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Sadarus

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Chapter One

The wind howled against the worn-down boards of the little shack as it carried the whispers of voices silenced long ago; voices Jabez longed to hear, but they also haunted him. His grey eyes stared at the wall as he tried to block out the voices that seem to sing to him from everywhere, getting louder and louder with every attempt he made to shut them out.

“Read me a story before you go?” Two little hands held up a small book as blue eyes seemed to sparkle with hope.

“Daddy has work to do, Mama will read to you tonight.” Ah, yes. Work. Because the young lord couldn't tie his shoelaces without consulting God's chosen one.

“But I don't want Mama to read to me; I want you to read to me.” Her soft curls bounced as she gave a stamp of her foot. Stubborn, just like her father.

“Daddy needs to go now, give him your kisses and get to bed,” A beautiful woman with the same golden locks as the girl said with one finger pointed toward the child's bedroom door and the other over her swollen belly.

Jabez brought a bottle to his lips, but the bottle was as dry as the dirt caked on his skin. In frustration he threw the bottle against the wall and watched the pieces fall to the ground. Shattered. Beyond repair.

An angry September gale stormed into the room, almost knocking the door off of its hinges. The gust of wind whirled about the room, sending papers flying and tossing about Jabez's matted hair. He ignored the wind raging and opened another bottle. Refusing to be ignored, the wind stomped out the fire and bite at Jabez's skin.

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The smoke from the ashes rose up from the fireplace and came toward Jabez. He held his breath as he tried to stop the images from coming back. Even as he refused to let air in his nostrils the scent of the lingering smoke made its way into his nose. Mixed with the scent of charred wood was something else. It wasn't there and he knew it, but he could still smell it. The memories won the war with his mind and Jabez slid down deeper in his chair. He rubbed his forehead, smearing the dirt around as he massaged his aching head. Why couldn't the images just leave him be?

"I hate to tell you this, my friend, but this doesn't appear to be an accident," the sheriff said as he carefully stepped over the rubble on his way toward Jabez. "Do you have any clue who would want to do this?" Jabez never answered the sheriff. He was lost in a trance with his feet cemented in place as he faced the one thing he was told not to look at. In the corner of the burnt down house there lay two bodies that barely looked human. The blackened skin and the scent of burnt flesh captivated Jabez in that moment and never left him.

It was the sight of a bright blue butterfly that drew his eyes away from his loss. The same kind his daughter liked to chase around in the summer sun. It landed on his nose and blocked his view of his family. He had tried to shoo it away, but it refused to leave him until he looked away. He had then watched the butterfly dance away as the wind sang with the imaginary sound of his daughter's laughter, such a wonderful sound that would never again grace his ears.

"That is it!" Jabez sprung to his feet, only to have the earth bring him back down. He used the arm of his chair to rise to his feet once again, but only stayed upright for a few steps. He clenched his fists in frustration as he continued to stumble away to the barn. He took a break at the door as his eyes scoured the barn for what he needed. Carelessly placed

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atop the door to the horse's stall was a rope. He swayed back and forth, like a new sailor on his first voyage, as he made his way to the rope.

"Run free old friend." Jabez took the rope and unlatched the gate to the to the horse's stall. The stupid beast happily followed him to the door of the little shack where it waited outside for his master to return and ride him, something Jabez only did when he was out of vodka. Jabez staggered over to the table, tripping over the six recently emptied bottles on his way.

Climbing onto the table was no easy task, but it seemed like breathing compared to tying the rope with legs that swayed and fingers that refused to obey, but Jabez still managed to get a tight knot on the crossbeam and a noose at the bottom of the rope. He put the noose around his neck, lifted one foot off of the table, and leaned forward. He knew that this would solve nothing, but it defied the monster that took everything from him. He wasn't letting God chose his end. God ended some lives too soon while others went on too long. Jabez's end was already well over due.

He expected there to be pain as he lungs screamed at him for air and his life slowly drained out of him, but none of these sensations came to him. He just simply hung there as the rope slowly twisted, turning him to face difference sections of the shack.

Frustrated, he failed around on the rope hoping to choke himself at least a little, but he only managed to look ridiculous. But all became clear when he twisted back around to face the front door.

Standing in the door way was what looked to be a woman with golden curls that cascaded down to her waist. Most would mistake her for a young woman of about twenty,

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but the night gave her true identity away. Her skin glowed ever so slightly, illuminating the otherwise dark corner of the room. This creature was in no way human.

“What do you want demon?” Jabez said with narrowed eyes.

“Don’t play dumb prophet.” The monster said as she walked over to the table and reached into the bowl of apples on the table. Making herself more at home than most messengers did. “You know I serve a higher master than a demon.”

“Makes no difference to me.” Jabez said as he slowly turned away from her on the rope. “Now leave here! I no longer server your master!”

The beast walked over and sat down in Jabez’s chair. After making herself comfortable, she took a bite of the apple. Her blue eyes rolled as a blissful smile crossed her lips. So they do eat. Jabez had always wondered about that. Watching the creature happily munch on the apple made his heart ache.

‘Of course he would send someone that looked like Sarah. Do you think that will make me do what you want? Is that why you take this form?’ Jabez thought as he watched the creature out of the corner of his eyes. The other messengers could read his thoughts. This one either ignored him or was weaker than her predecessors.

“It’s time to get back to work.” She said with a mouth full of apple. “You’ve ran from it long enough.”

“Never!” Jabez insisted stubbornly. “Your master took everything I loved from this world.” Jabez said as the rope twisted him around so that he could no longer see the glowing girl.

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“My master took nothing from you.” She said starring off into dark fireplace. “But I know who did. If you complete this last task for my master you will not only know who killed your family, but you will have vengeance.”

“I don’t care about vengeance any more.”

“What do you want?” The girl said as she snapped her fingers, making the fire once again roar back to life. It exploded more than she had planned for she and she gave a small, frightened shriek in response. Jabez twisted away from the girl and when the rope twisted him around once more, he saw patting down a burnt spot on the carpet. This one appeared to know little of the power she possessed.

“I just want to join my wife and daughter in heaven.”

“I’ll walk you into the kingdom myself.”

She snapped her fingers and the rope disappeared from around Jabez’s neck and reappeared neatly coiled up on the table. Jabez, on the other hand, wasn’t treated with the same care. He was allowed to free-fall to the ground.

“Welcome back to the Lord’s side prophet.” The woman was now standing above him.

Jabez laid his head on the ground, head spinning. The last thing he saw before receiving his last and final vision was the glowing feet of the angel that watched over him.