fit for my purposes." The words that came from his hypnotic lips were mercurial and double-edged with a soft exterior, masking wild jagged edges just below that velveteen surface. Cordial words well chosen, but venom barely held in check behind their harmless appearance, like a stuffed bunny rabbit filled with razor blades, begging a child to squeeze it with all of their strength.

"I don't know what to tell you, but your information must be wrong, I am Beam Smith. I'm sure it's me that you want to speak with. Are you from State or from one of the big schools?" Beam's brain worked as fast as it could, attempting to rationalize the events before him. Someone must have mixed up their names, a clerical error of some sort, as no one could ever confuse the two of them in the flesh. If Beam's opinion on the matter was sought, the definition of 'twins' would not be as loose as it was in his case. It was as if someone asked for filet mignon and received tuna salad. It was not close enough and should be sent back for a serious correction.

"No Beam, I know who you are and your specific gifts do not interest me at this time. I need to see your brother K-N. Now if you please, why don't you be a polite, obedient child and fetch him for me, or at the very least let me know where I might find him then remove

yourself from my presence.” His words were now harsh and Beam could sense the rage he was suppressing within his eloquent façade.

“Yes sit, well if you’re sure it’s Kayen you need, then...” He felt scolded and uncertain, two sensations which were completely foreign. Scanning the halls, he feared he would barely recognize his brother even if he tried, but figured if he just looked for the blind spot, devoid of all attention then that would be where his brother should be taking up space. Sure enough, in the center of the main hall in a perfectly formed and isolated bubble of antisocial toxicity, Kayen leaned against a locker in an apparent attempt to hold up the walls, so that the hallway would not collapse on people that were more important. “There!” Beam pointed, thus ending the dulllest game of hide ‘n seek which anyone ever conceived.

“Excellent Beam, that’s a good lad.” The man said as he tousled Beam’s hair as if he were a common street urchin, begging for loose change or something to eat. “And allow me to thank you for your time.” The man bowed insincerely and ever so slightly, then turned about and began heading down the hall in the opposite direction of his brother.

“Hey you,” The man glanced back with disgust in his eyes, “I mean... excuse me sir, but aren’t you going to speak with him?” Beam was struggling with the entire interaction, but sensed a rare protective moment creeping into his tone and pressed on.

“Not at this time my impertinent little lout, but I believe I have gleaned what I required in order to continue my plans. I am now certain as to what I need to do in order to attain my end goal. Do not worry yourself; I am sure I can find uses for you and your family in the future as well. I am sure you would make a competent errand boy of some sort or lackey. Now” His eyes shone yellow, like a nocturnal predator and a heat in his gaze set Beam’s skin ablaze, followed by a nearly hypothermic cold. “Go to class!”

“Okay, yes sir, I better go to class.” Beam began quickly gathering his things and heading off to class with an uncharacteristic and determined sense of urgency.

“Hey Beam, who was that?” Cimera was the nosey little sister that everyone seemed to love, but right now, he needed to get to class and did not have time to deal with further irritations. She pushed against him thwarting his rushed attempt at ducking her inquiry.

“Who’s who? Look Cim, I’ve got to get to class.” He attempted to shake her, but she was a bulldog when she wanted to be. A trait she stole from both parents.

“Who’s that?” She asked, pointing down the hall at the regal figure now nearly out of sight. Cimera’s steely gaze locked onto her brothers and she knew he was not acting like himself. Beam usually could not wait to talk about himself and his experiences as they pertained to him, but his avoidance was undeniably uncharacteristic.

“How the hell am I supposed to know? I’ve never seen him before in my life. Now get out of my way Cim, I’ve got to get to class.” Beam was highly irritated, which was typical when it came to his little sister, but even internally he knew he was being unusually harsh. The only thing certain was, questions about someone he had never met, by his meddlesome kid sister, was a waste of his precious time and without a doubt he had to get to class immediately. A gnawing aching sensation scratched at the inside of his skull driving him towards his goal. With a forceful shove, he pushed Cimera against the locker and stepped around her so he could be on his way, unknown forces urging him on.

Cimera stood confused and a little sore, wondering how Beam did not recognize a man with whom he just conversed at decent length, mere moments before. Beam was self-absorbed and oblivious, but even he should remember someone that touched him... especially his hair. Her shoulder hurt and her brain was nervously working overtime, but class would be starting soon and she needed to hand in her homework before too many people got there and took notice of her secretive academic success. Not only that, but one year of perfect attendance was nearly within her grasp, and simply too close to throw it all away over her obnoxious brother’s apparent spontaneous onset of dementia.

Beam glanced back at Cimera, never straying a step from his path. He knew that he had to get to class, but inside he felt, there was no reason for pushing his kid sister like that, especially over a few

questions about some stranger. Brushing the idea aside as nonsense he moved on, kinetically and mentally as well, it was a great day, he was a great person, and the world would always right itself in the end. He thought back to that retreating figure in the hallway and admitted to himself, there was something eerily familiar about him.

CHAPTER ONE:

Never the fastest or the strongest, Kayen always considered himself painfully average. The only noteworthy thing about him was everyone's apparent inability to properly spell or even pronounce his name correctly. Whenever it was attempted, the name always came out, as Cain, Kane, or Cayenne but never how it intended to display. It seemed easy and required only a phonetic reading of the letters, yet it remained an enigmatic puzzle cast aside due to its complexity like a Rubik's cube after the first hour of discovery. To other people's perception, Kayen was utterly forgettable. When handing in standardized forms, he would experience an inevitable tedious conversation, which repeated so often in his short life that it had become almost a reflexive scripted scene from within a long running stage production.

Opening:

[A young man hands in his form to portly administrative assistant in her mid-fifties. The admin then reviews said document assuring all fields filled out legibly]

Admin: “Oh my, what a unique name, how do you pronounce that?”
[Spoken in a cheery voice at the excitement of discovering something unusual in her predictable, ordinary life]

Kayen: “Just like it sounds really... similar to the first and last letter saying its name their own name.”

[A look crosses the face of the admin as she disappointingly resets her mask of official surliness]

Person A: “Well K-N, I guess it wasn’t at all as interesting as I previously thought. By the way you need to put your initials on paragraph C”

And scene.

[Exit stage left]

The oft repeated dialog usually involved being asked to come back at another time and as soon as he was out of sight the disappointed administrative assistant would forget he had ever been there in the first place, prompting an encore performance upon his next visit. People did that a lot; forgetting about him as soon as he was out of sight. He believed in the possibility that he was actually in a secret experiment analogously demonstrating what happened to the missing sock in the washing machine once the door is closed. He lived his whole life without anyone ever wondering what he was up to when he was absent from their sight. That philosophy, as well as the painstakingly dull

scenario led to everyone eventually pronouncing and writing his name as K-N to avoid suffering another round of hopeful curiosity.

The mirror was a reflection of this emotional condition as it stared back at him uninterestingly in the dim morning light. Grey eyes, undiscerning features, with a scrawny build and brown hair disheveled (but not in the ‘Cool and Trendy’ manner, but more in the manner of a person who really had no need to impress anyone... ever). The collection of ambiguous factors leaving him with a vague and easily forgotten visage in his opinion. It wasn’t that he was unattractive it’s just that he was so unremarkable that no one would have paid enough attention to his physique to even critique it one way or another. He simply was a mass of flesh, bone, muscle, nerves and skin that made up the lump commonly referred to as K-N.

The limbo of anonymity in which Kayen floated, readily likened him to that of cheap sugary chewing gum. Most remember sticking a wad of K-N in their mouths and upon meeting him there was a concentrated blast of curiosity and then ... palate killing tastelessness. No flavor remained just a bland lifeless wad of chewy unpleasantness, slowly breaking down to disinterest and eventually spat violently with disgust from the chewer’s mouth.

Dour, but not really depressed however, Kayen did feel that when people lacked emotional connection to one another then these disconnected individuals might just as well just give up on trying to

live life to the fullest. Instead, they could just hang around until eventually becoming something productive. Most notably that useful product was worm food. Kayen wondered if the worms would spit him out or forget about his corpse all together.

Like most ordinary kids, Kayen had siblings and parents, each of them archetypical in some way as to give them a sense of identity and purpose in the grand scale of things. His father was a brilliant attorney and avid football player (being from England football meant soccer, but since they lived in America, it really meant track and field with a ball which no one really cared about), who was home as little as possible. While work seemed to consume every spare second of his time he did provide well for the family so he avoided vilification as an absentee father figure.

His mother was a real estate agent of some significance although while always out showing a house, Kayen could not recall if she ever sold one. She always had extra money and though she had never mentioned selling one while he was around, she must do so on occasion. Either way this continued to baffle him how she managed to stay I the black this way. She was sweet and genuinely loved Kayen and he knew that, but children that are more relevant occupied her ‘mother time’ and so sparing time for Kayen was severely limited. Going about her daily life and harboring little concern for what was actually happening

around her. She seemed to enjoy the Zen like existence in which she found herself.

Cimera, his baby sister, was the definition of a vapid high school popular girl and all around ditsy cheerleader on the outside, except she was actually camouflaged closet genius, hiding it remarkably well throughout her entire life. Publicly she had the lofty goal of attending the most prestigious beautician's school or possibly a hard partying celebute, while in private, she had truly wanted to become a physicist and work at the Large Hadron Collider in Geneva, Switzerland at CERN. At Ten months younger than himself, he was slightly put off by the fact that she somehow still managed to have more going on in her life than he.

Beam, his older brother, by thirteen whole hours, was the pinnacle of youthful, talented, attractive male-ness. Supposedly, "Mirror Twins" Kayen was certain that the term was using a loose definition. Where he suffered familial anonymity; Beam rested on a pedestal and was worshipped by all, especially the girls around town and at school. If he could possibly be more of awe-inspiring, he could only follow the logical step of donning a cape and sporting fancy spandex underwear.

This is how Kayen Smith saw the universe and how he defined his place within the family dynamic. His life was the after effect of a view through a kaleidoscope, beautiful but nauseating when examined for too long. Each of his family members contributed in some way to a

symbiotic whole organism of a perfectly synchronized hive mind, which meant that someone saddled him with all of the mediocrity riding atop their shoulders. Though he was not consulted on the decisions, which the universe continuously made to mock him, it was his burden to bear never the less and he would do so without complaint, at least not aloud.

A flashback to his last family vacation immediately filled his mind. During the Smith family incursion into the Grand Canyon, he did find himself lost on a trail barely wide enough for his donkey and it took three days before anyone realized he was gone and sent out a search team. Once he stumbled back into the search party, the media focused on how the other members of his family felt and then they followed the family to the hospital for further updates, which was standard except the ambulance forgot Kayen on the side of the road waiting for his IV for severe dehydration and strapped to a gurney. Kayen realizing it would be hours before anyone noticed his absence or found his corpse, instead he forced his body up and after a round of arguing with a trail donkey, which he had lovingly nicknamed PITA, short for Pain in the Ass, he managed to ungracefully plod up to the hospital and collapse inside the door to the ER. After an orderly nearly tripped over him, they got him on his feet and made him wait in the waiting room for someone to see him when they finished with a two first degree burns and a very bad runny nose. Upon waking up in a bed, he knew he felt that everything would be okay. Upon turning on the TV, the local news was

reporting on his harrowing story, but then the reporter segued into his brothers' college baseball prospects and he was forgotten once more.

Change was rare for him, but then there came a letter; a simple eggshell colored letter about the size of a note card with elegant crimson writing on the front and no return address. The back was adorned with a strange wax seal that looked like the letters 'H' and 'C' nestled next to one another. The letter circulated around the family in disbelief for a while until its intended recipient finally recovered it. It was addressed to K-N and contained no postmark, as if it had just been left in the mailbox rather than journeying through regular postal channels. Upon careful unsealing and inspection, it read:

K-N Smith,

I am taking a break from my hectic schedule and sacrificing my valuable time in hopes that I can make some use of a life that you have obviously failed to utilize in any but the most uninspiring and unimaginative ways. Can you honestly remember the last time that you served a purpose other than syphoning off oxygen meant for use by people that might matter or creating carbon dioxide for plants to take in? Despite all this mediocrity and pointlessness, I feel that my services may be able to assist you and turn the eyes of the world towards your unrealized talents.

You see K-N, I have a knack for spotting potential and you, my dear young man, are positively bathing in it. Although just like a chunk

Jae Xerrano

of coal needs time, heat and pressure to become a diamond, you my dear man need my assistance. Therefore, I propose that you do yourself a favor and grace my office with your presence tomorrow at 11:06 am. Please be mindful of my time as it is limited and extremely valuable, so I would like to have this all wrapped up as soon as possible.

With anticipation,

Innee Dove Solz, Duke of Hell;

Ph.D. of Non-Corporeal Solicitations; V.P. of Contracts, Asset Procurement and Negotiations

When: 11:06am this Friday

Where: The alleyway behind 666th avenue and Unholy Way. You will know which alley... trust me.

HellCorp, Nightmares are Dreams too.

In astonishment and some stunning level of discomfort, the words burned into his mind erasing from the page, leaving the paper the not-quite-white of bleached bone. Kayen blinked away tears; his eyes had become very dry and tiny black orbs danced in and out of his field of vision, as if he had glancing at the sun on a clear sunny day. A sense of dread unfelt throughout his life lingered, and although terrified, it left a feeling of being alive in ways unexpected and new to Kayen.

His surge of emotion was cut short by his chatty sister's attempts at creating more screen time in the dark comedy of his life. Kayen often thought that if Cimera were to appear as Shakespeare's Juliet, she would be unable to remain silent throughout the tragic death scene and instead would break out into song and dance. Admittedly, Kayen knew she would be fantastic at it, but that was hardly the point.

"Hey Dad, you'll never believe this, but your other son got a letter," Cimera called across the room to the strange hybridized construct of smart phone and man, which their father had become years earlier. Advancements in technology, such as the convenience of the Bluetooth headset and microprocessors had made him wireless and slightly closer to resembling the human he once was, but there was no mistake in the obviousness of his father's transformation into a cyborg linked to the hive mind of the technological collective.

Cimera, now standing behind him saw only the clean sheet of folded ivory cardstock. Kayen assumed she was thinking that he had mailed the letter to himself just to feel important. In her defense this had occurred in the past, but the correspondence usually seemed to wind up lost in the mail or sent somewhere else entirely. Most were keenly aware that he was not deserving of the needed effort or forethought required behind the act of someone authoring a letter, purchasing a stamp, and then mailing said letter. In fact, he may have been the only person on the planet who never even got spam in his e-

mail account. Actually, Kayen mused to himself, he never even got an automated response back from companies he had solicited.

“Heya Sport,” his father called him out of his reverie while staring at his smart phone and tablet simultaneously, “What have you got there?”

Perhaps it was a sense of obligation, but his father still attempted to feign interest, as noted by the fact that he never used Kayen’s proper name, just sport, tiger, kiddo, or any other impersonal colloquialism that would pass as a form of familiar address. Instead, his fatherly automaton just compounded anonymity upon the already established impression, Kayen manifested quite prolifically upon himself. At the same time, these talks, if calling them that was even adequate, fulfilled his father’s daily conversational requirements, so Kayen attempted to sit through them and at least attempt helping with his share of the mandatory father-son dynamic.

With his distracted side road of thought now reconnected to the main thoroughfare, Kayen began opening his mouth when Cimera’s voice quickly cut through the room. “Why would someone send you a letter? I mean it seems kinda weird, doesn’t it? I mean that it’d be for you and not Beam,” her mocking voice followed up by his mother’s comments came blasting out of the kitchen.

“You know Cimera, it’s probably for Beam and someone just misaddressed it. Tell your brother he really shouldn’t open mail like

that. Just because something comes in the mail addressed to him doesn't mean he should open it up without checking with Beam first," the rest of her assessment was trailing off into complaints about the garbage disposal and the water pressure. It was a fair point about Kayen's mail after all; there might have been a typo or mistake in the address had he not read the contents to confirm. This seemed considerably more plausible than the notion someone would take the time intentionally to send him mail.

"Tiger, are you certain it was addressed to you and not Beam? Beam is the one to whom the most post goes. Although if it came addressed to 'Current Resident', by all means he should be allowed to open it, after all it is just a different way to spell it, right lad?" Kayen's father smiled guiltily, without looking up from the eerie glow of his tablet's screen.

The expression his Father was hidden poorly and was masking a story involving a boy full of hopes, dreams and ambitions. It was a story about a child whom everyone loved and constantly received mail daily. His nickname remained well known and occasionally he would have to take his mail from family and friends houses due to improper delivery. Of course, he could not properly read yet, but he sure did know how to spell his name with so much mail sent to him. Kayen (C-U-R-R-E-N-T) Smith (R-E-S-I-D-E-N-T) was certainly a well-known personage. It was not until Kindergarten that his life of anonymity truly

began. As a side note, Kayen was positive that ignorance really was bliss and the truth was kind of a bitch that loved to make him look and feel like a jackass.

“You know slugger, back when I was Beam’s age; I was always invited to all the grand soirées and fancy dress parties. I would have invites to every one of them and sometimes I even had to go to two or three in the same evening; it was a lot of pressure. Beam is a lot like me in that way, just too popular to handle it all. The poor lad needs a personal secretary,” and then he trailed off wistfully into another unending rendition of what Kayen began to think of as ‘Isn’t Beam Lovely’, set to the similar song by Stevie Wonder. It was a tribute and a show of adoration for his magnanimous offspring.

Kayen shook himself loose from out of his mental fog realizing everyone was now amidst sharing his or her own, ‘isn’t Beam amazing’ stories. So retreating quietly, figuring this was a good time to slink out of the conversation, he made his way up the stairs to his bedroom. Said room, in actuality was a poorly lit, musty crawl space in the attic that his parents converted into a modest living space. It served its function as a room, but so did prison cells at Rikers Island. He never could shake the lingering feeling he was just an afterthought, quarantined away from the rest of the family in fear that whatever afflicted him could be contagious and thus its removal from the rest of the healthy

organism was paramount, like the necessary amputation of a gangrenous limb.

Placing the blank mysterious letter on his nightstand, he began to come up with reason after numerous reason for what he had read, before the migraine from the bowels of Hell, Kayen smiled subconsciously at the unintentional pun. Perhaps it was merely a symptom of his inevitable downward spiral into the soft and comforting abyss of isolation induced insanity. If it happened to someone else, he would assume either they had become unhinged and unstable and soon would be on the news, as the key person of interest in relation to a Branch Davidian style raid by government agents. Perhaps even a crazed gunman dressed as Kermit the Frog and carrying a high-powered sniper rifle perched atop the town's water tower. The other alternative would lead him to the conclusion that he was completely sane and the person who sent the letter was the one diagnosable, mentally fractured, insanity filled missive.

The more that Kayen played the possibilities over in his mind, all it seemed to achieve was making the 'Kermit Sniper' scenario significantly more likely. He was fairly sure that the crazy option was solid as the thought of being special or having any potential seemed as likely as a Leprechaun riding a unicorn carrying Excalibur and the Golden Fleece coming over for Ambrosia and Lembas Bread and discussing the mechanics of Pai Gow with his mother's garden gnomes.

Kayen internalized events often carrying in-depth mental monologues and his internal voice often was part of most discussions. All this was processing while trying to decide on the easiest way to climb the water tower in oversized green webbed floppy feet made of couch interior foam and green fabric. Sadly, Kermit the Frog, rifle, and water tower, were entirely more plausible than any potential for destiny in his infinitely dull existence.

Being anonymous left Kayen with a lot of free time, as a byproduct he was knowledgeable and regularly read and studied a broad spectrum of subjects. However, with no one willing to listen to him, he felt as though he might as well have been, 'Jo Jo the idiot circus boy', for all the good that intelligence was garnering him. To an outside observer some might think him depressed, but as no one really thought of him one way or the other, he figured this was probably an unnecessary waste of his time and energy, like attempting to treat a condition no one would ever bother diagnosing because its pathology was so obscure and it only effected one person on the planet. Another useless benefit was that his mind actually worked differently than most, Kayen could process multiple pieces of information from different sources and senses quickly and was able to comprehend in-depth concepts, troublesome for others, as natural as breathing to him. He could write down the presidents in order of office while singing the entire score to the HMS Pinafore without missing a note or placing a president in the wrong order. A gift it turns out, which rarely came in handy since no

one ever asked for his help or opinion on any matter let alone more than one at the same time. Though he did find that this led to fantastic internal banter when carrying on tedious conversations or tasks.

If Kayen were going mad, then he felt deeply disappointed in his blossoming new psychosis, which should be a trifle more considerate as it was aware he had school to attend at the stated time. After all, the middle of a school day seemed an odd time to arrange an appointment if one desired attendance. It seemed that even his delusions were proposing impossible social scenarios for him to be excluded from attending, yet again. Regardless, today was Thursday the twelfth and Friday was a long night away from its pleasant ripping into the week with promise of the weekend. Since his participation in today seemed wholly unnecessary, he plopped down on his bed, waiting for dinner, slowly drifting off to sleep. As predicted, no one ever called him down to eat.

Kayen was a righteous warrior; a swarthy swordsman defending the kingdom against hordes of the undead with companions willing to die for his cause. He mounted the marble steps to the great citadel and felt ozone crackle as the dark sorcerer raised beings from beyond the veil to halt his approach. With a wave of his sword, white flame sent the spirits back within the void as he continued. He was epic and heroic and he was something feared by his enemies more than their inevitable

deaths. His lithe warrior-princess at his side and his menacing silent blood brother at his back made short work of the evil wizard and his foul minions.

Sometimes he was a knight, barbarian, fighter pilot, starship captain or even a decorated police officer. Kayen was greatness personified, so the idea of a world in which all were ambivalent to his presence was both inconceivable and abhorrent to a man of his acclaim.

While Kayen dreamed, it was a rare time where he felt part of things, anything really. In his sleep, he was the nucleus both confident and hopeful; such a strong contrast to his pathetic reality. It was no surprise that he chose to spend a great deal of time trying not to be awake. It was not the sleep he craved but the relevance and purpose of the dreamscape.

Clawing his way from the tangle of covers amassed on his bed and stumbling down the stairs clumsily into the shower, proved a heroic task as any his sleep provided. With crusted eyes shut and his hand eye coordination appearing to be most uncooperative if not actively defying his will he managed to make it to the bathroom. The water did not disappoint and was its usual tepidly intense lukewarm with which he had developed a close personal relationship. Admittedly, it was due mostly to his tendency always to be the last to take a shower more than the universe signaling any prejudicial slight towards him. Just before ice formed on his extremities, which ironically always seemed to be the

case whenever he had the most soap remaining on his body, Kayen turned off the shower and dried his personally unimpressive physique off with a dull grey hand towel. (*It's a wonder how we always have only two clean towels for the three of us kids, it's not that hard of a math problem, is it mom?*) Glancing at himself in the mirror, even as his own reflection seemed uninterested in the view, he quickly looked elsewhere to avoid the awkwardness of the moment.

Using baking soda to brush his teeth instead of regular toothpaste, which is how his bland day always began was a sad way to wake up his mouth. It seemed to leave an unpleasant taste and sensation, causing him to wonder how anyone could consider the sensation a great kick-start to a bountiful day of reality altering potential. Instead, it left him void of feelings or taste buds, setting his day up for more mediocrity, and a disinterested sleepwalk through events.

Realizing the time, he quickly threw on a worn t-shirt that once had a phrase, saying or logo on the front and some faded blue jeans; Kayen headed for the door on his way to school. The 'place where dreams go to die' was how he always thought of it. Outside the Smith residence it was cloudy, yet yielded no rain, instead presenting a gloomy atmosphere with a moisture-sucking aura blanketing the morning sky (*yeah, this figures*). Marching along purposefully, while once again carrying out his everlasting burden of social ambiguity all

the while thinking of his fictitious play date with the devil quickly approaching.

Although for the sake of accuracy it was not really ‘The’ Devil... after all, ‘The’ Devil would not waste time with someone of Kayen’s insignificance. It also stated he was only a Duke of Hell after all, which Kayen assumed meant that this Devil had family twice removed from a mid-level manager which allowed his likely insertion into a hastily fabricated hastily created position for the sake of marital ties, that must be the never-ending sin of nepotism within demonic office politics. Furthermore, a Duke of Hell must be a title given to a sister’s, daughter’s, husband’s, brother, so that he could avoid working for a living and just skate by in life while comfortably sequestered in some corner office with little to no actually daily duties and a huge pay check and retirement benefits (*I wonder if they get 401k and dental*).

Glancing around and seeing no one else from his school on the streets slowly forced him out of his musings knowing he needed to hurry or he would be late to class. His absence could hardly matter since he had been out sick, went home early, even showed up tardy on numerous occasions, yet he never received a reprimand or attendance call to his parents. In fact, he was certain that the school never even listed him as an enrolled student, since his name was not on the roll call sheet or in the student registry.

Every year, without fail, he would have to remind teachers to make a report card for him, and every year they would crinkle their foreheads trying to remember anything that he had contributed to the class and when nothing came to mind they proceeded to give him the same grade every time. This letter grade, if it could truly be called that, resembled a queer epileptic pictogram that could be a representation of any letter from A-F. His teachers' penmanship was far worse than any doctors' script with regard to how illegible it was. (*Hieroglyphics of ancient lost civilizations were easier to decipher.*)

No matter how hard he worked, slacked off, or if he even bothered to show up at all they would continue to produce report cards with the aforementioned bizarre glyph, which at least somehow was a passing grade, but unable to be calculated into a GPA which always said 'ERROR' in place of a desired numerical sum. Somehow, his parents never questioned it and the school system did not seem concerned at Kayen's unimpressive academic dearth.

A fire truck passed, while on its way to do something heroic, as he approached the stop light at the end of his street. The avenue he stood on was home to a perpetually red stoplight that never seemed to turn green. That was of course unless a driver had already become so incensed that they decided to run through it, in which case then it would turn from green long enough to give them hope, but turn red in time for a police car to notice the running of the same red light again. It

was fickle but could at least provide some entertainment from time to time. Another fire truck passed racing off towards adventure with lights flashing and sirens wailing. (*I bet even the people they are going to help wouldn't trade places with me.*)

With real troubles occurring to people, Kayen figured it was pointless to consider last nights' obvious lapse in mental stability and forced logic and rationality into the forefront of his thoughts. At last, fairly certain he had never received any letter and the corresponding invite from a Duke of Hell for an ominous proposition regarding some fictitious potential buried deep within himself, it was time to hustle and stop wasting his time on such nonsense. The whole event must be his brains' way of signaling that the uneasy peace between reality and batshit crazy was being rent in two and then smashed together mercilessly like a toddler with pot lids in a make-believe marching band. (*I am seriously getting a headache.*)

Concluding that either the toddler scenario induced migraine was the cause of his onset of nausea or whether it was the lack of food yesterday evening, he realized he should have grabbed one of the premade sibling lunches, his mom always had ready to go in the fridge to see if that helped settle his stomach. (*Although if I am lucky, maybe I am contracting a new form of viral brain cancer with myself becoming patient zero for a plague of psychosis and eventual death, followed by the obvious reincarnation and new brain matter dietary requirements*

associated with all great zombie flicks. I would probably be the new litmus test for the all disciplines of psychology and neural science dedicated to determining the extent of insanity.)

Kayen might warrant a footnote in the annals of psychiatric medicine and his affliction would forever be referred to as ‘That Guy’ Disease, or perhaps even the Spanish words for insignificant entity, as ‘Entidad Insignificante’ sounded more exotic. Yes, he was certainly going insane and looking forward to the recognition upon further descent. Figuring that he most likely was afflicted with extremely vivid hallucinations as a police cruiser came screaming past, blaring its siren while it sped by heading the same direction as the firetruck.

Kayen pinched the back of his arm bringing tears to his eyes. (*Damn! Ouch! Nope, definitely not dreaming.*) He fumed while expressing his consciousness to himself angrily. Realizing the test was something he should have performed yesterday, during his initial breakdown, and not now that he was more coherent and fully cognoscente of his environment. Two more police cars whizzed by as he rounded the last corner leading toward his high school’s main entrance.

He stopped in his tracks taking in the chaotic scene before him. A massive crowd assembled outside on the lawn as emergency crews ran in and out of the building wearing strange glittery silver hazard suits with face shields and oversized oxygen tanks on their backs. Even the

firefighters were staying back at a relatively safe distance. Smoke billowed out of the eastern entrance aptly referred to as ‘Smokers’ Hall’.

They must be here for the cafeteria food, Kayen thought to himself.

Making his way to the front of the law enforcement barricade the emergency responders had set up, Kayen saw the schools’ principal clinging to the side of a fire engine with one hand and a bullhorn in the other, shouting at students and faculty alike, as well as anyone else being held at bay by the police and their barricades. Kayen was not necessarily a fan of his, and he was sure that part of his apprehension was from his principal’s uncanny resemblance to an African American version of Adolph Hitler. He was about five feet tall (*including the lifts*) and he had an odd little mustache and for some unknown reason everything he said was in short brusque commands and usually sounded as if he was shouting even though Kayen was positive that just happened to be his normal speaking voice.

“Everybody, listen up!” principal Hadler barked as the screech of feedback filled the morning air gaining more than a few ill-tempered groans, mostly from irritated staff. Silence seemed to come slowly as spectators speculated in hushed tones, the way crowds tend to do whenever ordered to silence.

“There has been a small incident in the Chem-Lab! (*Incident and Chem-Lab are words one rarely likes to hear in the same sentence, right up there with ‘the check is in the mail’ and ‘it’s your baby’.*) We

are currently awaiting the ‘all clear’ from the authorities! McGaffin’s grocery store across the street is now setting up tents! They are to be used only as places for students to sit, in order to wait out this extreme annoyance! I have been ordered by the school district to announce that anyone who ‘feels’ too traumatized (ironically the little dictator air quoted ‘feels’ and not ‘traumatized’) to attend school, due to concerns for their wellbeing, are required to report to their homeroom teacher! Show that you are present and then you are dismissed!” he turned the bullhorn off with a loud chirp.

Fully expecting to see a platoon of grey clad SS officers goose-step past him on the way to cause sadistic torture on the huddled masses, Kayen made his way to his homeroom teacher’s section beneath the makeshift shelters. Roll call was brief and he had to remind his homeroom teacher, Mrs. Mallory once again that he really is an enrolled student in her class, named Kayen Smith just like the last time she inquired how he pronounced that (*Kay-yen still*).

“Oh yes Mr. K-N. I seem to recall you now. Will you be staying or heading home?” His teacher already looked bored and before he could even respond that he was going to head home she had already moved on to other more important matters like the Pomeranian with bows in its hair, being walked by its owner.

At least he could move on instead of having to convince her that they had a conversation about his name almost every day for the last

five months. Marking him down as present, she of course would say his name in the same stunted manner that everyone else said it making sure over emphasize the nonexistent pause between consonants sans any vowels.

His siblings were off doing those popular things, which popular siblings seemed to do, while the other students all made a break for it, as it was quickly deteriorating into becoming a free ‘Skip Day’ for the student body as well as staff. Gathering himself and heading towards store passing by the line of makeshift tents; where the socially despised were congregating beneath a canopy in order to conduct makeshift classes taught by teachers with nothing better to do or nowhere else to go. Yet, somehow even these bottom feeding societal delinquents would be missed by someone sparking concern. Kayen would be missed by someone of course, probably family after a week or two, but peripherally and never for more than a fleeting instant. Like roadkill residing on a familiar street driven by daily for days and then, suddenly just gone as it wastes away becoming part of the earth. Kayen too would fade and those that noticed would find it harder to remember him as more time passed.

Suffering from terminal apathy regarding the state of his baffling existence, or considerable lack thereof, Kayen knew his attendance would not gain him any measurable recognition whether positive or

negative and with that uplifting thought he walked into the store to get a snack with a loud and resounding, CRACK!

It's so damned dark in here.

Slamming face first into a glass door, he staggered back woozily, realizing that he had actually walked into the stores' infernal sliding door. He slowly stepped forward again and once again, the door refused to budge. Kayen found himself sitting his bag propped up against a bench cradling his face, which he was sure was swelling exponentially by the minute. A quarter hour had lapsed when the fog began to clear, revealing a woman talking on her mobile phone heading for the entrance entirely oblivious to the world around her and the fate that would surely befall her.

“Urghem...” Was all Kayen could get out as he tried to warn her of his personal cautionary tale's literal impact; an impotent attempted uttered warning at preventing her from an impending fate should she continue on her current course. Then through watery eyed vision, the wily door opened and she was gaining admittance to the magical land of ‘Oz’ located on the other side of the glass guillotine.

Kayen got up and walked to the door. Nothing happened once again as he then proceeded to try everything such as waving, pushing, pulling, prying, shouting, and finally resorting to jumping up and down like a raving lunatic in a feeble attempt to trigger a pressure sensor or garner attention, but the obstinate door never budged and no one came

to assist. Kayen sat down once more in defeat. His pouting ego was relieved briefly with a newly formed idea born from his self-pitying brainstorming, built of the need to have this single win in his so far progressively lousy day.

Patently waiting for another person to confront the impregnable gateway this time when it opened, Kayen rushed at full speed in behind her, just as the doors nearly closed on his backpack. The successful execution was almost overwhelming and he could not believe that the universe had allowed it to work. Something horribly wrong was sure to transpire and the saliva laden fingers of impending doom smothered his flame of euphoric joy.

CHAPTER FIVE:

The air was stale and musty and left a feeling of greasy soot covering skin and hair. Standing in a foyer of a large eatery was an A-frame restaurant chalkboard, often used to display their menu, meal times and other information to be hand scrawled in various pastel or fluorescent shades, but this sign was an uninviting warning meant to halt passage before them, a silent sentinel guarding against entrance. Its presence appeared out of place, the pretty colors, so chipper and uplifting in its flowery handwriting, a stark contrast to the message.

Open for patrons at the following times only:

6:00am – 6:15am

11:30am – 12:00pm

5:15pm – 5:25pm

All other times reserved by Glutton Demon Personnel ONLY

Now Serving:

Everything that's left

Enter at own risk! Don't feed the dog!

The stench initially overwhelmed and pervaded the air, accosting their senses. Like the extreme temperatures of the floors and stairways before, the smell was at the edge of unbearable, at once smelling like a stadium toilet and a slaughterhouse. Actually, a strange comparison entered Kayen's mind causing him to realize that it was a scent not unlike Sloppy Joe day in the cafeteria at his high school.

And yet, we still looked forward to it every time. What is wrong with us?

Everywhere they looked were tables with heaping piles of meat, sprawled out for all to consume. At each table throughout the room were dining groups of anthropomorphic boars devouring every scrap they could cram into their mouths. The gluttonous beasts were stripping away every morsel of flesh from the bones of unfortunate sacrifices; some were even gnawing on their own limbs in order to satiate their abhorrent cravings. Several vile creatures at a nearby table were trying to lick the blood and gore from the tables so as not to waste a single drop. Above the entrance to the macabre dining hall was a sign that read 'Commissary'.

"This is disgusting." Kayen whispered to the other two.

"It looks like there ain't no stoppin' these critters. I wonder how they've managed to not bust a gut with all that shoveling." Griv commented to Evelyn.

“Well, there goes my appetite.” Evelyn whispered in addition. “The only thing that makes me more nauseated than gluttony is celibacy.” Kayen smirked at this, while Griv gave out a reserved snort of amusement.

Damn!

At that sound the heads of each demon from nearly all the immediate tables turned towards the party. The eyes removed from each of the hog like demons, but their hearing and sense of smell were working overtime. They sniffed at the air trying to determine the origin of the new entrée delivered to their voracious selves. Griv made a finger to the mouth ‘hush’ gesture and everyone suspended all movement including breathing. Surveying the scene caused nausea that was unrivaled within Kayen’s core. These newly bonded friends, were witnessing a hunger, so beyond what was necessary to survive and instead a horrifying compulsion, showing no sign of stopping.

Kayen, like the others, stood without moving taking in the horror, breathe held as long as possible. The problem with holding one’s breath is that it generates two easily discernible sounds. There is either the sharp intake of enough breath in order to hold it as long as possible or the sharp exhale of toxic carbon monoxide, so that one can draw breathe once more.

*I am gonna look like an asphyxiated Smurf before I breathe again.
I am not gonna end up on the menu.*

In the end, it was Evelyn unable to take it any longer and before the cannibals' fine dining establishment, the demon let out her perfume scented breath in an intense explosive exhalation. Without hesitation, those demons with legs ran and those without crawled quickly towards the sound; knocking over heaping piles of skin, bone, and entrails from the carnal table tops.

Like report from a starter's pistol, the race for survival had commenced. In the lead, Evelyn showed off her graceful sprint by deftly spinning past the first wave while causing a few to stumble over a pool of quickly coagulating bile, giving Kayen an opening that Griv took advantage of by pushing him through. The Rage Demon then turned about and let out an eardrum-bursting roar, giving the three of them precious needed seconds as the hog demons momentarily weighed the threat of dismemberment at Griv's hands, against their fevered need to devour.

Hunger prevailed in the end, and once again, they were scrambling after their fleeing smorgasbord comprised of Fateless, Rage and Lusty goodness. Kayen just focused on Evelyn's backside, to avoid looking back and possibly in order to die happy. It would have been a great view had the tsunami of porcine wood chippers not been pursuing the three with ill intention.

Evelyn's grace finally gave out and she slipped on something that Kayen was grateful he could not identify, but reflexes he didn't know

he had kept her from delivery into their midst with a rather heroic catch of her waist.

Sense of touch checked off, four down and one to go.

Once again, Eve set off, but the demons were gaining on them and multiplying with each step the pursued took. (*Who knew far beyond morbidly obese, blind, pig-things could cover that much ground so quickly?*) Kayen knew was only joking internally, to keep from curling into a ball and dying from terror.

This was a race impossible to win without a miracle. Years of swimming meant he had stamina and track was always a solo sport he had enjoyed, so he was fast enough to keep up, but not fast enough to break away from the roiling mass of blubber and teeth, threatening to engulf them at each misstep. The wave of ravenous flesh clawed over one another, attempting to push through every obstacle with blunt force and succeeding by overturning tables, chairs and each other like clods of dirt pushed aside. A plow of living hunger in a field of flesh.

“How are we supposed to outrun these things?” Energy fading, Kayen shouted in order for Evelyn and Griv to hear his question over the frenzied Glutton Demons, his breath harsh and labored.

“Hold on partner, she’s gonna buck, but we’ll make it, just remember how unpleasant fallin’ will be and use that as reason not to.”

Griv replied without any hint of amusement, equal exhaustion laced his speech as well.

It's no MLK sermon, but that will have to do. Kayen pushed himself even harder.

“Will you two shut up and watch where you’re going?” Evelyn did not appear as winded as the others did, but her dancer’s body would not hold up forever either. “Here you two are, complaining about being eaten, but my tight little demon ass is going to be put through a lot worse than that. Remember Griv, glutton demons are about excess appetites, but not all of them crave food.” She visibly shivered making a quick glance behind her.

“Look out!” Kayen shouted as a demon attempted to grab at her legs from a blind spot beneath a grizzly salad bar. *(Is it still a salad bar if it missing any actual form of vegetation?)*

“I see it.” She leapt like an Olympic hurdler, sliding over the edge of the buffet on a tray while managing to avoid any filth that might mess up her immaculately composed outfit all in a dress and serious high heels.

Amazing!

Two more figures were attempting to block Griv, but he responded in kind by lowering his head and charging through them like a bull. Kayen, lacking the grace or raw power of his companions, merely

concentrated on footing, but then realized he could also be calculating the optimal path by dividing his mind and focusing on the two separately rather than using it to make comedic observations about his surroundings.

The technique was leading to an increase in speed and agility. While it was a perception only because in reality, it was just the unique way Kayen's brain worked; choosing both paths simultaneously in his mind and evaluating their benefits before committing to an optimal course.

The Glutton Demons were herding the friends together, whether deliberately or by pure chance towards an alcove within the cafeteria. Griv pushed Kayen and Evelyn back behind him protectively. He roared again this time more out of frustration than anything else like a cornered animal protecting its young. His fury now barely held in check, as the Rage Demon positioned himself between the horde and his companions.

Flames danced in his eyes and his face became more bovine in appearance now looking more the literal bull, ready to if need be. Snorting caused steam to hit the air in a great billowing cloud. Griv's arms became darker red while he shook in anticipation of the battle unfolding. Kayen could see Griv's rationality and calm crumbling apart, giving way to hatred and animosity. A true demon was all Kayen could view where his friend once stood.

Within seconds, Rage Demon Griv rushed the foremost of the swarm. With massive swipes of clawed hands, he raked through the first wave, rending flesh and bone as easily as tearing apart a head of lettuce. Kayen was certain he was not going to be able to eat for some time if he survived this. One got a little too close to Evelyn and Kayen noticed a quick flick of her wrist as a short blast of fire splashed against the offender's exposed face.

The hate-fueled charge from Griv, worked at clearing a momentary path. Evelyn sent scorching steam in small bursts, fine enough to cut through Demon flesh, as a rear guard action to keep from being overran, while Kayen swung a table leg at those that grew curious at the groups' perceived soft and chewy center. The demons were attempting to flank them when Kayen made a quick calculation and with surprising force crushed the skull of one, while opening a hole to the right of his companions allowing a new means of egress. With determination, Griv shoved the wall of meat in a steady push and made his way, slowly and deliberately until the elevator was in site. The big demon had lacerations from claws and teeth over every inch of his forearms and face, but he persisted unfazed. Evelyn maneuvered elegantly, switching positions with Kayen, so she could insert the key and hit the call button.

Returning to a position in front of Kayen once again almost as effortlessly was an act to be respected by anyone who thought the smallest would be easy prey. Teeth, claws and bone dug into Griv's

arms and chest, but he held steady, pressing against the onslaught, unyielding as granite.

The ground around them shook violently and a baying repulsive howl filled the air. The tables flung aside and the repellant attacking Demons cowered as a hound of mammoth proportions, sporting three heads bounded into the fray. Its call was the din of souls in eternal suffering. Eyes dead gray, blinded if Kayen was any judge, but it scented the air and faced the trio deftly. A low growl summoned more images of the lost disembodied spirits hopelessly devoured and trapped forever, digesting within its massive abyss of a gut.

Oh come on, you've got to be kidding me with this crap!

“Cerberus, ah damn it all to here! Who in the name of the unholy let him out of his cage? Trash day isn't till Friday, right?” Griv commented still in his hellish form while transitioning back into its more human appearance. Evelyn looked fearful and the least seductive or composed Kayen had as of yet witnessed and because of that he was even more afraid for their fate.

“Why should I be more afraid of him than the hundred cannibals before?” Kayen asked his guide. Without any effort, Cerberus tore through the massive undulating body of pork and faced squarely against Griv.

Oh! That's why.

Slamming his palm to the elevator call button rapidly as Evelyn shakily tossed him her pilfered executive key once more, without taking her eyes off either the demons or their new monstrous adversary; Kayen frantically inserted the key into the lock and depressing the button once more hoping that this act would bring a faster response than what currently transpired.

Griv changed again and no longer rational, appearing completely lost in his atavistic nature. Run or Fight? That was all that circled in his mind, and Kayen concluded that Rage Demons do not run. Cerberus' challenge received a quick answer, as Griv slammed into him using one forearm to keep the heads at bay while he clawed at the exposed underbelly with razor sharp talons on his fingertips. The hellhound rolled backwards but soon regained footing and launched into a full-on assault, leaving Griv to surrender what little ground his group had purchased grudgingly with his initial charge. The physical exchange was barbaric and savage with each blow sending black blood flying from each combatant. Then the melee began to turn and an even exchange was now becoming less of a quick onslaught and more of a test of endurance. Unfortunately, Kayen knew Griv was failing gradually.

I have to do something.

Cerberus moved in for the kill as it rose on its hind legs trying to get purchase on Griv's sinewy neck. Beyond any expectation that

Kayen had, Griv pushed once more holding the beast's weight on his forearm and tearing at the vulnerable belly again. The weight of the beast was wearing him down and he dropped to one knee. Kayen ran towards him and pushed Griv from behind trying to add his meek strength. Inconsequential as it was, Griv became overwhelmed and lay prone beneath Cerberus' ferocious jaws, now inches from his throat. Kayen found himself thrown to the side.

The impact on the ground sent a shock running through his astral body as he had never felt before. It was electric and gave him the feeling that this was not the end for any of them. Kayen halted his retreat by wheeling about. His fists clenched knowing he had to help, knowing that these strangers were risking their afterlives for him and he was not going to let them do so without trying. His eyes were closed, but he could see white-hot light before him and an outline of the beast pressing his friend to the ground. Closing the distance between himself and the Cerberus, Kayen made straight for its centermost head. Jumping up with every ounce of courage and force he could muster he slapped the palm of his hand atop the beast's centermost nose.

Kayen heard himself shout a firm dominant 'No!', an exclamation accentuating the somewhat comedic corrective action against the hound of Hell. Searing heat crackled and instantaneously cascaded forth from the palm of his hand as Cerberus let out a sullen whimper. Then just like any chastised dog, lowered his head in admonishment and slowly

backed away letting out a disturbing whimper as a decisive sign of submission.

Evelyn was already tending to Griv, beginning to return to some semblance of humanity, once more and assisted Kayen in heading toward the elevator door once more. Griv was conscious but unable to move very quickly. The sweet sound of the ding from the elevator was musical as the doors whooshed open and they cautiously backed into its calming and safe embrace. The Glutton Demons kept their distance, but retained the hunger in their beady eyes contemplating the risk versus reward.

From the other end of the hall, a frustrated wail blasted as an irate flesh colored hippopotamus charged the elevator, cutting through more demons attempting to pursue the group once more. It was a race to see whether the elevator door would shut before Rico could close the distance.

Come on dammit. Kayen thought to himself while pressing the close door button frantically. As the halves finally met, an imprint of Rico's face permanently impressed into the steel elevator doors and the car shook upon the impact. The passage was sealed and they could finally breathe a sigh of relief. Griv was hurt, Evelyn was on edge and Kayen came out the hero. It was pretty much the end of days by his count of things.

Hah, was all Kayen could say as they were soothed by the sounds of instrumental smooth jazz. Time moved by slowly at first, the shock and revulsion giving way to relaxation and rest, bringing about a release they all needed so desperately. It was Kayen, who finally broke the silence.

“I can’t believe that worked.” Kayen said in awe of his self-proclaimed awesomeness. Evelyn gave an exhausted, but tender smile at his hint of the uncharacteristic bravado.

“Kayen, thank ya. I would be dead if not fer you. I mean really dead not just dead, but dead, dead. Ya know?” Griv said with haggard breath, one eye mostly closed due to swelling and the other severely scratched up.

“I couldn’t think of anything else, so I figured it was still a dog. I remembered seeing someone whack a dog on the nose with a newspaper to get it to behave when it attacked his wife and I know that’s how you can stop a shark, so I figured why not? Seeing how it was a dog the size of a Great White anyway, it seemed a relatively sound idea.” None of this seemed sound when spoken aloud, but he liked where his train of thought was going realizing he wasn’t being very polite he stuttered, “I mean, well... uh... You’re welcome Griv. I owed you for having been such a good friend in a bad place.” Evelyn sat in silence just relaxing.

The elevator ride was peaceful and Griv seemed to be healing rather quickly. Scars had already faded to a light pink and his hair was beginning to grow back in damaged spots. Kayen was now sitting on the floor as the other two had done, drained from their dangerous escape from the Lunch Room.

“Kayen, I have to ask, how did you do that with your hand?” Evelyn looked at the elephant in the room that she and Griv had been ignoring, since their hasty retreat.

“Did what, you mean slap that dog on the nose? Well it wasn’t anything really. I just reached out and slapped it, I guess.” Kayen examined his hand in confusion at the question. It looked normal.

“It was something. Think back to what happened exactly. You jumped up to his nose Kayen, while Cerberus was on its hind legs requiring at least a fifteen-foot vertical jump, and then when you slammed your hand into Cerberus’ nose, it felt so powerful. I could feel the force while back behind you where I was standing. The resulting light upon impact was blinding. It felt like something familiar, but something I also barely remembered.” She stopped as Griv groaned and then added his thoughts.

“It was hope. Ain’t that right Evy? I almost forgot what it felt like too. You’ve got a very powerful weapon down here and you need to watch yourself, kid. Somehow you channeled it into your legs to jump

and your hands to send a shock into Cerberus.” Griv’s eyes began to close again.

“Yeah, that’s what it was. Kayen, listen, you need to hide that and use it sparingly. Out of fear, it’s the only real thing craved and denied by Infernals. With hope that this will end, eventually Hell loses a great deal of its power over its prisoners. Some will go to great lengths to covet that type of treasure, either to use it as a weapon or a drug.” Evelyn stated emphatically, though now worn out, as she lay propped between Griv and Kayen.

“I guess I never really thought about not coming out of this. I mean no matter what happens down here it all feels like we will make it... if we stay together.” Kayen whispered half to himself as Evelyn closed her eyes resting against him in silence for a little while longer. He could feel her smiling without looking at her face.

“Kayen, how did you know about the shark thing? I mean dogs are pretty common where you came from, but how did you run across a shark?” Evelyn asked between yawns, her eyes shut tight and he breathe slowing.

“Shark Week.” Even that small phrase took a large amount of energy for Kayen to force through his lips.

“Shark Week? I didn’t know you fed people to sharks once a year like we did in the old days.” She remarked quite seriously, which

somehow made the sick torturous practice more amusing than Kayen wanted to admit to himself, or anyone in fact.

“Uh, no. That’s not what I meant. I... oh never mind. We can cover the Discovery Channel later. You should rest.” Kayen managed to squawk out, before dozing off to the soft slow hum of the elevator and something that resembled an instrumental version of Benny and the Jets, droned on as the elevator ascended for a bit longer.

Evelyn thought to herself that a chance at a ‘later’ with Kayen seemed like a special kind of wonderful, which she began contemplating much to her surprise. He was so helpless, chivalrous, awkward, and caring and all of that makes up a wonderful meat bag, which she realized she was falling uncontrollably for. She was Succubae and this was supposed to happen to her target and not to her, but she shrugged and nuzzled into Kayen’s arms unconcerned with protocol.

Kayen awoke startled. Disoriented but keenly aware of where he was, but having no clue how much time had passed. Griv was now standing again and fairly steady, scars almost completely faded away. Evelyn was just beginning to stir with a feline purr that made Kayen shiver with excitement.

“Hey Kayen, it’s nice to see you two so refreshed.” Griv smiled down at him as his tiny friends began to stir.

“Thanks Griv, I am just glad you are able to wake up at all.” Kayen was elated to see his companion up and about. That slight reward made a huge difference in a place as sinister and dark as Hell, forging another link in the bond that had grown between them all.

Evelyn stood up and stretched, as her perfect body seemed to snake around the entire room, squeezing the sensuality from every corner and then digesting it into the perfection and elegance that were her trademarks. Smiling, she strutted like a highborn princess in front of a gallery full of potential suitors. This was no more deliberate than a hiccup was to anyone else, nothing really but an evolved involuntary reflex. It was who and what Evelyn was and Kayen knew he was feeling something foreign to him. Sure, Kayen had felt attraction, but this was a weight pressing on his internal organs, a burden only lessened by Evelyn’s proximity.

“Hey guys, how are my boys feeling?” Evelyn asked as she settled into a comfortable position, leaning into Kayen. The contact was electrifying to him as her breast brushed his ribs and all he could do was hold onto that feeling as long as he could.

“Good!” both Griv and Kayen answered in off timed unison as Kayen was a little behind still lingering in aching thought.

“How can you two be so kind in this place? I guess what I mean to say is that the two of you seem so different from the others we’ve encountered. I am curious to know why?” Kayen had thought this from the beginning, but he was unsure whether to mention the subject being as he was the damsel in distress (*figuratively of course, though less so that I would like*) in this bizarre fairy tale. Saving them from Cerberus gave him enough confidence that he no longer felt he was simply a branch swept away by a raging river, but a log that could potentially become a dam if it managed to place just right.

“Looks like it’s time to tell him the truth, Griv.” Evelyn said cryptically causing Kayen a moment of doubt.

“Guess so my dear, but it seems to be a damned shame. I mean after all he is still kinda scrawny and stringy. Can’t we fatten him up a little more before we ring the chow bell?” Griv licked his sizable lips menacingly.

“No, I think we should just end this here and now, before he gets even more nosey.” Evelyn nuzzled hungrily towards his neck teeth pressed against his throat. Kayen’s heart was racing even while knowing they were joking. The frightening serious tone was lost as Evelyn broke out laughing, promptly followed by Griv’s deep-throated chuckle.

“I’m sorry little one, but you should have seen the look on your face at first.” Griv said while Evelyn was still trying to catch her breath

and stifle the hysterics. Noticing the color returning to Kayen's face he began to explain, "There just ain't no big hidden agenda or conspiracy here if that's what you're frettin' 'bout. See some of us belong here, but most of us are just punishin' ourselves. In truth, we all still have a moral compass fer justice and cruelty, but we still need to feed off the emotions and acts of man that violate those same boundaries.

Feedin' off those who are reluctant to stray from righteous paths are the ones that feel the most fillin'. The darker the berry the sweeter the juice is kinda similar. The darker the desire or sin, the stronger we get from feeding. Those of us who can shut down our emotions and morality typically do so and those that can't, often waste away in despair. Fer those demons that can flip the switch, they enjoy it and thrive. Others are damned souls refusing to forgive themselves or to feed off their own sin or emotions and the third is where Evelyn and I fit in. We're demons, because we do feed, selfishly, but we try to feed while sticking to our moral code as best as possible. We punish ourselves when we go outside of that or lose control, but for the most part feeding off the evil works for us.

I'm a Rage Demon, so I feed off the dark anger and emotion that corrupts a man's soul. Killin', acts of vengeance and the like. Now some in my line of work, prefer to be in a room with one person who is weak willed, and talk to them nonstop 'bout letting it all out. Until eventually, that mild mannered person with no thoughts of malice,

loses a wheel and drives his carriage off a cliff, murderin' and takin' his hatred out on loved ones.

As for me, no, I just head to a battlefield or rough bar and relax and soaking up the wrath like a sponge. I don't need to do nothin' to consume my tribute. I can just feed off the anger and rage that's already runnin' about without any coaxin' at all. It's hard to stomach the joy and rush that happens when we feed and so I disconnect some. Afterwards, I still feel horrible and remorseful for not doin' nothin' to prevent it and even more so fer benefittin' from it, but in the moments leadin' up to it and durin' I feel justified. That the same for you Evy?" Griv turned towards Evy without making eye contact with Kayen, still uncomfortable confronting the reality of what he was and did to survive.

"Pretty much. Most lust demons like to drive men to infidelity or promiscuity and destroy families, marriages and then bathe in the emotional mess left behind. I like honeymooners and teenagers personally. They taste fantastic and making a teenager aroused is really unnecessary, so we both get what we want." She looked down at her hands contemplatively. "I've fed off the darkest part of lust before and it's like Griv says. It feels so good that you don't think about where it comes from or your part in it, but then you come back to yourself and all of a sudden, your soul feels sick, ashamed and contaminated. You know you deserve to be here after an experience like that." It was

condemnation in her trembling voice that made Kayen wrapped his arm over her shoulder in consolation.

Evelyn glanced into Kayen's eyes pleading with a desperate need, her soul whispering to gain his acceptance. No one had ever desired his opinion before and he looked back at her with a compassionate smile. Griv simply nodded choking back emotions he obviously did not like to admit to, but still seemed happy to see that Kayen wasn't recoiling from their revelation.

"Griv, are you crying?" Evelyn shot a look towards the giant. "You are. Oh I can't wait to tell the girls in the steno pool about this one." Kayen became lost in the comedy. It was nice to have a change of topic. Griv broke a smile as Evelyn broke into a genuinely musical laugh. As Kayen joined in followed by Griv, for one instant in the chaotic universe that had become their reality, they were all happy and grateful for one another's company, friendship and acceptance.

"Where's this elevator taking us now?" Kayen voiced wearily as the jocularly subsided. Griv bunched up his shoulders in a sign that suggested he had never been up here before and then looked towards Evelyn.

"Accounting." She paused contemplative, "Accounting is on the next floor. It should be lax for the most part. These people are so busy; they will barely even notice us up there. They all spend too much time

crunching the number.” Kayen thought the choice of a singular was odd in Evelyn’s explanation.

“Don’t you mean ‘crunching numbers’? You know plural?” Kayen interjected, while his mind was still a little foggy.

“No, she meant ‘THE’ number.” Griv chimed in as Kayen feared it would turn into the whole devil predicament all over again. “See that was a joke that Ol’ Lucifer thought would be hilarious, but it turned out to be a huge success and everyone adopted it so quickly that the only thing left was to use it as a punishment for the Brainiac which thought they were just too damned big for their britches.” This clarified nothing as far as Kayen was concerned and falling behind in the conversation was something he was dreading so he nodded.

“But then what is ‘the number’?” Kayen volleyed back to Griv, who took another swing at it.

“Pi. You know that whole, insane incalculable constant number thing. Dang boy, what am I, your tour guide to the black abyss? While his Lord of Darkness were setting up for this new form of life that turned out to be us hairless apes and was sure to become the current world of man, he created science and mathematics as a means to avoid theology and mask his presence further. The problem with this is that humankind has a propensity for logic that no other life forms at the time had come into except sloths; those shifty bastards think everything through.

Anyways, they took this very convoluted series of subsequent events and turned it into a mystical basis for the explanation of all things. So, you see, the Devil decided to give them a challenge they couldn't possibly overcome, but would force them to try, trapping them in a puzzle box they had no hope of solving. He created Pi.”

Huh, so math was the Devil's creation. Somehow, this made an evil kind of sense to Kayen.

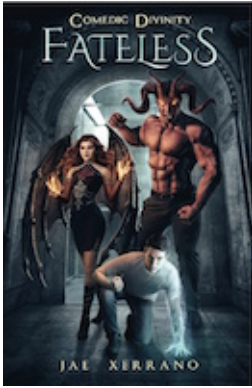
“So now, when Satan wants to punish the analytical or greedy he promises them an unimaginable reward, usually consisting of exactly what they desire most in the universe and all they have to do is solve Pi. Its simplicity is admirable, but people in accountin’ are a little out there. Since these stiff have all of eternity they usually think this will be a breeze to get out of this miserable place, but like everything else around ‘ere, they are quick to discover the price of that ill thought out assumption.” Griv finally ceased his lecture.

“I wish they would acknowledge me more often, I hardly get any attentions when I come up here. It’s so draining.” Kayen felt Evelyn was meaning that literally, as if not being the focus of attention sapped her life force away. *On the other hand, maybe I should call it death force or afterlife force... Oh, never mind?* Kayen was unsure, yet confident that Evy was in control of a powerful force of some kind. The Lust Demon looked pouty already, as if anticipation of the disappointment were already having ill effects.

“Come on, perk up, you can always torture Kayen with your wiles if ya need a quick hit to get by. He’s all sorts of droolin’ fer ya anyway.” Griv heckled to Kayen’s obvious irritation and Evelyn’s delight at the flushed face of her as of yet, unconquered paramour.

“I am not, I mean not that you aren’t attractive, but I just, well you know, it’s this whole circumstance, and the fact that, I uh, well, you see it’s just that...” And then he turned a shade of red that was reserved to bird plumage for attracting a mate and fell silent.

“I’ll be, thanks Griv, I feel tons better already.” Evelyn smiled as she brushed her hand against Kayen’s savoring the taste of his aloof and poorly concealed desires. The contact drained all thought from his mind except satisfaction and completeness.



Kayen Smith is Fateless.

Invisible and ignored by the universe, unable to affect anything of significance, it's not just the melodrama of teen angst – the forces of destiny truly have no clue what to do with him! But a persuasive argument from a Duke of Hell offers him the change that he so desperately wants.

In a journey that takes him through Heaven and Hell, and the worlds between, will he accept control over his own life, or finally get the fickle harlot a chance to do the dirty work for him?

From obscurity to front and center, this young man without purpose or hope is given the spotlight he so craves, but at a terrible cost. Now can the Fateless One, a Succubus, a Rage Demon, Michael Jackson, Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack change events set in motion, resulting in a deal with a devil?

Comedic Divinity: Fateless

Order the complete book from

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/8892.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**