

The Garage

by Joe Zito,

Published: 2014

*** **

Table of Contents

News Reports



Part 1 ...	Amy's Pain (The Dark World)
Part 2 ...	The Haunted Man.
Part 3 ...	The Interview (Pre-Blood)
Part 4 ...	Angel Bloody Angel
Part 5 ...	The Bludenhale Massacre of 1974
Part 6 ...	A grisly Discovery (the lasting glitch)
Part 7 ...	A Foretelling of Blood
Part 8 ...	Nightmares come true

Part 9 ... The bloody End



Acknowledgements



The walls of the garage dripped with warm, dark red blood. It had become a virtual blood swamp that was suffocating. Hot and sticky, early morning June air rushed in from the hole in the roof. The stench of gasoline, blood, and oil filled the air. The odor was vile. Steam ascended from Ron's eviscerated corpse and Angel stood stiff as a board up against the wall with her eyes still shut tight, too scared to move. Trembling and crying and thinking.

And she screamed, "I bathed in her blood!"

Special News Report from Channel 13

**A Document of Blood
„The Bludenhale Massacre of 1974“
20 years later**

June, 1994: *“Hello, this is Bob Roberts from channel 13 news, and today June 17th, marks the twentieth anniversary of one of the most disturbing and violent crimes to happen in this rural and sleepy town of Bludenhale, Indiana. Of course I am speaking of the Bludenhale Massacre of 1974, where three young people were brutally murdered inside this deserted garage behind me. At the center of these unspeakable murders is the accused Angel Larson, otherwise known as the beast of Bludenhale, a title given to her by the people of Bludenhale for the murder of her boyfriend Ron Alders, Steve Cooper a friend of Ron's, and most notably Heather Smith, Angels best friend. Unaccustomed to such violence, the sleepy town of Bludenhale which sits comfortably in south central Indiana, has had its share of the usual petty crime throughout the years, but never has the community been subjected to the violence and quite frankly the absolute horrendous bloodshed that took place in this garage twenty years ago. Days after the event, the streets became bare, neighborhoods were eerily quiet, and no one dared stepped foot outside. The name Angel Larson has become something of a legend and a curse in this town and some feel that to speak her name is like unleashing a bad omen. Now, twenty years later, the community that was frozen with fear is still trying to*

come to terms with the gruesome findings that day. And still, so many questions remain unanswered, questions that are still burning in the minds of the people of Bludenhale; everything from the murder weapon in question, to why Angel Larson received only a life sentence in the Indiana State Mental Hospital rather than prison or even the death sentence. These questions have haunted the town of Bludenhale for the past twenty years let alone the sickening amount of blood that was found in the garage, which to some is downright chilling and beyond comprehension. Weeks after the murder a series of interviews of those involved with the case were recorded for document purposes. For the past two decades this video footage has been locked in the basement of the Bludenhale courthouse, and today is the first time it is being shown to the public. We would now like to take you back to 1974 for a look at these historical interviews documenting The Bludenhale Massacre of 1974. We must warn you though that the footage you are about to see is very graphic and might be disturbing to some. Viewer discretion is advised.

June, 1974—Stock footage of various interviews:

The footage begins to play. The film looks grainy with a greyish, sepia tone. It shows the many cornfields and rural areas of Bludenhale, IN. Then a countdown of numbers shows on the screen: 5 4 3 2. The sound of an old video projector is heard as black and white still photographs of the crime scene show on the screen. A man's voice is heard saying "exterior". A photo of the garage is shown. It is a very small white concrete building with large sections of chipped paint on the surface. It looks to have been built sometime in the 1950's in a cornfield, as there were cornstalks all around the building. It is very secluded. Next is an old road sign called Devils Bluff Road. This section of gravel road crosses 750 West and is a hotspot for drag racing among fearless teenagers because of its long stretch. It is also where a narrow dirt road on the right leads to the garage, a good fifteen feet into the cornfield. The man now says "interior". Various photos are shown: A side view of a black 70 Chevelle, large amounts of blood on the floor and walls, scratch marks on the floor as well as bits of broken pink fingernails, a metal stool sitting in a medium size pool of blood that seemed to be separated from the larger amounts of blood on the floor, a blood splattered old jukebox. The word "bodies" is said next and the corpses of the victims are shown. The names of the victims are revealed on each photo still. The last photo is a picture of a small hatchet, no larger than an ordinary household butcher knife. The man's voice now says "interviews". The following interviews were done in the Bludenhale courthouse basement in July, 1974. The footage is in black and white.

Interview 1: Detective Monroe

Interviewer: *Detective Monroe, when you were called onto the scene that morning of June 17th what were your findings at the garage?*

Detective Monroe: *Well first of all, I've never seen anything like this in my career working as a detective. The carnage my team and I discovered that morning was beyond comprehension. I've never seen so much blood in my entire life. Before working as a detective for the Bludenhale Police Dept., I worked in the city and I've seen plenty of suicides, car wrecks, you name it. But this was unreal. It was really quite chilling.*

Interviewer: *What evidence did you find that made Angel Larson a prime suspect?*

Detective Monroe: *Initially the bloody hatchet we found had Angel's hand and fingerprints all over it. This is what we needed. But even more so, there were fingernail scratches going halfway down the floor of the garage and pieces of broken pink fingernail we found. This along with a small cut on Ms. Larson's inner thigh suggests some kind of struggle. Still, there are some things that just don't make sense. Things we're still trying to piece together.*

Interviewer: *Can you elaborate?*

Detective Monroe: *For starters there is the issue of blood; who's blood and how much. The samples taken from the walls, which were blood-soaked when we arrived on the scene, came back as being Heather Smiths. But what we don't understand is we found a metal stool with a medium size pool of blood under it. There was also blood all over the seat and legs; this was Angel's blood. Then there is the murder weapon. The idea that a small, homemade looking hatchet could cause such violent bodily damage seems impossible. The manner in which the victims died doesn't correlate with that weapon in my opinion.*

Interviewer: *Can you tell me about the victims and their deaths?*

Detective Monroe is reluctant to answer. There is a long uncomfortable pause.

Detective Monroe: *Oh, Jerry. (He shakes his head in disbelief) Like I said, I've never seen anything—*

He stops in mid-sentence contemplating if he should go on or not. He breathes in slowly and then exhales. He begins to speak, his voice is shaky.

Detective Monroe: *This is very difficult to talk about and I don't think I'll ever understand how Angel Larson did what she did. And I will never get that image of Heather Smith's body out of my mind, if that's what you want to call it, just lying there all- He doesn't finish his sentence. As we were gathering evidence we noticed a bloody handprint on Heathers left cheek. It was Angel's blood. This was an act of a truly sick individual; I mean we found a lock of Heathers hair inside Angels pocket for god's sakes!*

Interviewer: *When you took Angel in for questioning what was her story?*

Detective Monroe's partner enters the room; interview ends.

Interview 2: Dr. Stone

Interviewer: *Dr. Stone, what was Ms. Larson's mental state when she first arrived at the Indiana State Mental Hospital for an evaluation, days after the murder?*

Dr. Stone: *At first she was very quiet and timid like, didn't say a word. We tested her for drugs and alcohol and surprisingly her results came back negative. She was clean as a whistle. What I found interesting about Ms. Larson is that most narcissistic sociopaths tend to show no guilt or any emotion about the crimes they have committed. She was very emotional; cried most of the time, mostly about her friend Heather. But what is truly horrifying is the story in her mind of what she believes happened in the garage. Over and over again she kept talking about—*

The camera becomes shaky, inaudible, interview ends.

Interview 3: Sheriff Red Brown

Interviewer: *Sheriff Brown, you were the first person of the law to come in contact with Angel Larson, and then ultimately the first to bear witness to the carnage at the garage. Tell me what you saw.*

Sheriff Brown: *Thank you Jerry; yes I was the first one on the scene. I was on patrol that morning when I got the call that a young woman was found lying on the side of the road, Devils Bluff Rd. to be exact. I couldn't comprehend it. It didn't seem real at first; the idea of a woman lying near dead on the side of the road.*

Interviewer: *What was her condition, was she conscious?*

Red let out a nervous sigh before speaking and began to rub his forehead.

Sheriff Brown: *When I stepped out of my car and began walking towards her I stopped dead in my tracks at the sight of her.*

His voice begins to crack slightly as he continues massaging his forehead, but he stops suddenly.

Sheriff Brown: *She was completely covered in blood from head to toe. That's when I motioned to old man Davis, the one who found her, to stay at his truck and don't move. I didn't know if she was alive or dead, she was just lying there on her side. When I reached her, I knelt down to check her status and by God she was alive because both her eyes were wide open just staring at nothing. Then she started making a little sound, almost like a light cry, like a child would do when they're scared. I asked her if she was ok and what had happened to her, but she didn't respond. Next thing I know are eyes meet and this girl jumped plum almost ten feet off the ground like she had seen a ghost or something. She was screaming like a mad woman. And then she starts—*

He pauses for a moment trying to collect his thoughts.

Sheriff Brown: *She starts screaming at the top of her lungs, "I bathed in her blood" over and over again. She was beyond hysterical. I ran and got a blanket from my trunk and tried to comfort her, you know, just calm her down. I asked her how she got that blood all over her, again she didn't respond. Finally she settled down and she seemed almost catatonic like, just staring off into space. I tried again asking her about the blood and where she had been. No response. I then called for backup and when they showed up me and Officer Meyer went searching.*

Interviewer: *And that's when you came upon the garage?*

Red is silent for a moment. He looks down at the table.

Sheriff Brown: *A good man Officer Meyer was, young man of twenty five I believe, had a couple of kids, a wife. I suppose what he saw that day was more than what he could handle. I guess he wasn't prepared for something like that; then again none of us were I suppose. Let me tell you something Jerry, I started out as a young deputy just like Officer Meyer and I've seen a lot of things in my time, but this—*

He holds his head down into the palms of his hands and begins to sob.

Sheriff Brown: *Anything that would make a young man with a family take his own life has to be the work of the devil. Dammit!*

Red slams his fists down hard onto the table.

Interviewer: *I know this is difficult Red, but I need to ask. What did you see in the garage? And more importantly, what did Angel Larson tell you about the garage?*

He is still sobbing quietly to himself.

Sheriff Brown: *When Ms. Larson finally calmed down, she began to explain what happened. She was crying half the time and it took a while to finally get through it. After hearing her story she asked me if I believed her. I don't know what scared me more Jerry, her statement of what happened or that sincerity in her voice when she spoke. It was one of the most honest sounding voices I've ever heard. I will tell you one thing, the devil is here on this earth as we speak and its name is Angel Larson, this I do believe. And that's all I have to say about that.*

The footage now shows a courtroom. Angel is sitting at a large brown table with her lawyer. The room is bustling with noisy chatter until the judge takes command by giving his gavel four hard whacks on a round wooden coaster. This quiets the room quickly. Angel has her head down, her long black hair looks stringy and unkept. A sad and pitiful frown shows on her face implying grief more than guilt.

The prosecuting lawyer states his case.

"Ladies and gentleman of the jury don't let Ms. Larson's tears and frowns fool you. What you see in front of you is beyond evil." Angel begins crying. *"I assure you that Ms. Larson's cries are only out of the fearful realization of her sick actions and the knowing of her impending doom."*

The footage switches to the judge asking the jury *"Have we reached a verdict?"* A man with a thick southern Indiana drawl speaks to the judge. *"Yes we have your honor. We the jury find Angelica Mary Larson guilty on three counts of murder."*

The courtroom erupts with a quick and loud cheer which the judge soon brings to order. Angel collapses on the table with her hands over her mouth trying to control her grief of which she is unsuccessful.

The judge speaks—*"Sentencing will be set for next Friday on the 15th."*

The black and white footage continues when it shows Angels defense lawyer standing in front of a podium in front of the courthouse. A large crowd gathers in anticipation of the sentencing.

Her lawyer begins to speak into the microphone on the podium.

"I believe we're ready to begin. If I can have everyone's attention please, thank you." The crowd settles to an eerie silence. *"After a very sleepless week I am here this morning and very pleased to tell you that the devil shall walk no more in Bludenhale."* A happy roar comes from the crowd. A man standing in the back yells out *"Burn that bitch" Ms. Larson has been sentenced to life at the Indiana State Mental Hospital effective today.* Instant rage and disbelief erupts from the crowd. *"WHAT!" "You call this justice!" "She should FUCKING FRY!" "Are you insane? She's a goddam murderer!" "This is disgusting and is insulting to those three kids that died!"* The yelling and spitting crowd begins to throw things at the lawyer behind the podium as well as push their way forward. The scene is that of mayhem and rage at the despicable sentencing of Angel. The camera becomes shaky and loses connection.

Bob Roberts returns to the screen. He is standing outside of the Indiana State Mental Hospital where Angel Larson has spent the last twenty years.

"Now, twenty years later, we're seeing a similar outrage just outside the Indiana State Mental Hospital where we have sent a camera crew to capture the people of Bludenhale protesting their two decade old hostility towards Angel Larson."

A crowd of fifty people or more are standing outside of the Indiana State Mental Hospital holding signs that read *Angel Larson go to hell* and the like. A news reporter holding a microphone gets some insight from the crowd.

"Sir would you like to say something". A man holding a sign says, *"Angel Larson is a sick and demented woman that deserves to die for what she did. The judicial system failed the people of Bludenhale. She should have been burned a long time ago."*

A variety of verbal hatred spews from the crowd.

"Heather was sleeping with Angel's boyfriend Ron at the time, that's why she murdered her."

"Angel hated her boyfriend's car. She thought he gave more attention to his chevelle than her so she slaughtered him for it. What kind of fucked up shit is that."

"She's also a druggie and a whore"

"I heard she slept with three men in one night. The cunt probably had sex with her lawyer just to keep from going to jail"

"Angel was jealous of Heather and she killed her for it, plain and simple."

A stoned out punk in the crowd has something to say as well.

"You have to admit man that Angel Larson is pretty fucking hot." The crowd begins to spit and hit the stoner. He barely makes it out of the angry mob. His voice trails off, *"And that was a badass shirt she was wearing to, even with the blood on it."*

We see Bob return to the screen. He is standing in front of the garage. *"As you can see there is a lot of hostility amongst that crowd and rightfully so. We would like to take you now to an exclusive interview with Heather Smith's parents, Susan and Mark Smith. They were kind enough to sit down with us to*

Speak about their daughter and how the tragedy from twenty years ago has affected their family.

Reporter Bob Roberts is sitting across from Susan Smith in the living room of the Smith's farmhouse. A picture of Heather is sitting on the mantel of the fireplace. Her smile seems to brighten the room. Susan is holding a green plastic cup filled with long island iced tea. Her partly grey but still mostly blonde hair is pulled back in a ponytail. She's nearing sixty but still looks as beautiful as ever, despite the stresses of the last twenty years. Her husband Mark is sitting next to her but seems to be very nervous about being on camera. Bob motions to the cameraman for the cue to begin and then nervously looks at Susan. She gives him a look as to say 'honey, there ain't nothin' you can ask me that I haven't already grieved over and cried myself to sleep about the past twenty years so let's get this over with'.

Bob Roberts: *I would like to thank you both for granting us this interview. I understand that it was a difficult decision to do this. Mrs. Smith, is it true that your daughter Heather and Angel were best friends?*

Susan: *Yes that's true; hard to believe I know, but they were.*

Bob: *What was their relationship like? Did you ever notice anything strange or odd?*

Susan shifted nervously for a moment in her chair but her eyes never left the reporter. The ice cubes in her cup clicked together.

Susan: *They were inseparable since they were five years old. They use to ride their bikes around in circles for hours in our driveway. When they got older it was the same. Angelica was always at our house; never missed a Sunday dinner with us. And she was like an aunt to Heather's daughter. So to answer your question, no I never noticed anything wrong with their friendship, just two girls that were really more like sisters than anything. And if there ever was something wrong with Angelica she sure did a damn good job of hiding it. Girl couldn't hurt a fly, Susan thought to herself.*

Bob: *I see you have many pictures of your daughter on your fire place mantel. She was very pretty.*

Susan gave a smile that was both proud and heartbroken at the same time.

Susan: *Yes she was.*

Bob: *I understand that Heather had a daughter. Is that right?*

Susan: *Yes she did; Amy. She was two years old when Heather died. We took it upon ourselves to raise her. We wouldn't have it any other way. She's twenty two now and still with us.*

Bob: *Did she ever ask about her Mother when she was growing up?*

Again, Susan shifted nervously in her seat at the reporter's question. The look on Bob's face suggested he may have crossed a line or touched a nerve of some kind. Susan gave him a hard, defensive look. Her husband looked away as if oblivious to the people around him.

Susan: *We've done our best to raise our granddaughter in a way that would make Heather proud. Amy now is a stable young woman despite what*

she knows of her Mother. We did what we had to do to protect her. Does she know about her Mother? Of course she does.

The interview ends and the screen returns to Bob Roberts standing in front of the white garage.

Bob: So now here we are twenty years later; still with so many unanswered questions of how and why something so heinous and violent could happen in a small, peaceful Indiana town. The citizens of this quiet community will never forget the bloodshed that took place here inside this garage behind me, and the lives that were taken. As Bob gives his commentary pictures of the slain victims appear across the screen. Then, Angel Larson's graduating picture shows on the screen.

Bob: Many are still trying to cope with the tragedy. Some just want to forget the name Angel Larson. But the one thing the people of this town are certain of is they will never be the same.

Part 1

Amy's Pain (The Dark World)

1994

They say Indiana sunsets are one of Earth's best kept secrets with their jaw dropping mix of orange, pink and blue hues blanketing small white farmhouses and miles of cornfields like a warm Midwest quilt. Amy Smith sees no beauty and no colors. The dying sun only indicates the oncoming terrors of the night for the twenty two year old blonde who resembles her mother almost to a tee. "You're so pretty just like your mommy." Amy clenched her eyes tight in distress as her mind strayed down the black path of her childhood. "Oh where I found your mommy was a very scary place, a very scary bloody place." These words rang hauntingly like a witch's bell in her mind as she drove down 750 W. with gravel spitting at her tires, listening to Danzig 4 on the cd player. A flash of heat lighting lit up the early evening summer sky. It looked monstrous and wide through the windshield of her cavalier. She lit a cigarette and skipped through a few tracks on the cd before stopping on I don't mind the pain. A metal flask of Jim Beam sat snug between her legs. As she raised it to her mouth the stench of two hour old sex hit her hard. It had been locked between her thighs with the odor of sex all over it from her black mini skirt ever since she left her grandparents' house thirty minutes ago. She almost vomited at the smell, but like a trooper she downed that fire whiskey. Lately it was becoming harder to fuck at her grandparent's house. Especially with this last twisted sex romp involving the guy she met two months ago, another girl and a razor blade. He'd do the fuckin, her friend would do the cuttin'; Cut and fuck, cut and fuck, at least for thirty minutes straight or until she was drained

and exhausted and couldn't go any longer. There was no way in hell she was going to try to pull that off at her grandparents' house. An old abandoned farmhouse down the road took care of her extreme sex games. Amy's boss Phil didn't like seeing those scars on her arms and back. Said it wasn't good for business. "Men don't want lap dances from a cut up ragdoll. Cool it with that shit blondie", he would say.

Her grandparents were embarrassed by her choice of work as a dancer at the local strip club called Cherrybombs. Their only granddaughter made a living prancing around naked for old men and truckers with scruffy beards. She was twenty two and didn't give a fuck. But even more disturbing was that thing she does on stage; a horrible act that sickens them to their core. They chose to view it though with a blind eye because she was their granddaughter and they loved her. They had taken on the responsibility of raising her after her Mother had died.

As Amy drove along 750 W. the bluish, pink and grey sky became electrified with heat lightning. A low and booming thunder growled in the distance. Her hand hung loosely out the window. A draft of warm air sifted through her fingers. She came to a four way stop. Her car sat motionless. The sweet scent of an oncoming summer rain eased its way inside her car. She laid her head back on the head rest and let out a tired sigh. As she did, a plume of smoke exited from her mouth, filling the entire front seat. Another distant rumble of thunder echoed through the wind. Cornstalks swayed lightly back and forth from the surrounding cornfields all around her. *"You ever have a best friend Amy? Your mommy's best friend sucked the blood right out of your beautiful mommy."* This witch's bell thought scoured through her mind like a steel rod plunging through the darkest nightmares of her mind. The memory made her flinch. She shut her eyes tight. Then, the memory of sex and razor blades ripped through her mind as she sat in her car alone thinking and feeling guilty of what took place at the abandoned farmhouse down the road just two hours ago. She could feel the cold, metal razor blade slicing down the back of her thigh. She stared deep into the rear view mirror and in her mind's eye she saw tears of blood falling from her eyes. They dripped down her face and into a mess of body sweat and vaginal secretions. She felt the grip of guilt and the slap of a warm tongue on her back thigh from the green haired girl she was with. The girl with the green hair and a lip piercing licked the blood from Amy's back thigh. And then Amy's daydreams of sex and torture came to an end when her cigarette smoke cleared away and only her blue eyes were left staring into the rear view mirror. They burned with anger and ten years of hate. "You filthy pig cunt!"

She spit into the mirror with disgust at herself. She screamed and banged her fists on the steering wheel in a neurotic fit as she sat alone in her car at the crossroads; the distant thunder rumbling madly in the sky. The zippers on her black leather jacket jingled with each hostile hit.

The storm inside the cavalier slowly simmered to quiet, moaning sobs as the real storm outside began to produce warm droplets of rain. She looked up at her windshield from the sound of heavy drops hitting the glass. Her face was a sloppy mess of tears and black mascara. For a moment she believed that it was blood raining from the sky.

Just then a large shadow caught her eye from the cornfield across the dirt road in front of her. But it had disappeared just as quickly as she saw it. She felt

frightened, but her fear turned to cold terror when her blue eyes zeroed in on the slanted green road sign in front of her. It read: Devils Bluff. She gasped in horror at the sign. She felt breathless. The wheels of her cavalier began to move slowly forward. She hunched over the steering wheel with watchful, scared eyes. She just wanted to continue on 750 W. and get to work, but she felt the urge to turn left down Devils Bluff. It was as if the corn was reading her thoughts' wanting her to drive into its bloody path. She turned left on Devils Bluff as if in a trance. About fifteen feet down was a wide gap in the cornfield on the right. It was at least ten feet wide and large enough for a car to drive through. It was the start of a dirt path; a path leading to hell. Amy's bottom lip trembled as she slowly drove up next to the opening in the corn.

The eerie dirt path seemed to go on forever in Amy's eyes. It looked infinite and endless. And really what she was seeing in her mind wasn't rows of corn on each side of her car but two demon faces. They were demon puppets with long stalks of green corn connected to their hideous faces making their eyes and mouth move. And the bloody garage hidden deep in the corn at the end of the dirt path was the puppet master. "*C'mon in Amy, the bloodbath awaits you,*" a voice in the distance called out to Amy. Then a female voice screamed, "*I bathed in her blood!*" Amy jumped at the sound of a screaming woman but there was no screaming woman and no demon faces, just two cornfields on both sides of her car. Feeling a sense of panic and urgency she put the car in reverse and slammed the gas pedal to the floor. She backed out onto 750 W. and bolted down the road. The spinning tires formed a cloud of brown dust that seemed to linger in midair as she looked in the rearview mirror.

The raindrops were coming down harder now. She would be at work soon. It was getting dark and the last remaining hues of pink and blue began to sink down into the cornfields on the horizon. "*Fucking cornfields,*" Amy thought, and then laughed nervously. She lit another cigarette. Danzig continued howling 'I don't mind the pain' as it began pouring outside.

Her mind was exhausted from another day buried in the shadows of her dark world where neurotic fits and hallucinations beamed brightly like sharp white teeth in the black of an old attic. "*Same old same old,*" she thought. She would be at work in less than ten minutes. It had already rained in Bludenhale.

* * * * *

The parking lot of Cherrybomb's show club glistened from the warm rain, making it sparkle like black sludge in a hell swamp. She pulled in back and parked next to an old dumpster where a drunk lay like a 9mm suicide victim against the rusty stinking metal. She sighed with disgust as she got out of her car and slammed the door shut. She stepped carefully over the drunk and started towards the back door to the club. A voice called out to her in the dark of the parking lot. "Hey Amy", the voice echoed. She stopped suddenly. Her hand gripped the handle of the back door. Her hair flew over her shoulder as she turned around quickly and yelled, "Hello, who the fuck is that?"

"Hey doll face, you coming in early tonight?" A 6'4 and slender framed kid of about 21 or so emerged from the darkness. He was wearing an Eyehategod tee

shirt and had black, stringy and greasy shoulder length hair. A slightly shorter punk of 6'1 accompanied him. Amy rolled her eyes when she saw who it was.

“Jesus Christ Paul, you scared the fuck out of me!”

“It’s ok honey, I ain’t the big bad wolf.” Paul moved in closer to her. He towered above her 5’ frame. She looked up at him. Her big blue eyes were wide and angry. She wasn’t smiling. The look on her face should have given him the hint that he was the last person she wanted to see. It spelled out: *You are a fucking idiot and I hate you, and just because I fucked you and your fuckface boyfriend doesn’t mean shit! You were a lousy lay anyway.*

“So,” Amy said sarcastically as she crossed her arms, “Are you and your girlfriend here to see the show tonight?”

“Whoa, hot shit.” He grinned and held his hands up as if to show he’s weaponless, like a thief would do when surrounded by the cops. “Maybe we did come to see you”, he said glancing over at his buddy, and then returning his glossy eyes to Amy, “Do your thing.” He laughed like a creep and nodded to his buddy who in return nodded back. Paul moved in closer to Amy, seriously invading her space. He pushed himself up on her confining her to the back door. She could feel the vibration of music playing loudly in the club. Blacktop by Helmet. It rattled the door making a flyer for the all-girl Danzig tribute band ‘Devils Plaything’ fall to the ground. Paul stroked Amy’s hair with one hand as the other pushed up against the door. She wanted to knee him in the balls but didn’t want a possible shiner on her eye before she went to work. So she just endured it for the time being.

“So uh, after the show what do you say we revisit old times,” he said lamely with a lame smile.

“I’d rather fuck a burn victim,” Amy said sharply and turned her head away.

“That can be arranged.” Paul said.

“Paul, please just fucking go.”

He lowered his face to her neck and inhaled her in one large breath. A slow build of his creepy laughter erupted from him when he began shaking his finger at her, the way a parent does when they catch their child misbehaving. Then he spoke to her in a light smoky whisper close to her neck. “You’ve been gettin’ dirty girl. I smell filth all over you.” She felt nausea set in at his rank breath. There was an awkward silence then for a moment between them. An eerie and distant flash of lightning spread across the sky; a low boom of thunder followed. The sick glow of an orange street light was shining down on them. Then, not being able to take Paul’s breath and stupidity she unleashed herself like a rabid tiger ready to devour a slab of raw and bloody meat. “You have a fucking babies cock and you fucking suck in bed you nancy fucking fairy cunt!”

His goofy grin collapsed into a mask of anger and embarrassment. He looked down at the ground. He wanted to slam his fist hard into her cunt, but he just got off parole and knew that would land him back in jail again. Instead, he chose a light rebuttal when he raised his head to her.

“Any fresh scars lately, sweetheart?”

Amy looked at him blankly for a moment, not sure if she heard him correctly.

“You are a cutter right? I mean, that’s how you deal with what happened to your Mother all those years ago right?” He took his hand off the door and stepped back

a few inches from Amy. He felt strong like he was putting this little slut in her place. *Dumb fucking whore, go spread your legs and get your pussy stink on some old fuck.* He almost laughed aloud at his thought. “Hey, isn’t today the twenty year anniversary of the Bludenhale Massacre of ’74, you know when that crazy fucked up bitch” he snapped his fingers trying to think of the name but he knew damn well who it was— “What was her name, Oh yeah, Angel Larson. She slaughtered those three people in that garage including your Mother.”

His tone was vicious and deliberate. Amy looked dumbfounded but it all started to register and her facial expression went from blank to red hot psychotic as she slammed a closed fist hard into Paul’s testicles. A harsh and stinging ache spread like a midnight field fire from his groin up to his stomach. He doubled over in pain and lost his breath. He fell to one knee and cupped his hurt junk.

“Y-Y-You fucking bitch, what the fuck!” He wailed.

Her black doc marten boot introduced itself to his testicles this time. A hard kick to his middle part sent him whaling. He turned over on his side and tear drops of pain slithered from the corners of his eyes.

Amy straddled him pinning his arms down to the ground. “We’re not done yet sonny.” She gently caressed his pain winced face with the palm of her hand and then smacked his cheek playfully. His sobs sounded small and pathetic to her. She wanted to hurt him even more by the sound of his cries. Paul’s buddy stood there in shock unable to move.

“Let’s see what we have here babycakes.” She reached behind her and smacked her palm to her ass. Her sharp, glossy nails dug deep into her black skirt. They clawed their way down over her sexy roundness like a tarantula until finally reaching Paul’s zipper. A quick unzipping and the spider had caught its prey; all four and a half inches of it. She snorted out a laugh at the touch of his puny pecker. “I think I was drunk that night when I fucked you, or maybe stoned, hell maybe both.”

Paul’s buddy bolted like a coward, leaving Paul alone in his painful predicament. Amy grabbed his short appendage with authority. Her small female hands began to pull. Paul screamed in pain as his penis began to stretch upward from the base. Curved veins were now erect straight lines looking like blue alien worms. She didn’t make a sound during Paul’s penis torture, only just had a twisted look of pleasure on her face, and sexual excitement.

Paul’s screams of terror rose to a new level when red dots like a rash began to form at the base of his penis. The skin was beginning to rip apart.

“Ahhhh! P-P-Please Amy!” he cried.

“More baby, does it feel good?” She whispered in his ear and tugged harder.

“C’mon, P-Plea-Ahhhh!”

He thrashed from side to side in horrific pain. The music from inside the club suddenly stopped. Amy released her grip and covered Paul’s mouth not wanting anyone to hear his screams. His pulverized penis was throbbing and red as it lay limp on his abdomen.

She leaned in close to him, her face next to his. She began stroking his hair comfortingly, “Shhh, there now, all done sugar.” Her tone was soothing and calm, almost motherly. “Now, I’m going to move my hand and if you make one goddam sound....off it goes, ok.” She smiled and Paul slowly shook his head in agreement.

She sat up and dug her fingernails through his shirt, rubbing his chest hard, rocking back and forth like she was fucking him.

The old drunk man by the dumpster looked at the wild scene in front of him with wide eyes of dismay. He was holding his paper bag whiskey bottle tight, like a child would hold its special lovey or teddy bear when it's scared. Amy blew the old man a kiss as she pseudo fucked Paul. The drunk frantically took a hearty swig of whiskey, drinking it like he's been deprived of its burning liquid glory for far too long.

She un-straddled herself from Paul and stood up right over him. She put her hands on her hips and looked down on him. There was a wet spot on his jeans from where she was sitting. It wasn't piss. She bent over as if to inspect in between her legs. As she did her hair brushed against Paul's face. It smelled like cigarettes and hairspray. He coughed. She rose up and flipped her hair back with her forearm. "Damn, that got me excited Pauly." He just laid there moaning and sobbing. A streetlight turning on caught her attention.

"Fuck, I'm gonna be late," She said looking around the parking lot.

She squatted down in front of Paul's face. He could see the opening of her skirt, revealing her wet panties. The rank of old sex made him want to dry heave. She fell onto him with her thighs around his neck. She grabbed a chunk of his hair.

"Now, if you ever talk about my mother again I will force feed you your tiny little prick, balls and all!" She pushed herself off of him and stood up.

It was getting close to her shift and that haunting thunder continued rumbling in the summer night. She straightened out her skirt and fluffed her hair. Just as she was getting ready to go inside the club she caught sight of the drunken old man by the dumpster. She saw his mouth move in slow motion. "*All skin and bone Amy, all skin and bone.*" Her body temperature turned to ice when she saw the drunk speaking to her. Then a rush of fear washed over her entire body when she saw a bloody demon figure lying by the dumpster instead of the old man. It looked as if its skin had been torn off. All its ligament's and muscles were exposed and bleeding, leaving a pool of black blood around itself. The creature demon thing eerily pointed its finger at Amy. She covered her mouth trying not to scream, even though she knew it was another visit from her dark world; a horrid and frightening place where that witches bell rung loud and long. The hallucinogenic demon's heart pumped black tar out onto its glistening body.

A flash of lightening distracted Amy from her morbid vision. She looked up into the night sky. Stars were beginning to shine through the depth of disintegrating storm clouds. She looked back to the dumpster and saw that the old man had returned. The demon had vanished. She stood there in the dark, frightened with only the sound of her heavy breathing. She turned the handle on the back door and found her way inside the safety of the club.

* * * * *

After experiencing two events going far beyond a ten on the scale of fucked up shit, she stood silently with her back to the door trying to compose herself. Her heart was beating furiously. She began to calm down once she realized she was in a safe place or at least it felt safe to her. Cherrybombs was her second home. It was her domain and she was the queen. Sick fucks from all around, both male

and female came to see her do “her thing” every Friday night. And tonight was no exception. The fact that it was the twentieth anniversary of the Bludenhale Massacre made it even more exciting for some people, knowing that their eyes were going to witness the pain and suffering of a young girl (whose Mother was brutally murdered and then mauled beyond comprehension), on the verge of a possible mental breakdown. *Let’s watch the girl who keeps to herself and is so quiet and who is so pretty just like her mommy, perform her bloody tribute to her dead Mother.*

Phil, her boss, projected this to be the biggest night of the year. He would prove to be right by the incoming crowd of people already filling in through the front entrance. These bastards wanted to see Amy do “her thing”. As she stood with her back to the door she gazed down the long hallway in front of her. To the left were the dressing rooms. And on the right were the restrooms. From where she was standing she could see the bar area and just the very tip of the stage on the left. The dimly lit bar sparkled with a mix of clear and gold glass. It complimented the rich dark walnut bar where men sat sipping on pabst blue ribbon and whiskey doubles.

Now calmer, she began to smile. It was the kind of smile that says you are the happiest and luckiest person to be alive. She rested her head on the back door with that carefree smile and began to laugh to herself. “Oh dear Mother, the Mother I never knew; was it you that gave me this gift; this gift of blood and nightmares.” Her eyes peered down the narrow hallway towards the bar. They honed in on the ceiling fan spinning slowly above the bar. In Amy’s eyes, the wooden fans morphed into metal scythes drenched in blood. They made a ‘shwoomping’ sound as they spun around flinging drops of blood across the room in a spray of red gore. Her mind’s eye saw the fan begin to slow down. It made a shwoomp sound with every turn sounding like a bass drum being played backwards on a cassette player at low speed.

Faint female screams echoed in her brain along with the heart like thump of the slo-mo scythe fan spewing blood everywhere. The screams were harsh yet distant, as if coming from across a dirt field in hell from where Amy stood.

Suddenly a soft female voice whispered with serenity in Amy’s ear, “I bathed in her blood.” It startled her out of her dark world trip only to see a normal ceiling fan spinning round and round. No blood, no scythes, no screaming.

“Amy? Hey kid you all right?” She jumped at the sound of a man’s voice coming from the right. He gently put his hand on her shoulder. “Shit, I didn’t mean to scare you. What are you doing back here all by yourself?”

“Hey Jack,” She touched his arm. “I’m fine, I just got here.” She’s was embarrassed by the thought of Jack, the owner of Cherrybombs, seeing her standing alone in the dark staring off into space. Her present persona was a far cry from the twisted female she was minutes ago in the back parking lot. Underneath her hard shell of pain and hate was a fragile and sensitive young woman that was hurting and breaking on the inside.

“What are you doing back here?” she asked.

“Well I was taking a leak.” He laughed motioning with his thumb behind him to the restrooms.

“What? Oh, Jesus.” She rolled her eyes feeling like an idiot, but she laughed anyway. “Sorry, I’m kinda spaced today, you know.”

“Yeah, I know kid.” He gave her the best reassuring smile he could. “You know, your mom was a really good gal, a really sweetheart; hell of a dancer to and crazy about zeppelin.” He looked up to the ceiling with a reminiscing look in his eyes, and also a smile.

“My mom was a dancer? Here at Cherrybombs?” This sparked tremendous interest in Amy.

“Yeah, but you didn’t here that from me. As far as I know her parents never knew, and I don’t think I could break your grandma’s heart, know what I mean. Besides, Heather only danced two maybe three times. She wasn’t a full time dancer, just needed some extra cash I guess, so I helped her out.”

“Kinda like you did with me four years ago,” Amy blushed.

“Yeah,” He held her hand gently for a moment and then let go. “Not only am I the bartender, but it is my joint. And I always know when I see the talent.” This made Amy smile, but only for a moment.

“It’s been a fucking media frenzy these past few days with that goddam camera crew at my grandparents’ house. It’s all so crazy.” She crossed her arms with her eyes to the floor. “I don’t know why grandma agreed to do that damn interview. She’s been through enough these past twenty years. I don’t think she wants to be reminded of how,” her lips press together in anger as tears welled up in her eyes. She looked up at Jack and her tears fell. “I was twelve years old Jack when I found out what happened to my Mother and the way she died.” He looked at her with sorrowful eyes through his glasses. “I guess my grandparents knew sooner or later I would find out.” Jack stayed quiet and just listened. He thought it might be good for Amy to vent a little. “It’s never been the same since that day at Sam’s. It’s all been shit. I just can’t connect with people emotionally. I guess I was afraid to get too close to anyone, or have a best friend like my mom supposedly did. And we all know what her best friend Ang,”—She couldn’t even finish saying Angels name without bursting into tears.

“Look Amy,” Jack said putting his hand on her shoulder, “That fucking lunatic Angel Larson is locked up and she’ll never be able to,”—Amy cut him off, “You know the cops found Angels blood on that bar stool according to that news report they’ve been showing today. I like to think maybe it was my mom fighting back, maybe trying to fight for her life.”

“You never know Amy, she might just have. Hey kid you gonna be ok tonight?” Jack asked with strong concern in his voice. He wondered if it was a bad idea to let Amy work tonight. He didn’t want to open her wounds any more than they were.

“Oh god, I’m sorry about all this blubbering, yeah I’ll be fine.” She said and wiped her eyes feeling foolish. “Hey, don’t you worry about a thing. Anytime you need to talk I’m here for ya kid, you hear me. I better get back out there, and I think it’s almost time for you to do your thing, right?” He smiled at her.

“Ah, yes it is about time. Thanks Jack for being such a great listener, and you know, giving me steady income for the past four years.” She gave him a hug.

“Anytime Amy, you have a good show tonight ok. Knock’em dead kid.”

* * * * *

Jack left her there in the narrow hallway as he walked back to the bar. She cleared her mind and began to focus on the upcoming bloodshed she would be unleashing on the sickos watching her do her thing. She stepped inside the ladies room to pee. The aroma of feminine odor and vomit hit her like a freight train. It almost knocked her off her feet as she gagged. And it didn't help that there was no air conditioning in the back either. A heavy drum groove and thick bass line began to play on house pa. It became muffled when she shut the bathroom stall door as an angry New Yorker yelled, "You snap your fingers, you snap your neck."

Her thumbs hooked under her panties, pulling them over her hips down to her ankles. She squatted down hovering an inch or so above the brown stained (most likely blood or feces) toilet seat. Her yellow stream penetrated the toilet water. "Shew, my piss stinks, fuck!" She scowled and wrinkled her nose at her piss stink thinking it was maybe the cheeseburgers she ate from earlier or possibly the heroin from yesterday. The girl in the next stall over suddenly threw up. A slop of wet chunkiness splashed into the toilet water followed by a long acidic belch. A sick moan followed thereafter and then finally a courteous "sorry".

A large cockroach zipped back and forth at Amy's feet. She squashed the thing with her boot as she peed and listened to vomit sounds. The cockroach's insides squirted out of its shell. The sole of her doc marten buried it deep into the muck on the floor. Some of that muck was hers from the quickie stand up fuck she had earlier in the week. Monday she thought.

It was getting closer to show time. A quick shower and she would be ready to take the audience of sickos deep into her dark world; a world full of blood and nightmares.

* * * * *

Cherrybomb's was not a very big club. The girl's dressing room was no wider than a standard large closet and was about fifteen feet long. They were packed in like sardines as they primped, showered and put on makeup. They called it the outhouse. Luckily for Amy her show didn't start for another hour just around eleven. Most of the girls were already on the floor giving lap dances between sets, boosting some dumb jocks ego, or making last minute plans for that back alley two a.m. drug deal. She had the outhouse to herself for now.

Gimme Danger by Iggy Pop played on the house pa as she let the hot water from her shower rush down her back. For one peaceful moment the evening's earlier events were washed away giving her a much need moment of clarity; free of her dark world. The palms of her hands pushed against the shower wall as a hot stream of water massaged her neck. Nonexistent memories began to flash in her mind. She pictured herself as a child sitting on her bed while her Mother brushed her long blonde hair, telling her stories of unicorns and magical starry nights. She saw her Mother again with a proud smile on her face sitting in the audience at her sixth grade chorus recital. She could hear her laughing on a Sunday evening in the empty parking lot of Hills, teaching her how to drive telling her "Step on it granny." She heard her Mother crying as she held her hand during the final push of child labor.

These nonexistent memories were abruptly shadowed by a dark cloud of despair and confusion. Amy could feel her soul unraveling and falling out of her body into the shower drain as if she was being sucked down by the demons of her dark world. She found herself standing alone in a dark hallway with crooked wooden pictures frames of old farmhouses. She could feel herself hovering over her own body from atop of the ceiling. Then, the blood soaked body of Angel Larson came into her view slowly walking down the dark hallway whistling and swinging a bloody hatchet at her side like an old rich woman taking a stroll in the park. Amy tried to move but she was frozen, feeling as if enclosed by an invisible wall in front and behind her. Angel continued walking down the hallway towards Amy and then she came to a stop just a few feet in front of her. Angel's shadowy shape sent a chill through Amy that made her lose her breath. The hatchet in Angels hand suddenly stopped swinging back and forth. Amy could hear the blood dripping from the blade onto the floor. There was a lengthy pause as neither of them said a word. The eerie silence seemed to last a lifetime to Amy. Angel leaned her head to the left as if admiring a sculpture at a museum. "Hi Amy." Her voice sounded blank and lifeless. "You're so pretty, just like your mommy." Amy's blood turned to ice when she heard these words. She's heard them before, but like a faded and blurry memory doesn't remember when she heard them. She just knows her life has not been the same since these words have been spoken.

The haunting image of Angel Larson standing drenched in blood in front of Amy in the hallway disappeared. Amy now only saw an empty dark hallway and heard the sound of rain and a girl weeping. It was herself crying in the shower feeling overcome with sadness over the morbid hallucination. The fact that she never knew her Mother made her feel as if she was in an inescapable vortex of pain and negative thoughts. This anguish turned into self-mutilation and nightmarish hallucinations. This was Amy's norm. Forget the idea of love and relationships. Fuck Friday night dates with a steady boyfriend with a good job and nice haircut. *Fuck all that bullshit* she thought. Amy was in her own hell that she created so many years ago. Although, the man who discovered her Mother's mutilated body did have a hand in developing her downtrodden mindset. *All skin and bone*. She rested her forehead on the shower wall and cried the last of her pain out. She turned off the water and got out.

* * * * *

An anxious crowd waited as she toweled herself dry in the dressing room. She could hear the low and constant chatter of people talking and laughing through the walls and the clicking of tall beer glasses. She sat calmly in front of a mirror wearing only her black g-string panties. Large round light bulbs went around the mirror. They buzzed an electrical tune and emitted a heat that made her face flush with warmth reminding her of the way she felt when she had a massive orgasm, wetting herself all over her bed sheets. Her mouth formed an O shape when she applied her glossy red lipstick. She took pride in looking the sluttiest of all the dancers at Cherrybombs. And she liked the how she was the only true blonde in the place. She despised the dark hairs and for good reason. The one that took her Mother's life, the infamous Angel Larson, was not only known for having a pretty face and long legs but also for her stunning, long, pitch black hair. Amy would

wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat with her heart racing and her mind reliving the dream she just had of strangling Angel to death with her long black hair.

Three quick knocks sounded on the dressing room door. A man's voice yelled from the other side. "Hey sexy girl, you're on in ten ok."

"Ok, thanks Jimbo, be out in a sec." She put the final touches of black eyeliner around her eyes and then reached for her metal studded chocker. It was sitting on top of a newspaper with an article of the Bludenhale Massacre showing face up. A black and white photo taken the day of the murder showed Heather and Angel sitting together on the hood of a black 70 chevelle. Amy stared deep into Angel's eyes. A faraway and final clap of thunder rumbled outside as she stared at the photo in deep thought. "Your time is coming my sweet Angel, soon enough." But for now it was time to do her thing. She stood up and grabbed the black leather whip that was hanging over a chair like a dead snake. She opened the door and began making her way towards the stage down the long hallway. And blood will soon follow.

* * * * *

A long black curtain was set up along the back wall on the left side of the stage. The girls called it the black hole. This is where they would wait before taking the stage. Two rows of cheap and colorful Christmas lights hung above on each side. A small table sat at the bottom of the staircase leading to the stage. On it sat two shot glasses, both for Amy, and a large butcher knife. She made it clear that she wanted a real knife in her act as opposed to some fake prop. She also insisted on having three songs in her set rather than the usual two. It was a special occasion after all. Her boss Phil agreed to the three songs but was unaware of the knife. But he knew the turnout would be a good one and wanted people to get their money's worth as well as get their kicks off watching a young and tormented Amy Smith perform such a hideous act; one that most people in Bludenhale considered sickening and beyond disgraceful to her slain mother Heather Smith.

The entire floor in front of the stage was packed with people. The bar facing the stage on the other side of the room was crammed full. There was a large mirror behind the bar. Upside down wine glasses and deep brown whiskey bottles sparkled in the mirrors reflection, displaying a spectrum of brown and golden hues dancing throughout the dimly lit room. The wooden ceiling fan spun quickly above the crowd.

Amy waited patiently with a cool like calmness in the black hole, smoking a cigarette. Photograph by Def Leppard was playing on the pa as another dancer was finishing up her set on stage. Amy quickly downed her two shots of whiskey. Then, Jimbo flew down the staircase as the house announcer walked onto the stage with a mic in his left hand. A large white bucket sat high above him on a platform at center stage. An Eyehategod and Ramones sticker was wrapped around its circumference.

"Ok Amy, were all set. You're good to go and I got two more right here full to the rim just like you asked." Jimbo wiped his sweaty forehead and shook his head. He was dreading the end of her set. Amy took a final drag from her lip stick stained cigarette.

“Thanks Jimbo, I owe you a couple joints for this one,” she said and smiled at him. The previous dancer made her way down the steps into the black hole.

“Hey girl looks like you’re getting extra bloody tonight.” The dancer said looking wide eyed at the two buckets sitting on the floor.

“Yeah, well you know. Hey good job out there tonight Lauren.” Amy said.

“Thanks baby.” Lauren told her in a raspy, smoky voice and gave her a hug.

The announcer on stage began to speak into the mic. “All right, let’s hear it for Lauren Hill. How is everyone doing tonight? Are we keeping you entertained?” A series of whistles and drunken ‘whoos’ came from the crowd. “Just a quick reminder right here, don’t forget to come on out next Friday night and welcome our newest addition to the Cherrybomb family, Vicki Daniels. She would love for you to help her ‘get off’ on the right foot.” His overall persona was sleazy and downright creepy. “Ok, now to the matter at hand. You all know and love our next dancer. In fact that’s why you’re all here tonight am I right? She’s a home town favorite from right here in Bludenhale. I hope you brought your raincoat and don’t say I didn’t warn you. Ladies and gentleman please welcome to the stage the very brutal yet oh so sexy blonde you wouldn’t dare bring home to mother; the dark, the twisted, the one with those killer curves, Amy Smith!” A huge roar erupted from the anxious crowd.

“Please forgive me Mother,” Amy quietly said to herself just before she took the stage with her leather whip gripped firmly in her hand and her leather metal studded choker tight around her neck; the warm caress of blood in her wake.

* * * * *

The hot glow of red lights lit up the stage as a fog machine blew out a ghostly white fog. A girl standing on the right side of the stage with her boyfriend suddenly had an overwhelming feeling of claustrophobia and entrapment. She should feel doomed; she was about to enter Amy’s dark world; that cold black world of blood and nightmares.

Amy stepped up onto the stage as Fuck like a beast by Wasp began to play. Starting at the back of the stage, her body swayed slowly and sensually at first. She demonstrated two very well executed spins followed by some back and forth hip swaying that would make Axl Rose proud. Then, her knees hit the stage and she began crawling towards the front. Her whip lay over her shoulder; the black tassels spread across her ass. She looked like a sex slave as she moved closer to the front of the stage. Immediately she stood up and took a few steps back. She raised her arms and began pulling at her blonde locks looking like a mad woman with a crazed frantic look in her eyes. A white piece of string hung helplessly above her shoulder where she stood. She grabbed ahold of it tightly. Her other arm wrapped around her stomach; her hand cupped tight into her waist. She pulled the string violently with a hard tug just as Blackie Lawless howled ‘I fuck like a beast’. Eyes widened in the crowd when they saw the gush of fake red blood spill out of the white bucket and onto Amy, splashing her blonde locks and then dripping down her waist and then to her legs. The panic stricken girl with her boyfriend covered her eyes and looked away. “I’m not watching this!” She said and then stormed away.

At last the sexual blood frenzy was here. The crowd cheered and began throwing green bills at the stage. Unbeknownst to them they were entering the black door to Amy's dark world where the door was locked and she held the key. "Yathzee!" Her boss Phil shouted as he stood with Jack at the bar watching the beautiful green fly. She whirled herself around a mirrored chrome dancer's pole as her blood drenched hair flung out wet redness into the crowd. She spun around four times and then stopped. She saw her reflection for a moment in the mirrored pole. The distorted image reflecting back at her was haunting and hideous. She thought, "*Look at you, you bloody little slut queen, you fucking whoring jezebel, mommy would be so proud.*" Her eyes rolled back into her head as she bended backwards and became lost within the sound of drunken yells and Chris Holmes guitar solo. She crawled across the stage floor like some bloody vixen in heat, looking as if she was possessed in a trance of blood, sex, and volume. Then, she pushed herself up onto her knees and turned her back towards the crowd. Her whip began a slow ascension up her body starting first at her calf, then up the back of her thigh and then over her ass until finally creeping up her back and over her shoulder. It left a bloody trail of red streaks up her back as if a hot rake scraped her soft skin. The song ended but the onslaught continued when Feed the Gods by White Zombie attacked the pa. She disappeared down the black hole. "Where did she go?" Phil asked raising his arms in confusion as Jack wiped the bar with a damp wash cloth not saying a word.

Strobe lights married to a thundering double bass drum bludgeoned the eyes and ears of the curious crowd. Amy emerged from the black hole. A unified gasp of shock came from the crowd. No longer was there a sexy blonde that teased the audience with a whip and a half covered body in fake blood. Now, a monster from hell stood before them blood-soaked from head to toe. Not a shred of bare skin showed itself. Her stance was sexy. Her right hand sunk into her waist and her left hand gripped a large butcher knife tightly. "Shit! Phil's gonna skin my ass for this!" Jimbo mumbled to himself looking on in terror as he knelt down behind the black curtain. Two empty white buckets lay behind him.

"What in the shit?" Phil uncrossed his arms slowly, looking in awe at the stage. "What the hell is she doing?"

"It'll be ok Phil, relax." Jack told him. But Phil was becoming angrier and annoyed by Amy's antics.

"Is that a fucking knife? Jesus H Christ Jack, I never approved this shit!" Phil cursed.

She raised the knife to her mouth and tilted her head back with her hands gripped tight around the handle. She ran the un-sharp side up and down her tongue and then slid it down between her breasts with the pointy tip lightly pushing into her skin. She circled it around her naval just before scraping it across her waist, hooking it under her g-string strap, pulling it away from her bloody hip. Phil was boiling over. "It looks like there's more of that shit on her. Goddammit Jack, one bucket, that's what we agreed on, one fucking bucket!"

"Phil, if you don't fucking relax you're gonna drop dead right here of a heart attack, take it easy and just let her do it, all right!"

"Let me tell you something Jack, this may be your joint but I'm in charge of these goddam girls. They pay my fucking bills and that 'thing' on stage right now

is my biggest money maker and I'm not about to have people start walking outta here because of some fucking freakshow!"

"Well I don't see anyone running and screaming towards the door, so have a goddam beer and relax, let her do it!

"Son of a bitch!" Phil spat on the floor in anger.

She was on her hands and knees now and her ass was facing the crowd. Her palm smacked hard into her blood covered backside, splattering drops of fake blood on the stage. Her fingertips sunk deep into the meat of her ass as they slipped all around, smearing blood in every direction. For one quick moment her bloody fingers got sucked up into her vagina like a vacuum as she was toying with her back thigh and g-string. This unintentional mishap sent green bills flying once again toward the stage.

"All right that's it!" Phil started to make his way towards the stage. He furiously passed the dj who asked if he should cut the music. Phil raised his finger to him gesturing to hang on. He was moving fast. His greasy pork chop like body slid through the crowd. Amy had ascended from the floor by the time he made it to the side of the stage. He motioned to her with his hand whipping through fog and cigarette smoke. She saw him and began walking towards him in a slow and sexy stride; taking long steps one foot in front of the other dragging her bloody whip behind her. She towered above him as he stood at the bottom of the stage. She lowered herself down and her knees went up almost to her face. Blood dripped from her crotch onto the stage floor. Phil was livid. The volume and tone of his voice suggested it.

"What in the hell do you think you're doing! Look kid, I'm really sorry about what happened to your mom all those years ago, but this has gone too far. Lose the fucking knife!"

She said nothing; just gave him a lifeless, glazed look as she tilted her head and stared at him, looking spaced out as if on some natural high. Just then a wealthy looking older man in a suit slips in front of Phil. He had two fifty dollar bills between his fingers and graciously tucked it into Amy's g-string. She gave Phil a smile with an 'I told you so' look and that same lifeless stoned out expression on her face now with her mouth partly open. She lifted her hand and sunk her chin into her palm and began tapping her fingers across her teeth slowly. The look of disgust on Phil's face turned to fear when he had the chilling feeling that Amy was going to lash out at him any second and scratch his eyes out for no reason. She waved her finger at him and then put the tip of her finger on his sweaty forehead, pushing herself up. He stood frozen and was embarrassed by the thought of the people around him watching and knowing he was scared shitless of her.

Phil treaded through the crowd and back to the bar. He told the dj not to stop the music. She continued her performance as she crawled to the side of the stage where an older man with glasses and a bad comb over was sitting. She whipped her blood soaked hair around getting it on his glasses. He just sat there stupefied. She backed away from him and laid herself flat on her back in the middle of the stage. The knife was still in her hand. It seemed as though it was in control of her body, going wherever it pleased, scraping and lightly cutting her soft skin. As she lay on her back she spread her legs wide in a V shape. The long and sharp blade caressed her inner thighs as she skimmed it up and down her leg. Then she

started a poking motion as if stabbing herself. The tip danced across the back of her leg and then around her blood drenched panties. She stopped the stabbing like motion when the tip pointed itself at her vagina through her panties. Slowly she turned the knife upwards with the smooth side running up and down in between her slit. The knife had found its way inside her panties. Her eyes rolled back into her head as she licked her lips, feeling the hard metal rubbing in between her legs. She couldn't stop there though. It just wasn't enough to feel the knife pushing against her vagina; she wanted to feel it inside her. She parted her panties to the side with the tip of the knife revealing her bloody gash. She tapped at her clitoris gently with the flat side of the knife and then flipped it facing the blade away from her. The point sat on top of her clit waiting for its bloody intrusion. Her back arched off of the stage floor when she slowly drove the knife inside her like a sword swallower inserts a sword into their mouth. About a fourth of the way in, she stopped and held the knife inside her. Her legs closed. She held them shut for ten seconds and then opened them. She released the knife quickly from in between her legs, flinging a spray of blood droplets across the stage in front of her.

The mood was mixed amongst the horrified yet entertained crowd. For some it was difficult to see the daughter of Heather Smith engage in such a vile and horrendous act that was so similar to the blood shed that took place twenty years ago. It was a grim reminder of Bludenhales past. Some looked confused, amazed, shocked, disgusted, aroused and scared. But not one set of eyes drifted from the stage. No one could look away despite what effect the blood scene had on their senses. Others just seemed terrified by the look of a pissed off blonde covered in blood wearing a metal studded chocker.

When the song ended the frenzied and excited crowd took Phil by surprise with their yells of adoration for Amy, despite the overall shocked and disturbed mood among them. He whirled his finger around motioning to the dj to quickly play the next and final song of Amy's set.

* * * * *

White fog filled up the stage under red lights as Christian Woman by Type O Negative played through the pa. Amy suspended herself upside down on the pole with her legs wrapped around it tight. An eerie dead silence lurked in the crowd as they watched in awe like fashion. They seemed to be mesmerized by the tranquil, almost dream like setting of the angelic audio and the image of Amy hanging upside down and bloody with her hair in a V shape. It was a sharp contrast to the previous sex violence to say the least.

Thin straight lines of red ran from her hanging body to the floor. She turned herself right side up and stood with her back against the pole once the song started. Her small bloody hand wrapped itself around the mirrored chrome pole and she swung herself around looking like some nightmare ghost in the fog. She seemed lost in a trance when she fell to her knees and ran her hands sensually up the sides of her breasts. She could smell the arousal lifting from the audience through sweat and feminine wetness from embarrassed twenty something girls with flushed faces watching alongside their boyfriends. She could taste their desire, and at that moment she wanted to fuck every single person in the room.

The red lights above grew dim making the stage a darker shade of red. Her mind drifted into a sea of red as she became lost in the music. In her mind's eye the stage floor had turned to a pool of dark red blood. It glistened under the red lights making it look black as night. In her mind she was no longer performing a terrifying act of erotic blood worship for a crowd of frightened onlookers. She envisioned herself chained to the chrome pole with her legs spread wide open. A long line of men in black masks took turns fucking her. With each thrust, a gush of dark black blood fountained high above her from in between her legs. It showered down on her belly and breasts and then splattered onto her face. Her high pitch screams of pleasure sent ripples throughout the blood pool in which she lay.

This bloody sex scene soon dissipated from her eyes leaving her with a new twisted vision. A vision of her hanging inverted on the pole with her feet shackled tight around it; two blonde girls were on each side of her with their faces buried lovingly in her middle part. She gazed up at them watching their blood splotted mouths and tongues fight over her throbbing clitoris like out of control dirty savages. Their lips suctioned together forming a vacuum like pump over her vagina. They inhaled her sex, sucking up and down viciously. Spit and aromatic sex secretions crept from the corners of their mouths. The mixture rolled down Amy's body in a straight line, and then curved around her waist until finally reaching her neck where it dripped slowly into her mouth like a leaky faucet. They continued the up and down sucking motion, ripping Amy's soul apart.

"Oh dear Mother, did you also have these tortured dreams of blood and sex? Did you pass this gift onto me? Why Mother, why?"

The white hot ecstasy of her dark world trip came to an end when a hatchet came flying from out of nowhere at one of the blonde girl feasting on Amy's vagina. It crashed into her forehead, crushing and impaling her skull. Blood and pink brain gore oozed from the impact point. The messy substance fell onto Amy's breasts in small wet chunks.

Phase two of her dark world trip was coming into play. Amy knew this because the red lights suddenly shut off and a bright spotlight was now shining down on her. The blood pool had vanished and her milky white skin was free of the sexual red liquid. She was alone and standing in the middle of the stage in just her panties and her metal studded choker around her neck. A stare of terror formed in her eyes as she viewed a massive cornfield in front of her that stretched for miles. A blood red sun peered just above the edge of the cornfield in the horizon. Its haunting glow accented the burnt orange and brown cornstalks knifing upward, looking like the devil's claws erupting from the blackened Indiana dirt.

Breathless and bewildered, she turned around and started to run. The sight of Angel Larson soaked in blood and lurking in the corn with a hatchet compelled her to do so. There was nowhere to run though. A vast blackness surrounded Amy and blood was on her heels.

Angel swung her hatchet, cutting through the corn with bloody intent. She slaughtered her way through the field as tall stalks of corn made harsh, shrill like screams with each slash. Angel hissed at Amy, "You're so pretty Amy, just like your mommy. Don't be afraid, the bloodbath awaits you," and continued slashing her way through the cornfield. Amy kept running but the image of Angel and the

bloody cornfield were still behind her. She ran into nothingness praying that this hellish trip into her dark world would soon be over.

Then suddenly the stage floor began to rumble and shake. The cornfield started to part in the middle, revealing a long and narrow path. At the end of the path sat a small white building with dirty cobwebbed windows and chipped decaying white paint on the exterior. It was death's home; the unholy fortress of butchery from so many years ago; the legendary house of blood that haunts Amy's dreams. It was the garage. It looked miles away to her.

She stood in the middle of the stage trembling in terror, unaware of the audience in front of her. She felt a hot breeze sweep through her hair. She could feel her legs becoming heavy as she stared long at the far away small white garage. A lump bulged in her throat. Her mouth was dry. The witch's bell returned and rang its horror three times. Amy cupped her ears in pain from the highly amplified ringing tone. It spread throughout the hellish cornfield, shaking it with a violent force. The vibration broke the windows on the garage, shattering them to pieces. From where Amy stood the breaking glass sounded like pins dropping; small and high pitched. But following what she heard was something she saw that was so frightening she felt she was going to collapse at any moment.

Far off in the distance the garage looked as if it was imploding on itself. Amy saw what looked to be small explosions coming from the garage. Violent bursts of dark matter vomited out of the windows. She opened her mouth in slow horror at the sight of the tidal wave of blood rushing fast towards her. The blast of red raced down the path, flattening corn with ungodly speed. She tried to move but the demon corn began crawling up her leg and around her waist. It squeezed her tight making her throw up blood from her bursting insides. Soon her entire body had become engulfed by the corn, mummifying her, leaving only a small section open around her eyes so she could see her oncoming death. Her eyes shut tight as she awaited her death by a massive blood drowning. Then a voice came from some far off place, a voice from reality, not hell.

"Amy, hey kid are you all right?"

She was startled out of her near death experience in her mind by the sound of Jack's voice calling to her from the edge of the stage. She inhaled a heavy breath of terror as if waking from a nightmare.

The scared and bloody girl glanced around the room looking up and down and then to her sides with an icy look of fear in her eyes. Her bottom lip quivered. The crowd stared back at her with zombie like eyes. They were speechless as the bloody blonde in front of them—who was now on her knees with her arms dangling lifelessly to her sides—had been completely unaware she'd been staring back at them for the last minute of the song; her mind trapped in her twisted dark world. Jack called out to her again. "Amy, the songs over, you ok kid?" She looked at Jack with a dazed and frightened expression and somehow her mind snapped back into reality. She grabbed her whip and trotted off stage walking quickly with her head down, leaving behind a trail of blood, sex, and nightmares.

* * * * *

Sick with worry, Jack made his way to the other side of the stage. In some strange way he felt responsible for Amy and as if he was a father figure to her. He

met her inside the black hole where she stood shaking with cold fear. “Give me that robe quick,” he said to Jimbo. He flung it as fast as he could. Jack covered Amy’s shoulders and began rubbing them to warm her up, or at least to calm her down. “Damn girl, looks like you’ve seen the devil!” Jimbo mouthed. “Shut up Jimbo and help me get her back to her room.” Jack scowled.

They entered the dressing room and sat her down on the couch. Jack told Jimbo to get her some hot coffee. “Decaf; no regular, She’s wound up enough,” Jack said without taking his eyes off of Amy. Jimbo ran out of the room to get the coffee, leaving the two alone. They could hear the unsettled and noisy ruckus of the crowd just outside the door. It’s as though they had awoken from their blood daze as well. Jack pulled up a chair and sat in front of Amy. His face was full of stress and for good reason.

“Amy,” he said and then paused for a moment. His hand met his forehead, massaging it trying to relieve his oncoming headache. He let out a sigh. “What the hell were you doin’ out there?” His eyes were on her but hers were somewhere else lost in the room, focused on nothing. And then a frown formed on her face and bloody tears fell from her eyes as she began to cry.

“Ok, how long since you’ve used?” Jack asked. She looked at him in confusion.

Her voice cracked when she spoke.

“What?”

“Don’t bullshit me kid, I know what you do. Look, if you knew you were coming down off the shit, you should have”—she interjected, “Is that what think this is about? I’m not withdrawing Jack.” He threw his arms in the air. “Well you tell me then Amy how is it just before the show you’re a sweetheart and next you’re freaked out frozen stiff on stage. What the hell happened up there?”

Her eyes darted away. They focused on the big light bulbs around the mirror of the dressing room table. “I just...I have thoughts sometimes, you know. I get caught up in them and sometimes they never let go.”

“You know Amy, I understand what you’re doing up there.” “The blood, that fucking knife; the whole bit, I get it. You have to stop terrorizing yourself kid. It’s not healthy, you know on the inside. And I know your mom would hate seeing you like this.”

Jimbo returned with the coffee in a Styrofoam cup. She put on her best ‘I’m ok’ look for both of them. She knew how much they cared and she did have a sense of warmth and love as they sat by her side with her shivering on the couch. She really just wanted to be alone for now. They reluctantly exited the room at her request, but somehow Jack knew she would be ok. The next few minutes were filled with tears mixed with red No. 5 as she cried alone to herself in her dressing room. It was a slow descent coming down off of her dark world trip, where blood and nightmare ruled the night and her fragile mind; always.

* * * * *

She bathed herself of the red goop that had now molded itself to her body. The warmth and steam of her shower mingled with the fake blood, making her skin feel ultra-smooth. She stared down at the drain watching the water swirl together with the color red.

She got out of the shower and began to towel herself dry. It was getting late. So What by Ministry began echoing down the hall and through her room. She began drying her hair. She saw the newspaper article of the Bludenhale Massacre still sitting on her dressing room table from earlier. *“Soon my sweet Angel, soon”* she thought. She slipped on her black mini skirt pulling it snug over her hips, and then put on her black leather jacket. She was out the door in a flash; her damp hair still smelling of hard water and shampoo.

* * * * *

She made her way to the bar with the every intention of having at least one shot of Jim Beam, maybe two. Jimbo was on stage pushing a mop, trying to soak up the remaining amount of fake blood left from Amy’s set. Their eyes met and her fingers went to her mouth as if smoking a joint. She pointed toward the door reminding him of the joint she promised him later. Jimbo waved his hand signaling not to worry about it. It was a good night financially speaking. Her ‘thing’ earned her three hundred fifteen dollars and that’s after her pay out to Phil. She took a seat at the bar. Two bearded old men sat on the opposite side drinking beer from frosty mugs. It was 12:45.

The TV sitting above the bar was replaying the news documentary from earlier, ‘The Bludenhale Massacre of 1974, 20 years later.’ Jack walked over to Amy. He swung his damp washcloth over his shoulder.

“Are you feeling better kid?” He asked.

She rested her elbows on the bar. Her chin sunk into the palms of her hands. “Yeah, just a little tired. But I know what can help that.” She smiled.

“You’ve had it kinda rough tonight Amy. I’m not sure if whiskey is the best thing for you right now.” They looked at each other for a moment and then laughed. “Let me get you a glass. Just one shot though all right.” He shook his head and chuckled as he poured Jim Beam into her shot glass.

“Thanks Jack, you’re the best.”

His attention suddenly turned to the television set when he heard the documentary playing. “Oh, why the hell are they showing this for again! Sorry Amy.” He reached up to change the channel.

“That’s ok, don’t change it,” she said abruptly. Jack was stunned.

“What, are you crazy? You don’t need to see this right now.”

“Really, it’s ok Jack,” she reassured him. He lowered his hand from the TV and staggered backwards, confused by what Amy was telling him.

“Suit yourself kid,” he said, and continued wiping the bar with the damp washcloth.

* * * * *

Amy slowly sipped her whiskey, keeping a watchful eye on the TV. Her eyes went back and forth between the TV set and the brown liquid in her glass as if too frightened to fully look at the screen. Back and forth her eyes went; her black eyelashes fluttering nervously with every look at the TV and then back at her glass until finally giving in with a cold, long stare at Red Brown. The black and white footage showed Red being interviewed, sitting at a table in a small room.

“How ya been Red, long time no see,” she said to herself. For years Amy’s grandparents believed Red was the one responsible for traumatizing her one early spring morning at Sam’s Hardware, laying out the grisly details of her Mother’s death. Amy was just twelve years old. The words he spoke that horrible day would become overshadowed though by something more spellbinding to Amy as she got older and started to understand the truth of what happened to her Mother—and the wretched one known as Angel Larson. Her obsession with Angel would soon consume her life and be the cause of many a haunting nightmare at three in the morning throughout her teenage years.

Amy knew better though. To her, Red was just the messenger of the bloody truth. Yes, she was angry at Red for what he did but in some way she understood his actions. Anyone who would witness something so heinous and beyond comprehension like Red did that morning of June 17th, 1974, would be expected to act irrationally and possibly a bit insane.

“Oh my dear Red, that was a long time ago. What was it you told me? Oh yeah, I remember now.” Amy sat at the bar as her mind drifted back to that day in the hardware store. “*All skin and bone.*” She gulped her hot whiskey fast and slammed the shot glass down hard on the bar. And then the color red engrossed her with the blood red memory.

Part 2

The Haunted Man.

1984

Twelve year old Amy Smith sat in the enormous back seat of her grandparent’s Buick Century with her eyes glued to her viewmaster. The vibrations of rocks hitting the tires and the under belly of the car could be felt through the soft plush seat she was sitting on. Tammy Wynette wailed out Stand by your man through the thin and airy sounding speakers of the radio. It was a cool spring Saturday morning as they drove past wet cornfields saturated with dew, sparkling under the rays of the sun. It had a crystalized sheen that Amy liked. But for now the viewmaster was winning.

She could hear her grandparents having their usual boring adult conversation she would always hear when they would drive into town every Saturday morning. This was something of a ritual she had grown accustomed to. It was breakfast, coffee, cartoons and then Sam’s Hardware store. There was always work to be done on her grandparent’s farm and many needed commodities to keep the farm running, and Sam’s Hardware was the place where the locals could get everything they needed from ladders, chainsaws 2x4 wooden planks. Whatever they needed, Sam had it.

As Amy played with her viewmaster she could hear her grandparents saying words like, damn layoff, factory, and elks lodge. Her grandma lit a cigarette and

began fluffing her hair. A mix of blonde and grey sifted through her fingers with ease. At just forty eight, she felt trapped somewhere in between young and old. Even though she was Amy's grandma, she could have very well been her Mother to. In a way, Susan felt as though she was getting to relive her daughter's life through Amy due to how much Amy resembled her Mother. So much that it frightened Susan at times. Amy looked up from her viewmaster and saw a wave of smoke crest off Susan's blue jean jacket and out the crack in the window. The suffocating aroma of cigarette smoke fought with her grandfather's Stetson and Susan's perfume which was some weird floral scent. Neither was the winner. It only created a unified rank of odor.

Susan glanced over her shoulder at Amy. "Hey there," her voice was thick with a southern Indiana drawl when she spoke. "When we're done at Sam's we'll head over to Tina's place and get your ears pierced like you've been wanting, sound good?" Amy's eyes lit up with surprise. "Really, are you sure?" Susan laughed at the sound of her granddaughter's amazement in her voice. "Of course I'm sure Heath—" It wasn't out of the ordinary for Amy to hear her grandma suddenly call her Heather on accident and then quickly cut it off before finishing her name. Times like these were usually followed by an uncomfortable silence between the two and a heavy sense of shame and sorrowfulness on Susan's part. She stared out the window as her eyes glistened. Amy pretended it didn't bother her but it truly did. She held her head down with a confused and embarrassed smile. The most she ever knew about her Mother was what her grandparents had told her, and it was always the same: "Your mommy went away to heaven when you were two years old." And it was left at that. No elaborating, explaining or going into detail of why. And Amy never asked why either. But still, she couldn't help but feel as if this person she never knew somehow meant more to her grandmother than she did. It was perplexing, but she let it be.

They made their way through town onto Main Street going past old brick buildings with large display windows. Sam's was just off of Main Street on Maple. They pulled up to the store front. Amy's grandfather didn't turn the engine off at first but let it set for a moment. His hand reached out to Susan's shoulder. Her hand touched his and then she reached back extending her hand to Amy. She gently took hold of her grandma's soft hand. Susan wiped her eyes, then turned and smiled warmly at Amy. "C'mon baby, let's get what the old man needs and get the heck outta this man store." She grinned at her husband and then Amy laughed knowing that her grandma's moment had passed and everything was all right. "Yeah, this yucky man store, I wanna do girly stuff." Susan squeezed her husband's hand, and nodded. They exited the car and began walking towards the entrance to Sam's. The last true and happy smile showed on Amy's face as she stepped inside the store. The sound of shiny round bells hitting the glass door rang with a high pitch, welcoming Amy and her grandparents.

* * * * *

The smell of cedar wood and motor oil lingered throughout the isles that had tan metal shelves occupying merchandise for rural living. A bright ray of sunshine cast itself through the glass door entrance and onto the speckled white flooring of the store. A younger looking employee around sixteen or so stood on a ladder

putting boxes up on a shelf. He smiled at the sound of the bells jingling on the door as Amy and her grandparents entered. He welcomed them kindly in true southern Indiana fashion, "How we doin' folks, can I help you with anything?" Susan looked up at the young boy and smiled. "No honey, thank you though."

Amy's grandfather Mark had already started up what was going to be a very long conversation between him and Sam who was standing behind the checkout counter. She knew they would be there for a while from their hearty laughs and inaudible man jabber. She tugged at her grandma's elbow letting her know she was heading down the aisle with the toys. "Ok go ahead, and take your time," Susan told her as she rolled her eyes and motioned with her thumb behind her head at her husband. Amy giggled and made a fast talking hand gesture. Susan playfully returned two talking hands at Amy as she watched her skip down the aisle. She put her arm around Mark. The toy section was within eye distance from where Susan was standing. She looked over her shoulder at Amy. It was just her paternal instinct kicking in and even though she'd seen her granddaughter skip down that same aisle nearly a hundred times before, she had to see that Amy was safe. She was for now. Bob and Margret Higgins strolled up to the checkout counter with a cart full of plants and other items. They were the Smith's neighbors from two houses down on their road. When Amy saw the two couples standing there talking like there was no tomorrow, she knew it would be a while till they left the store. This meant ample time to sift through the massive pile of toys and games at her feet. Sam kept a good supply of toys for the bored children that came into the store dragging their feet behind their parents.

Amy kneeled down and began shoveling through handfuls of rubber dinosaurs, yo-yo's—scratch-n-sniff stickers and of course her favorite: insert discs for her viewmaster. Her eyes widened at the sight of a Cinderella disk and then something caught her eye at the end of the aisle. It startled her. She looked down the aisle at the checkout where her grandma was. She just wanted the comfort of knowing she was right there. Susan winked at her and waved her fingers as she continued talking to the Higgins. Everything was ok for now; safe. Amy returned her attention to the pile of toys and then looked up again. This time she did see something. It was a man standing at the end of the aisle. She quickly stood up. He looked to be in his mid-fifties but seemed much older, more around seventy. The hard life rears its cold and heartless beauty on the downtrodden. Amy knew not to talk to strangers but she sensed this man was harmless. He wore a tattered green trucker's hat, (circa 1979 more than likely). His tan khaki pants were baggy and had mud stains on them. He had big brown boots and was wearing an oversized red and white plaid coat. He also needed a shave. Cradled in his arms like a baby was a package of duct tape and some rope. Amy looked over her shoulder and saw that her grandparents and the Higgins had moved slightly to the right. She was unable to see them now. *No need to panic* she thought, *It's just some old man. But why does he keep staring at me? I can easily outrun him if I have to.* He was looking at Amy as if she looked like a monster. His eyes bulged out making him look dumbfounded and speechless. And he truly was by the ever so familiar sight of Amy and her blonde hair. Amy dug some more through the junk toys not noticing the old man walking up to her. Then he was right by her. Amy felt her heart speed up as she pretended not to see him standing there. He said, "You look just like

your mommy,” and grinned. His voice was deep when he spoke. “You know, I met your mommy one time, did you know that?” Amy stayed silent still looking at the Cinderella viewmaster disk. It took a moment for her to register what he said. She wasn’t sure if she should respond or not. She asked nervously, “You knew my mommy?” Her voice sounded small. There was a certain fear in it. This they both knew.

A smile took form on the old man’s face when he saw the heap of small knickknack toys on the bottom shelf. “My oh my, would you look at all them toys. Why you could be in here all day playin’ with those things.” He kneeled down on one knee in front of Amy. *Still safe*, she thought. *Tina’s soon. Barbecue later. Grandmas sugar cream pie.* He picked up one of the many rubber dinosaurs and held it, letting it dangle in between his fingers. “Which one is your favorite?” She hesitated to speak. His oddness made her stomach knot up. “Let’s see, I bet you like these,” he held one of the Cinderella viewmaster disks in his hand, flipping it side to side with a creepy grin on his face. “I guess so,” she shrugged awkwardly. The disk displayed a rainbow of prismatic colors. He smiled at her with that big creepy grin, showing his yellow stained teeth. “Look at you. You’re so pretty just like your mommy.” Her eyebrows slanted in confusion. She asked finally, “Mr. How do you know my mommy?” His eyes went big and bulgy again. An ‘o’ expression formed on his mouth and his big grin returned. He had a look of excitement on his face as if he couldn’t wait to tell his story to Amy. When he began to speak his tone was warm, almost inviting, like an old timer reminiscing of a time long ago.

“Well, I met your mommy about ten years ago. See, she was in a scary place; a very scary place.” Amy gasped. She inhaled a breath of terror. Her face felt warm. Fear surrounded her like dark ghosts. “Oh Amy, it was such a scary bloody place where I met your mommy.” Amy asked, almost crying, “How did you know my name?” The old man did not answer. He just stared off into nothingness as he babbled the bloody tale of Amy’s deceased mother. A deep, twisted laugh roared from his belly. Amy could feel the hot sourness of his breath on her face. It stunk of stale beer and cigarettes. Scared to death, she looked over her shoulder hoping to see her grandma, but her face returned to the old man when he gently put his large calloused hand around her wrist. *Run. Run now*, she thought. *Can’t move; immobilized by terror.* He continued his verbal treachery. “She was just lying there on the floor all sprawled out and broken in every which way. What a terrible thing.” Shock caressed Amy’s face. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Her bottom lip trembled as it hung halfway open. Her wet eyes were glued to the old man like she was in a spell. “Grandma,” she said softly, with her eyes not once leaving the old man’s face. “See Amy, every ounce of blood had vanished from your mommy’s body. She was nothin’ but skin and bone. All skin and bone I say.” She gazed at him, trapped in a web of horror. She was unaware of what was suddenly happening to her body. She didn’t even blink when it seemed that her heart stopped for exactly one second after hearing the nightmare words coming from the old and jaded death messenger. The seed had been planted. No fairy tales in this new dark world sweet little princess with the beautiful long blonde hair, only haunting tall tales of bloody horrors hidden deep in the corn.

“Now, how does that happen?” He smiled big at Amy. Her tears were falling. “How does one lose every last drop of blood in their body?” His face suddenly had

a look of genuineness. No smile. "Amy, do you have a best friend?" She called out to her grandma again, a little louder this time. "Grandma!" she cried. "Your mommy had a best friend. Her name was Angel. And you know what she did? She sucked every last bit of blood right outta your beautiful mommy!" A deep laugh rumbled out of him making him twitch oddly. His laughter elevated.

Amy's grandparents had moved over to the checkout counter once again with the Higgins, still talking up storm. That grand idea Amy had about running away from the old man seemed to escape her mind. It's as if she completely forgot she had legs and knew how to run. Susan turned and looked down the aisle. Her smile dissolved into a straight face at what she saw. Then it was an emotional collage of horror, panic and rage. "Oh my dear God." She shrieked with her hand cupping her mouth and darted down the aisle towards Amy at a frantic pace. Her stride was swift.

The old man's out of control laughter had turned into heavy slow breathing, like he was out of breath. But that fucking creepy grin remained. He stood up. His hand was still around Amy's wrist. It wrinkled the cuff of her pink jacket. He lowered his head down to Amy and gave her a sincere look.

"You know," he muttered and then paused.

Susan's quick walk turned to a run.

"She bathed," Red said.

Running faster faster.

"In,"

Amy turned her head around just in time to see her grandma running towards her. "Grandma," She said, her voice sounding younger than what it was. Her frightened and tearful eyes returned to Red Brown.

"Her blood." (Witch's bell)

Susan pulled Amy up into her arms just as Red slithered out his last words. As Susan lifted her up into her arms, Amy saw Red's face and horrid grin rise up in front of her like a giant mad man. It was a slow motion life collapsing moment. She held her arms tight around her grandma's neck and began to cry. "You bastard, what did you say to her!" Susan scowled. He shook his head from side to side with a dumbfounded look on his face as if he had no idea what Susan was talking about, looking almost like a child. She sat Amy down and kneeled in front of her, gently placing her hands on her red and teary cheeks. Amy, the girl who foolishly stood in her bathroom a week earlier with a look of embarrassment on her face with her panties around her ankles and Susan just as red faced showing her how to properly insert a tampon, was suddenly crying like a small child. It broke Susan's heart and reminded her of the way Amy cried at Heather's funeral (closed casket) when she fell and scraped her knee on the sidewalk in front of the church.

"Is it true grandma, what he told me?"

"What did he say honey, you can tell me." Susan's eyes gleamed with hate at Red.

"Di... Did that girl really suck my mommy's blood all gone?"

Susan felt a sharp ripple of pain go throughout her body. She held her head back and made a cracking 'squawk' sound as her mouth slowly opened and released a cry. She looked at her husband with wet, distressed eyes. She was

suddenly faced with the painful reality of having to explain to her granddaughter about her mother's death; something she never intended on doing when she woke up this morning, or ever for that matter.

She stood up and moved in on Red. Her husband put his arm around her knowing that her fingernails were en route to Red's bulging eyeballs. A quick vision flashed in his mind: Red's face all scratched and torn to pieces, bloody and in horrific pain at the hands of his wife's claws of revenge. If it weren't for Amy standing next to her, he would have let her do it.

"You fucking bastard! How dare you!" Susan spit out her words at Red like venom. "You ain't no good to anyone anymore Red Brown, just a damn no good drunk, stumbling around town runnin' your filthy mouth. Why can't you just let it go, we're all trying to forget what happened." She wiped the tears running down her face. "And know look what you've done, you son of bitch! Go crawl back under your rock and just fucking stay there!" Susan paused and gave the old man a deadly stare. She held Amy close to her side with her arm around her. "The devil will get you for this Red Brown." She said to him pointing her finger.

They left the store in a haze of anger and sadness. Susan sat in the backseat with Amy on the way home. The poor child cried the whole way and made Susan's blue jean jacket a mess of salty tears and mucus. Susan didn't care though. Her only granddaughter had just been mentally raped and scarred by the old deviant man Red Brown; a man with his own personal demons that would creep up on him in the middle of the night reminding him that his life to would never be the same. *'All skin and bone'*. As far as Susan was concerned Red could die a slow death by the hands of the devil in hell. Yet it still wouldn't bring back Heather and it wouldn't wash away the fresh scars Amy just received. They turned into their long gravel drive way, slowly driving up to their old white farmhouse. No Tina's.

* * * *

"You best get on outta here," Sam said scolding Red. "I can't have you causing a ruckus in my store. And damn you for tearing that little girl apart like that. You did a bad thing old man." Sam shook his finger at him. "I hear your hogs callin', they need tending to." Red picked up his rope and duct tape having every intention of getting out of Sam's store and going back to his hog farm which he had been running ever since he retired back in 1978. The voices were coming, marching into his mind like soldiers of insanity, pounding their boots of dementia into his brain just like they always have ever since the Jack Daniel's therapy stopped working eight years ago.

He ran out of the store with the sound of the jingling bells laughing behind him and stammered to his old pick-up truck dazed by the fiasco in the store. He clumsily fumbled with the duct tape in his hands and dropped the rope onto the ground. As he bent down to retrieve it a low growling sound of a 70 Chevelle snuck up on him with its shark like dark blue muscular body. He went into a cold sweat. Two young boys both about eighteen sat inside banging their fists on their knees and the dashboard to *Haunting the Chapel* by Slayer. The kid in the passenger side nodded to Red. "Whadaya say there old timer." Red with big round eyes of terror glared back at the kid. He couldn't speak. He just stared at them. "Man why you keep gawking at me?" The kid spat out. Red didn't answer; just had that

shocked and appalled look on his face. He began eyeing their car as if surveying it, cautiously looking all around it, but he cupped his mouth in horror when his eyes became fixed on the hood. They squinted shut looking as if he had seen something horrendous. He also looked like he was in excruciating pain. His body started to twitch and jerk. "What the fuck is wrong with you old man?" the kid said. Red opened his eyes in quick flashes and began ducking as if trying to dodge something (or things) attacking him. He wandered in his black void of terror as the boys continued shouting and laughing at him. They mocked him with rude gestures and curses. What seemed like a never ending episode of hallucinogenic horror for Red was in reality only fifteen seconds. His twitching ceased but his breathing was slow and heavy, sounding like he just ran a marathon. Exhausted, he lowered his head with his eyes closed. Slowly he opened them and stared at the boys; a lifetime of torment in his pupils. The kid in the passenger seat suddenly gave Red a peculiar look pointing his finger at him. "Hey aren't you that cop that found those kids all hacked up in that garage a long time ago?" Red didn't respond. He had a disturbed look about him. And then calmly he spoke with caution in his voice.

"Maybe I was. Ain't no concern of yours anyhow son."

"I ain't your son old man."

The driver had an amazing epiphany. "Holy shit, it is that cop. You found Angel Larson; found her bloody ass lying in a ditch on Devils Bluff road, hot damn!" He smacked the steering wheel.

"See, I knew it was you," the other kid chimed in. "You were all over the newspapers after all of it went down. I remember hearing my parents talk about it when I was a kid. They also said you went fuckin' nuts after what you saw in that garage. It really messed you up. They said you were a good cop and then you flew the coop."

Still speechless, Red just stared in confusion and terror at the boys. The driver leaned over with a cunning, devilish grin, looking out the open window at Red. "Say, just between us, did you get you some of that sweet angelpussy after you cuffed her and stuck her in the back of your car?" The two boys laughed out loud. "C'mon now, we all know that whore put out. She was easy as syrup."

"Hey old man," the kid in the passenger seat remarked, "We're goin' out to Devils Bluff just before dusk tonight. We're gonna show up this prick with a loud mouth and a wannabe eight block. Wanna come?" He smiled and looked at his friend.

The driver said, "Don't worry, Angel won't get you. She's locked up in that insane asylum three counties over, remember?"

"Or is she?" His buddy eerily stated and then snickered.

"You boys' best watch what you say. You ain't got no business being on Devils Bluff. That's a bad, bad place."

The driver continued, "Holy shit, you're scared old timer, aren't you." The boys let out a mean spirited laugh that swarmed inside the car like a ruthless and antagonizing entity.

"Shut your traps now, ya hear!" Red howled at them.

"She might try to break outta there one night and go haunting around your farm," the kid in the passenger seated ranted.

“Shut your traps I said!”

“Maybe pay ya a little visit at the foot of your bed one night with that hatchet of hers; you know the one she used to....” Red cut the kids bastard mouth off as he screeched, “Stop it, stop it, stop it!” He was hitting his head hard with his fists as if trying to knock out the insanity. A line of spit dangled from the side of his mouth as he cursed the boys. “Oh dear God,” he cried out as he looked around the parking lot and then to the sun drenched sky; looking horrified like he’d seen the devil in the forest, blood drenched and grinning. He fumbled his hand around looking for the door handle on his truck. He opened it and got in quickly. His hands shook as he held onto the big round steering wheel. He put it in reverse. The tires screeched as he pulled out of the parking spot. But just as quickly as he put it in drive, stepping on the gas like a mad man, a car reared out in front of him making him slam on the brakes. “Watch it you old bastard!” A man furious with road rage raised his arms in anger and yelled out his window at Red. The man went on his way shaking his head in disgust.

Red sat for a moment in his truck shaken and distraught by the mornings events. The wheels of his truck slowly started to move forward. He turned and gave a final look to the boys sitting in the chevelle. A blank, hollow look came over his face when he saw the kid in the passenger’s seat mouthing the words, “Angels gonna get ya.” It looked like he was speaking in slow motion to Red.

The sound of heavy boots marching in unison played in Red’s mind for indeed he *did* see the devil. He was sitting in the passenger’s seat smiling its bloody grin at him.

* * * * *

The rest of the day had been a blur of sickness and anxiety for Amy. Susan finally called Dr. Leary after Amy vomited for the third time throwing up what little she did eat for lunch when they got home.

She didn’t have much of an appetite. Rancid thoughts of her Mother, (the Mother she never knew) flowed through her mind like sludge coated pictures wet with blackened images of her mangled in a heap of hair, blood and skin. It was more than her twelve year old mind could handle, and Susan knew it. Amy wasn’t ready to know the truth about what happened ten years ago that awful night in the garage, and Susan wasn’t ready to tell her.

“I gave her a mild sedative, nothing to strong,” Dr. Leary told Susan. “It’ll take the edge off anyway.” He gave her a look of puzzlement. “Mrs. Smith, if you don’t mind me asking, what exactly happened today down at Sam’s? Amy looks pale as a ghost. Something must have scared the bejeezus out of her.” Susan was leaning against the doorway to Amy’s room with her arms crossed. She stared carelessly at the floor and then looked up to Dr. Leary. She shook her head with discontent releasing a quivering sigh. “Red,” she moaned. Dr. Leary nodded at her affirming her stress. He smiled weakly and gently squeezed her arm letting her know he understood. “Call if you have any more problems with Amy, ok.”

“Thanks Tom,” she said softly. She stood in the doorway for a little while longer after Dr. Leary left, watching Amy sleep. The room was eerily calm. For one frightening moment Susan thought she saw Heather lying on the bed with her face turned towards her, smiling. Then, a series of chilling thoughts washed over her

like freezing water. *Is my daughter still here with me? All that blood and murder, was it real? Is the girl I saw every day for twenty two years really gone?*

At times it was almost unbearable seeing Amy every day for Susan. Amy resembled her Mother so much that it made Susan feel as if she was reliving Heathers life all over again through this odd reanimation of her daughter through Amy. Hearing Amy laugh, talk and cry was agonizing at times; making Susan divided and torn between the great sadness of wanting her daughter back and the unconditional love she had for Amy. Now she would soon be faced with the bloody secret she has kept from Amy for ten years. There would be questions that she had no answers to. She stepped out of the room leaving the door cracked just a little.

Later that evening, she was on the floor in Amy's bedroom soaking up red watery vomit with a green towel on her hands and knees. "Damn you Red Brown, Damn you straight to hell," she thought.

A wave of guilt washed over her when she thought about how this was the last thing she wanted to be doing today: cleaning up her granddaughter's vomit. She bit down on her lip trying to repress her thoughts. They rushed in hard. As far as she was concerned she would've been just fine sitting back in her lawn chair under the sun, sipping her long island ice tea, smoking her Virginia Slim lights while watching her husband Mark give her bedroom eyes as he mowed the grass, and then have bbq chicken on the grill with corn on the cob and mashed potatoes and that badass sugar cream pie, and maybe just maybe her husband would fist fuck her again like he did the other night. "*Stop it old gal,*" she thought and then laughed to herself.

She puffed away some dangling strands of hair that annoyingly kept touching her forehead as she continued scrubbing the floor. The guilt she felt made her stomach feel tight and sour, more than the stench of vomit. These thoughts which she perceived to be selfish were only covering up the inevitable and now unavoidable task of speaking with her granddaughter about Heather, and the way in which she left this world. She scrubbed harder. Sweat formed on her forehead. Amy began to fidget restlessly in her bed as she began to awake from her afternoon slumber. It was already dark outside when she awoke to the sound of a scrub brush running back and forth on the carpet. She still had her clothes on from earlier; jeans and a tee-shirt. She opened her eyes slowly as she lay on her side; her grandma in her view on the floor scrubbing.

She raised herself up leaning on her hand. Her hair lay over her shoulder, tangled and every which way. Little blonde strands of hair stuck to her cheek from sweat. She tried to speak but had horrible cotton mouth from the sedative Dr. Leary gave her earlier.

"How long have I been asleep?" she finally asked groggily.

"You've been out since around four." Susan answered but without looking at her. She focused on the vomit encrusted carpet instead.

"Oh my goodness grandma, I'm so sorry about the floor. I couldn't make it to the bathroom that last time."

"That's all right. It's not a big deal. Why don't you lie back down." She still hadn't make eye contact. Her tone was straight.

Amy could sense her grandma was irritated. She raised her knees to her chin and crossed her arms around them.

"I'm really sorry," she said softly.

"Amy it really is ok, just lie back down. Go on know."

Amy suddenly felt a tension she'd never experienced with her grandma before. It made her feel bad. She kept silent. A lump formed in her throat. Her eyes felt moist.

She just wanted her grandma to hold her and stroke her hair gently and tell her that she loved her. Instead, this alien mood lingered among the two; confusing and odd.

"I'm sorry, don't be mad at me grandma," she curled her hand to her mouth and began to cry.

Susan stopped scrubbing with her eyes looking straight at the floor. She bit at her top lip with an angry look on her face, yet her eyes were saddened by her granddaughters' cries.

She quickly glanced at Amy and then back again to the floor. She began furiously scrubbing again as Amy sobbed.

"Who was that man at Sam's?" she cried.

Susan shook her head vigorously without answering. She just scrubbed.

"What happened to my mom?" she continued her uncontrollable sobs.

Susan loved her granddaughter with every ounce of her being, but it angered her beyond words to hear Amy ask these questions. She wanted to tell Amy to shut her little mouth but that wave of guilt rushed through her once again. *Please Amy, no questions, not now, not ever*, she thought.

As she scrubbed like a mad woman, her own tears began to fall from her eyes. *My dear sweet Amy, you don't want to know the horrific truth, you can't handle it. I've protected you for so long now and I will continue to protect you. Please, please, please Amy, just shut up! No more questions!* More insane scrubbing.

"Who is Angel?" Amy unknowingly asked.

Susan turned her face sharply at Amy. The scrubbing stopped. Hot tears lashed down her face from her eyes.

"Listen to me little girl, don't you ever speak that name in this house, you understand, ever!"

She returned to her scrubbing, but Amy was a sobbing, crying mess of tears and confusion. For the first time in her twelve years of life her grandma had shouted at her in anger. It wasn't the kind of yell she would hear like when she would get into the chicken coop and get scolded. This was a direct and personal.

Susan began to sob as she scrubbed the floor which was beyond clean by now. It became slower and slower when her anguish took her breath away. She finally stopped moving the soft bristled brush over the carpet and covered her eyes with her hand in a way that suggested shame, but also exhausted grief. Her hand moved to her mouth when her cries became too loud. She didn't want Amy to hear or see her like this. But Amy was crying as well, watching her grandma cry on her hands and knees on the floor.

"Grandma?" Amy cried out. "Grandma please don't cry."

Just then Susan reached her arm to her granddaughter without looking at her. Her shame was too great and the tears were too many for her to look at her. Amy

pulled the covers from over her and climbed down off the bed to her grandma. She wrapped her small hands around Susan's neck, hugging her tight.

"I didn't mean to make you cry grandma," Amy said in short crying breaths.

Susan let out a grief stricken cry. Her wet hand full of tears pulled Amy close to her bosom where she held her with her hands around her head. They cried in each other's arms under the soft, warm glow from the lamp on Amy's nightstand.

Later, after they all called it a night and made their beds a place of solace (at least for now) Susan and her husband Mark awoke to the sound of terrifying screams coming down the hall in Amy's room. They both ran to her side where they held and comforted her, telling her that it was just a dream. Amy pleaded with her grandma to sleep with her for the rest of the night. She was too scared to be alone. This would be the first of many nights when Susan had to lay with Amy until she fell asleep because of the horrendous nightmares she would endure because of Red Brown's tale of blood that day at Sam's. As Susan held her arms around Amy, she shut her eyes and began to fall asleep but not without the haunting regret of having told Amy of Angel Larson and what she did to Amy's Mother. Meanwhile...

* * * * *

Red sat on his porch in an old wooden rocking chair as he watched the sun settle down into the earth. His bones ached and he was dog tired from the day's work of tending to his hogs. He rocked back and forth easily in his chair, sipping beer from a sweaty brown bottle. He puffed at his non filtered cigarette, listening to the sound of crickets in the muggy hot evening until he passed out falling into a drunken sleep. The cigarette fell out of his fingers and onto the porch where it burnt itself out. The sun had gone down completely.

Two hours later he awoke to the sound of the TV playing loudly in the living room. He had forgotten to turn it off. It lit up the front porch with a display of flashing colors and lights. It was showing a ten year anniversary special on the Bludenhale Massacre of 1974. Red sat stunned for a moment in his rocking chair. Then he saw something move in the large and grassy weed infested field in front of his house. A shadowy mass in the shape of a body stood out in his field, outlining itself under the night sky. His blood went cold when he saw two glowing red eyes staring back at him in the distant field. A tall, dark haired woman held a blood soaked hatchet. She was laughing. Even though she stood far off in the distance, Red could hear her laughter as if she was right on the porch. The image in the field disappeared suddenly and the laughing stopped. Red sat back in his rocking chair. He opened a new bottle of beer and took a long sip.

The news special continued playing on the TV. Red could hear it clearly now. A news reporter speaking into a camera, asks the viewing audience in a general tone, "What was Ms. Larson's story?" A sick grin formed on Red's face as these words played over and over in his mind like a broken record.

"Oh my sweet Angel, it's been a long time hasn't it. Do you remember?"

In his mind he heard a startled and breathless female voice on the verge of tears respond, "Yes, I do remember."

"Show me then," he said. And then everything turned pitch white.

Part 3

The Interview (Pre-Blood)

1974

Angel Larson sat alone in her jail cell on the morning of June 17th, 1974. Her mind was dizzy and frail from the previous night's horrors. She looked like a zombie that had just been chewed up and spit out of a brutal war. Her mother and father stood behind the black bars of her cell, shaken and bewildered. They tried speaking to her but she hardly said a word. She just stared at the moldy and crumbling concrete wall in front of her. A single ray of yellow sunlight showed through the small window at the top of her cell.

"Why is our daughter not speaking to us?" Angel's mother with a tear in her eye asked the cop sitting lazily at his desk with his legs propped up. He seemed annoyed by her asking him a question.

"Ma'am, she's in shock. And I can't really tell you anything right now. Detective Monroe will be in shortly to talk to you both. Don't worry, she'll live." He ruffled his newspaper.

Her mother gripped the cold black bars of the cell. "Angelica, honey can you hear me. Its mom and dad, can you tell us why you're in here? What in god's name happened?"

Angel sat on a metal bench like a scared child with her knees raised to her chin. Her hair was still damp from the shower they gave her when they brought her in. Heather's blood had since dried on Angel's body from the time Sheriff Brown found her lying in a ditch on Devils Bluff road, hysterical and screaming. Her little screaming fit she had on the side of the road disturbed some crows that were feeding in the surrounding cornfields, making them burst into the morning sky speckling the sun. Her black hair was parted in the middle and was covering her eyes. She raised her head like an abused animal and frowned at her mother.

"Heather's gone mom, she's gone."

Her mother saw a terror in her daughter's eyes like she had never seen before. She didn't know what was going on or why her only child was sitting in a dark jail cell on a Saturday morning terrified and crying. She wanted to scream but was startled at the sound of the metal door opening behind them. Detective Monroe along with Sheriff Red Brown entered the room. Monroe, a tall, clean cut man of thirty six with perfectly parted to the side salt and pepper black hair, began to explain to Angel's parents why their daughter was sitting in a jail cell on a Saturday morning. He was cut off when Angel's mother collapsed into her husband's arms from hearing the news. As if she wasn't a wreck enough when she got the call only an hour earlier that Angel was in jail with no explanation, (Bludenhale city jail policy).

"Mrs. Larson, your daughter is not under arrest. She is a suspect though. For now we just want to question her, get her statement of what happened. It's all very

confusing right now, but we're working on getting it all sorted out." He paused for a moment. He had a hard look on his face. He turned to Red giving him a troubling look and then back to Angels distraught Mother.

"Mr. and Mrs. Larson, you have to know that when Sheriff Brown found your daughter," Monroe stalled. He rubbed his forehead. "She had Heather Smiths blood all over her. She was screaming over and over again that she had bathed in her blood. I have to ask, did your daughter have it out for Heather? Was she jealous of her? Did she ever talk about Heather to you?"

Mrs. Larson covered her mouth in grief and shook her head. She couldn't believe what she was hearing. She felt faint and sickened.

"Would you be shocked if I were to tell you that Angel and Heather were best friends and have been since they were five?"

"Well yes, I suppose I would." Monroe said.

He continued, "I don't want to point fingers this early, but I have to warn you that the outcome of this looks rather bleak."

Red jingled a large keychain from his belt and started to unlock Angel's cell. Both men stepped inside before Angel's parents had a chance to hold her.

"Angelica, my name is Detective Barry Monroe" Angel looked at him in a daze. "You've obviously already met Sheriff Brown." Red looked down to the floor when Angel looked at him with her big scared eyes. He nervously cleared his throat. He was too afraid to look at her. In the short time since they met (six hours ago) he was already terrified of her and had a good feeling of bad dreams to come. Red couldn't get that image out of his mind; the sagging skin, the lifeless blonde hair, the mangled and broken look of Heathers body lying in a bloody heap on the garage floor and that ghastly odor of blood.

Red held his breath as Angel walked by him and out of the cell. He believed that's as close as he's ever been to the devil. As they exited, Angel's Mother and Father took her in their arms and held her, although she didn't hug them back; just stood straight with her arms to her sides. Her Mother held her daughters face in her hands. Angel gazed back at her with glossy eyes.

"There was so much blood mom, Heather's gone." Angel said in a daze.

"Ms. Larson, we'd like to ask you some questions about what happened last night, ok. We have a room set up where we can be comfortable and just talk and get your statement." Monroe told her.

Mrs. Larson's eyes were turning red from crying. She turned to Detective Monroe. "Please, detective," she said with heartache in her voice. "What's going to happen to our daughter?"

"I understand you both are in a world of grief right now, but this is all very routine. Right now we are just questioning her. You are more than welcome to stay while we question her, in fact I would hope that you do."

"We're not leaving our daughter, we're staying." Her Father said.

Monroe shook his head in agreement with a slight smile. "We have a lounge area with coffee down the hall. You may want to get settled in. This could be a long day."

* * * * *

They took Angel to a small room that had a two way glass mirror. There was a small round table with three fold out chairs sitting around it. A small tape recorder sat in the middle of the table along with some styrofoam cups and a pitcher of water.

“Have a seat Angelica, or is it Angel?” Monroe asked politely. His good natured demeanor gave her a false sense of security. It did calm her nerves just a little. In her mind she knew she was innocent. “Angel is fine,” she told him quietly.

There was a large video camera set up on a tri-pod stand sitting in the corner of the room. She felt like she was on some strange game show, but felt more at ease when Red flipped the light switch on brightening the room.

* * * * *

“We’re going to record your statement.” Monroe began explaining the basics of a questioning session as Red fumbled with the video camera in the corner. “You all set over there Red?”

“Yes sir, you can start anytime,” Red told Monroe as he tried nervously to keep his eyes off of Angel.

“Ok Angel, let’s begin. I just want you to clear your mind and relax. Just do your best to give us as much information and detail as you can. All right, here we go.” He pushed the record button on the tape player and began to speak.

* * * * *

“This is Detective Monroe of the Bludenhale Police dept. and I’m speaking with Angelica Larson in connection with the murders of Ron Alders, Steve Cooper and Heather Smith. Ms. Larson can you state your full name and date of birth please.”

“Angelica Mary Larson, 3-22-1952.”

“Ms. Larson I want you to start from the beginning. Concerning your whereabouts yesterday prior to being at the garage, were you with the three people I just mentioned on Friday?”

“Yes, I was.”

And where were you when you were with these three people?”

“I was at Heathers house.”

“Approximately what time? Do you remember?”

“It was around two in the afternoon. I was helping Heather with her daughter Amy.”

“Ms. Smith has a daughter, how old?” Monroe was surprised.

Angel hesitated. “She’s two.” Her voice cracked as if she was going to cry. Monroe scribbled something down on a small notepad and continued. “So tell me about your day. What you did, how you and Heather met up with Ron and Steve.”

“Amy was extra fussy for some reason so Heather called me and asked if I could come over to give her a hand, you know. I was going over to Heather’s house anyway because Ron and Steve were going to pick us up later. We were going to Mac’s drive-in and then.....”

* * * * *

Friday afternoon, June 16th, 1974—Angel leaned over a tall wooden crib. Two large and partly opened green eyes stared back at her. “Amy,” Angel said slowly.

“Amy.” She brushed her long black hair over two year old Amy Smith’s face, which in return made Amy giggle in her half sleep state. “Hey seepy girl, you ready to get up?”

“Oh c’mon Angel, just ten more minutes please.” Heather begged as she sat Indian style on her bed applying pink fingernail polish to her nails.

“Mommy’s not ready for you to get up yet is she.” A big smile formed on Amy’s face at the sound of Angel’s voice.

The record player in the corner of Heather’s room was spinning out the glorious glam rock of Now I’m Here by Queen, and according to the girls vaginal wetness meter Queen was a close second to their mainstay gods of sexual rock fury, Led Zeppelin. Angel reached down and slid her hands carefully under Amy’s arms and lifted her up. Amy bobbed her head on Angels shoulder getting some naptime drool on her Led Zeppelin ’73 tour jersey. It was a classic black sleeve jersey with a white front and the swan song logo outlined in black. It was also Angels favorite tee shirt but she didn’t care that little Amy was slobbering her baby spit all over it. It was just a shirt.

“Uh, Angel, you know she’s salivating on your prized Zep tee,” Heather said as she blew on her fingers.

“That’s ok,” Angel said and stroked the back of Amy’s head.

Angel loved taking care of Amy and she most defiantly had a hand in raising her along with Heathers parents. She was Heathers unofficial sister. Angel was there from the beginning and always helped Heather on a daily basis with Amy. Angel was that girl. She was the supportive best friend that had no problem getting her hands dirty when it came to changing diapers, feeding or cleaning up baby vomit. She was the one that would make faces at Amy keeping her occupied at the department store as Heather sifted through hangers of clothes. And she was the one Heather cried to when Amy’s Father just up and vanished. Heather and Angel were friends since the age of five and had a strong bond that showed itself through the daily laughs, cries, heartaches and dreams of their friendship. Angel loved Amy and would do anything for her. And for this, Heather loved Angel.

Heather watched Angel rolling on the floor with Amy having a tickle fest. “All right you two, make room for mommy.” And then Amy was bombarded with kisses and tickles from twenty something girls that suddenly reverted back to being thirteen.

“Amy, wanna hear your song?” Angel asked with excitement in her voice.

Amy eyes went big. She started jumping up and down saying, “Willwee song, willwee song,” while clapping her hands and laughing.

Angel sifted through a milk crate full of vinyl records and pulled out a Sweet album. Little Willy was Amy’s favorite song and loved dancing to it. Angel slid the record out of the album jacket and spun it around between her hands like a magician. She laid it on the turntable and dropped the needle on the spinning black vinyl. Amy’s curly blonde hair flopped in front of her eyes as she hid behind her Mother, watching Angel crawl on the floor towards her making faces, pretending like she was a monster. “Angel get me,” Amy giggled. Angel leaped playfully at her and the high, shrill child siren went off when Amy screamed. “C’mon baby, dance with mommy,” Heather said. Soon they were all dancing together in a circle and holding hands. Heather was laughing so hard at the sight

of Amy jumping up and down with Angel to the song that she fell back onto her bed out of breath. Her blonde hair spread out over her big pillow. She sat up trying to catch her breath. It warmed her heart seeing her best friend with Amy. She felt lucky to have a friend like Angel and was glad someone like her was in her daughter's life. Her breathing slowed down as she relaxed and watched them both dancing together on the floor. And then it flashed in her mind like a bolt of lightning. The dream. The god awful dream she had last night. The dream she'd been trying to forget all morning but kept haunting her like a dark witch in the night creeping around in the attic of her mind. Her face went from carefree and happy to blank in the blink of an eye and Angel noticed.

"What's wrong sis, you ok?" Angel said from across the room. She went over to Heather's bed and sat down on the large and fluffy comforter. She put her hand on Heather's knee and asked her what was wrong. Heather tried to shrug it off.

"I just had trouble sleeping last night, it's nothing really."

Angel knew better and gave her suspicious eyes. "Are you sure?"

Heather shook her head. "Yeah Angel I'm fine, really."

Angel put her arm around Heather. She could feel Angel's body warmth radiating through her Zeppelin jersey from jumping around with Amy. And she could smell the lingering sweet aroma of her shampoo on her soft black hair. It was good enough to knock out those bad thoughts of her dream and cause that tingly feeling she would get every time Angel got close to her. She also couldn't help think of how damn good Angel looked in those white shorts she was wearing; tight in both the front and back. And those long legs to. *Come wrap those snakes around me Angel, please oh please, oh god I want to feel you around me Angel*, she thought.

"Well I'm here if you wanna talk ok," Angel said and kissed Heather on the cheek. She continued pecking at Heather's cheek playfully, making her blush.

"You want kisses to Amy, huh, do ya!" Angel leaped off the bed and Amy ran for cover, screaming and laughing at the same time with her curly blonde locks flopping around on her forehead.

"All right girls, get your asses down here!" Heather's mom Susan stood at the bottom of the staircase with a cigarette dangling from her mouth as she yelled up to the girls. Yelling was the normal everyday way of doing things in the Smith household. Heather grabbed her blue jean jacket with a hand drawn picture of David Bowie (Ziggy Stardust) on the back. "Can't forget Ziggy. C'mon Amy let's go, grandma's callin' us."

"What in the world have you girl's been doin' up there all afternoon?" Susan asked the girls as they came around the corner into the kitchen. She threw a wash cloth over her shoulder and set her cigarette in a gold ashtray sitting on the kitchen counter.

"Oh Mother," Heather said and rolled her eyes waving her freshly painted pink fingernails at Susan. She continued with, "girl stuff," in her usual sarcastic, sassy self. She got that from Susan.

"Now Angelica, don't forget to take one of these with you tonight before you leave. I made one for your parents." She set aside one of her sugar cream pies with a toothpick stuck in the middle with a small white piece of paper taped to it saying 'Larsons'. "Oh thank you Mrs. Smith, I won't forget." Angel said politely as she sat

on the counter top. She blushed slightly when Susan called her by her full name Angelica. It made her feel like she was eight years old again. She liked it. Susan cut into one of the pies she made, placing sinfully sweet and decadent triangular shapes of sugar heaven onto small plates. She licked her thumb as she asked Angel, "How big?" Angel looked confused by what Susan said.

"What?" Angel said. Her black hair flared out to the sides of her face.

"I said how big a piece do you want?" Susan said.

"Big or small silly ass," Heather laughed as she was pouring an excessive amount of sugar into a pitcher of cherry kool-aid. Amy was peeking just above the counter eyeing the flowing sugar with intensity.

"Oh, just medium." Angel smiled.

"Well here's a big piece. You girls are too thin." Susan slid the plate towards Angel.

"Believe it or not mom, Angel can eat like a horse when she wants to." Heather commented.

"So Angelica, Do you have any plans after graduation from beauty school? You must be excited." Susan asked as she cut around the pie.

"Well, for now I'm just going to keep working at Tina's salon until I can save up enough money to hopefully get a business loan for my own place. And yes I am excited about graduation." Angel's eyes sparkled when she talked about her future.

"Ms. Beauty school princess is finally graduating. Proud of ya sis," Heather said playfully to Angel. Her sarcasm was showing through once again. It's not that she was jealous of Angel or was trying to be mean, it's just the way she was. Angel got it. Heather truly was happy for her. She missed Angel and was happy she would be able to see more of her. Heather did loathe the fact though that somehow her life seemed to have gone in a different direction after high school once she started dancing at Cherrybombs periodically just for extra cash. She just hoped and prayed that her daughter Amy would never end up doing something like that.

Susan seemed aggravated with Heathers remarks to Angel. She gave her a stern look. Heather just stuck her tongue out at her and smiled. "Heather, you should be happy for Angel. When I was young I had dreams to."

"Yeah and then Dad knocked you up," Heather said and then cracked a high laugh into her glass of cherry kool-aid when she took a drink. It sounded as if in a tunnel. Susan walked over to Heather and put her arms around her from behind. "You're damn right he knocked me up and look what happened. He gave me a beautiful, wonderful little girl that's grown up now with a daughter of her own." Heather smiled and squeezed her Mother's hand, "Yeah sorry about making you a grandma so early."

"Yeah, thirty eight is a little young to be called grandma," Angel said.

"Well at least you were twenty when you had Amy. I was sixteen when I had you. When it's all said and done I wouldn't change a thing. And just remember girls, no matter what you decide to do with your life, there isn't anything wrong with just wanting to be a mom."

Angel narrowed her eyes to the floor once again feeling like a little kid. Amy began tugging at Susan's shorts wanting to be picked up. "Who's this muchkin on the floor with those curly blonde locks?" Susan laughed as she began to pick up

her granddaughter. "It me gamma!" Amy's sweetness filled the kitchen as Susan picked her up and showered her with kisses.

"So are we going to see more of you Angelica since you'll be out of school? We've missed you around here lately." Susan asked.

"As if we don't see enough of her already mom, jeez," Heather laughed.

"Very funny Heather," Angel said.

"You know I'm kiddin' sis." Heather winked at Angel. "But I don't blame you for wanting to be here more than your own house. I mean that freakin' place gives me the creeps to."

"Be nice Heather." Susan warned. "Besides, what supposedly happened there is just a myth."

"Yeah, what was that myth again Angel?" Heather asked with a sly, cool smile. Angel covered her face with her hands knowing where Heather was going with this.

"No Heather, please don't," Angel begged. A devilish smile formed on Heather's face. There was no stopping her. Angel looked at her with a weak, pleading smile.

"Let's see. Oh yeah, that little Armsworth girl."

Angel broke in, "She wasn't little, she was sixteen," she said rolling her eyes.

"Ok whatever, she was sixteen year old Audrey Armsworth," Heather said waving her hands at Angel. "She was snooping around her father's barn one day and she caught her step-mom messing around with the farmhand if you know what I mean. He chased her out into her Father's cornfield and HACKED her to pieces!" Angel covered her ears and squint her eyes shut when Heather barked out the word hacked. Amy giggled when she saw Angel covering her ears. She imitated her and covered hers as well. Susan reminded her daughter in her best stern motherly voice that there was a two year old in the room. Heather didn't let up. She was enjoying scaring the crap out of Angel.

"But that's not the scary part. The scary part is that she came back from the dead and," Just then Heather's Dad came in through the back door. Angel was so caught up in listening to Heather tell the bloody tale of Audrey that she didn't even hear the door open, much less notice that Heather's Dad was standing behind her listening in waiting for the perfect moment to scare the living hell out of her. He poked his fingers at her sides making her jump, letting out a scream. Her face turned red when she saw that it was Mark. Her hand went to her quickly beating heart as she closed her eyes with a look of relief on her face. His laugh filled the kitchen and it made Angel laugh along with everyone else, even though she was blushing horribly.

"Oh, c'mon Angelica, you really don't believe that story do you?" He waved his hand and said, "Hogwash." Then a sparkle of excitement showed in eyes. "Oh hey, look what I got here." He was holding a brown paper bag.

"What did Sam talk you into buying this time, c'mon let's see it." Susan not sounding impressed took a long drag from her cigarette.

He shook the bag and pulled out a large black plastic looking gadget. "Check this out!"

"Uh Dad, what the heck is that?" Heather asked.

"It's called a Polaroid camera," He said proudly.

“A what?” Susan blew out her smoke in a long foggy line from her mouth. She looked at Mark like he lost his marbles.

“It takes instant pictures. No waiting or anything. You just hit this button and boom! You got a picture. I’m telling you, this is the future.” They all huddled around him like witches to get a peek of this new technology. There was a collective ‘Oooh’ among them. And then Heather looked up at the sound of a car getting closer their house. “Boys are here,” she said.

The group dispersed. “OK, well we’re outta here,” Heather said quickly while making her way to the front door only to do a complete u-turn back into the living room. “Never mind.” Her Dad cut her off as he busted through the screen door; a big smile on his face from the 70 Chevelle rumbling in his driveway.

“You boy’s keep that baby runnin’ now. Let’s get that hood up.” He rubbed his hands together eager to get his hands on the engine.

Heather went back into the living room and threw herself down on the couch letting out a sigh. Amy was on the floor gnawing on the Polaroid camera getting it wet with toddler spit. The sound of men talking loudly over the engine trailed off into nothing as Angel shut the door.

“You can’t blame him,” Angel shrugged. “Oh my goodness Amy you can’t eat that.” She went to pry the gadget from Amy’s mouth.

Heather knew Angel was right. She couldn’t blame her Dad for wanting to talk about cars with Ron and Steve every time they came over. After all he was in a female dominated household. The poor guy just needed to get away from all that estrogen every once in a while, and that ‘girl smell’ that just seemed to linger about the house he lived in.

They heard Mark yelling something from outside. He asked Susan to bring out his new toy. He wanted to try it out and what better way than to take some pictures of the black behemoth of metal and thunder, Ron’s 70 Chevelle. “C’mon girls, let’s get this over with,” Heather huffed.

They made their way outside to the muscular beast of a car. Susan was holding Amy. Heather handed her Dad the camera. He took a picture of the car and it ejected a square piece of film. Within seconds it revealed the picture of Ron’s car. “See,” Mark boasted, “This is the future, I’m tellin’ ya.” Heather took the picture and gave it a look. “Here, take one of me and sis’.” She pulled Angel close to her and they sat on the hood of the car. She put her arm around Angel and leaned in close to her. Their heads touched. Mark convinced Susan and Amy to join them. He took a few shots. Both Heather and Angel had purposely big, cheesy grins on their faces, evidence that they were finally having a good time in the midst of Marks photo frenzy. After all, Heather considered this ‘good family time’, and she did love her family.

“Ok Dad, it’s getting late. We wanna get outta here.” Heather said.

“All right, just one more,” Mark said with a laugh. “Ron, Steve, get on in there.” There was no way they could say no. Heather had Amy on her lap as Steve reluctantly walked up to the hood. Amy noticed Steve immediately. “Stee mommy, Stee.” He was twenty four but turned into a fourteen year old when he stood there with his hands in his pockets rocking back and forth on his feet. He just wasn’t good with kids. He waved at Amy. “Jesus Steve, she ain’t a monster,” Heather laughed. She held Amy across her arms and began making obnoxious sounds

as if Amy was a little beast. She got a kick out of it. Steve didn't; his face turned red. She knew that her relationship with Steve wouldn't last much longer. He was just a good lay. Amy giggled as her Mother swung her around and around. This would be Amy's last memory that she would have of Heather, and the final picture ever taken of her and her Mother together, sitting on the hood of the Chevelle in 1974.

Then Ron, Steve, Heather and Angel all took a seat on the hood. The camera flashed for the final time.

"You be good for Grandma tonight ok, and mommy see you tomorrow; give me kisses," Heather leaned down to give her daughter her final kiss unbeknownst to her or anyone else. Amy was sitting on Susan's lap on the grass. Her little hands wrapped around Heathers neck as she kneeled down to hug and kiss her goodbye.

"You all stay off that Devils Bluff you here, it's dangerous," Susan said to her daughter. Heather was thrown off guard by her Moms sudden concern of her evening's whereabouts. "Don't forget girly you may be twenty two but you still live under my roof."

"Jesus mom were just going to a movie. Then it's going to be bored city for like four hours. You know how those guys are about that car. Anyways, I love you mom, thanks for watching Amy." Heather said.

She kissed her Mother on the cheek and got into the backseat of the Chevelle. Susan continued playing with Amy in her lap. "Don't get too crazy with that thing Mark; I wanna till the garden before dark."

* * * * *

Detective Monroe sat across from Angel with a stunned look on his face. He leaned back in his chair. "So it sounds like you were part of their family, almost like sisters with Heather."

"Yeah," Angel said softly in a distant voice. Her eyes became moist. "Heather was my sister."

"You said something about going to the drive-in that night, right?"

After we left Heather's house we went to Mac's drive-in, they were showing...

* * * * *

"Oh no, I am not watching that movie again. That little bitch with the green face gave me nightmares for a week. Especially when she puked that green shit on that priest," Angel made her case.

"Here, this'll help you relax." Heather pulled out a small joint from her purse. Angel's stare burned right through Heather. She didn't like to see her best friend getting high even if she only did it occasionally.

"Why do I suddenly feel the presence of my Mother," Heather pouted. "All right, all right. God sis', I'll wait till later. It's only marijuana." Angel didn't respond.

"Oh what, I suppose now you wanna tell me how you disapprove of me dancing at Cherrybombs right?"

Angel was thrown off by Heather's comment. She looked stunned and really didn't what to say. They never really talked about Heather's stripping gig at Cherrybomb's. Heather knew Angel hated her dancing there even if she had only done it two times; two times too many in Angel's mind. Heather did have some

good news though for Angel. After a few awkward seconds of silence Heather decided to alleviate the tension.

“Well Angel just so you know, last Friday was it for me and Cherrybombs.” A smile slowly formed on Angels face at the news. “I told Jack I was done. I thought it was a good idea at first ya know, to make some quick money. I kept thinking of Amy though and how it would make her feel someday knowing that ‘mommy use to take her clothes off for men’. And (she stretched out the word and) I knew it was causing a rift between you and me.” She touched Angel’s hand gently. “And I don’t want that.” Angel felt like crying when she heard Heather tell her these words.

“Why didn’t you tell me last week?” Angel asked, a little teary eyed.

“I wanted to surprise you. I knew it would make you happy.” Heather smiled.

“I know you made the right decision. Besides, that guy Jack is a creepoid.” Angel laughed.

Heather nodded in agreement at Angel. “He is a fucking creepoid.” They both burst into a laugh and hugged. “I am going to smoke this joint later though. It’s only marijuana.” Heather said.

Angel gazed out the window watching the sun fall into the earth as No sugar tonight by The Guess Who played on the radio. Her overall feeling at the moment was that of happiness and great relief knowing that Heather was no longer going to be dancing at Cherrybombs. She knew that her best friend wasn’t some out of control, sex crazed drug fiend. It really wasn’t that big a deal to her. It was only marijuana like Heather said.

Heather popped open a can of beer from the six pack sitting on the floor in the back seat. “You better be sharing that joint later Heather. Don’t be a reefer hog.” Ron said looking in the rear view mirror.

“Why don’t you ever hit that Angel, it ain’t gonna hurt ya,” Steve asked.

Angel was ready to stand her ground but before she could Heather jumped in with, “Cus she’s a good girl. It’s all sex and rock-n-roll for sis’, no drugs kiddies.”

“And what exactly is wrong with that?” Angel smiled slyly under the fading daylight. “So I don’t get wasted, big deal; I still like to fuck all the time.” Heather sprayed out her mouthful of beer she was drinking at Angels comment. “Jesus Angel, a little subtlety please,” she laughed. “I’m the horniest bitch in Witchington county.” Angel leaned up to Ron and whispered in his ear, “And my pussy is calling you; it’s been three days.” She nibbled at his ear and sat back with a devilish smile on her face. She swung her hair over her left shoulder and began stroking it downward. The black velvet sifted through the palm of her hand and through her fingers. Heather took another gulp from her can as she looked at Angel. Her slender white legs stuck out amongst the black interior of the backseat. They laid slightly spread apart. Her inner thighs curved out beautifully from her white shorts which were sticking to her skin from sweat. Heather could smell the sweet aroma of sweat coming from Angel. Those arousing uncontrollable thoughts of Angel came rushing into Heather’s mind just as they always have. *Sweet sugar sis’ with that hot sugarpussy. Wrap that black hair around my neck and pull me down into the fire between your legs. Please Angel, I need to taste you.* She wanted pounce on top of Angel and suck those puffy, ruby red lips of hers. She wanted to inhale the scent of her sex till she got her fill. She needed to get out of the car and fast. “Are we almost to Mac’s?” she said frantically.

* * * * *

Detective Monroe leaned back in his chair listening to Angel talk about when and where she was yesterday Friday afternoon. His arms were crossed and he seemed relaxed just taking in everything she was saying. He was a little taken back by how calm and in his eyes 'normal' Angel's demeanor was concerning the circumstances; those being the three dead people found in the garage soaked in blood and stinking of death, and one of those three dead people being Angel's best friend. He just summed it up to her being in shock.

"So after the movie you said that you all went out to Devils Bluff road, is that right?"

"Yes, we did." Angel said calmly.

Monroe snickered quietly under his breath. "Now Ms. Larson, we all know what you and a lot of other young kids like to do at Devils Bluff. That sure is a hot spot for racing isn't it, am I right?"

Angel looked scared for a moment. "We weren't doing anything wrong, we were just," Monroe let out a hearty laugh sounding like some middle aged Father. "It's ok, old Red Brown here use to race out there in his younger days, didn't ya Red." The sheriff gave Monroe a look and then he smiled only just briefly before returning his attention back to Angel. His face went straight in a flash. Monroe's smile faded and he cleared his throat.

"So you were at Heathers house in the afternoon and Mac's later that evening. Tell me about Devils Bluff."

"Ron had made a bet with Timothy Wellman a week earlier. Timothy was working on his '68 Camaro and was almost certain he could take Ron on Devils Bluff. Both Ron and Steve were buddies with Timothy, so it was all in good fun. Ron told Tim that if he beat him in a race that a cold six pack was on him..."

* * * * *

"...and I'll throw in a pack of Camels to, but if you lose, you buy us a case and a carton of Camels," Ron told Timothy. Ron had a certain way of motivating his opponents with beer and smokes. He always would up the other guys due if they lost. That way they would race harder in order not to have to pay up. Heather removed her blue jean jacket and took off her shirt. She was just in her tan bra.

"Ok, what the hell are you doing Heather," Steve said.

"We're getting low on beer. Hopefully these will distract little Timmy and we can get ourselves a case." She cupped her breasts in her hands. "I like the way you think babe," Steve said with a big grin.

Angel could care less about getting high or drinking beer with her friends. She just wanted to feel the rush of speeding down Devils Bluff in the dark with the engine vibrating and rumbling and Zeppelin blaring on the radio. It excited her in more ways than one. She felt a tingling sensation between her legs and a slight wetness as Ron pulled up next to Timothy.

"Hi Timmy," Heather stretched her arms up. Her bosom arched out. He bashfully waved and nodded to the two females sitting in the back seat. "Hi Heather. Hey Angelica." Steve glanced in the back to the girls. He rubbed his hands together, "Ladies I believe we're gonna get drunk tonight." Ron held his

head down and laughed. Both he and Steve were a little older than Timothy. Ron kind of took Timothy under his wing making him his little hood rat prodigy.

“You give it all you got now boy, don’t hold back.” Ron told Timothy when he rolled his window down. Angel blew Timothy a kiss just as Ron revved up his engine. “Fuck me Jesus turn it up, Zeppelins on,” Angel said. Heather felt as if she was in the midst of the perfect storm: A loud engine, Led Zeppelin, and her smokin’ hot best friend sitting next to her and she knew damn well these elements were Angel’s vices. And it made her angrier than hell that Ron was the lucky bastard to get his 10 inch beast (or least that’s what Angel told her) saturated on a nightly basis with Angel’s sweet, wet sex, and tonight sooner or later he’d get that sugarpussy slippin’ and slidin’ all up and down his face.

‘Dancing Days’ played on the radio as the Chevelle blazed down the dirt road known as Devils Bluff. Angel switched sides with Heather. She craned her head out the window so she could feel the hot summer night air blow in her face. Her long pitch black hair zipped past rows of green cornstalks in the night. Heather teased Timothy with her ample bosom peeking through the open window of the Chevelle. Her erect nipples pushed hard through the fabric of her tan bra. High female laughing, Led Zeppelin and a roaring engine took over the night. As Ron passed Timothy’s Camaro at about eighty five, he yelled out his window along with a cocky laugh, “Make that a case of Bud ya here.” As they neared the end of Devils Bluff and began slowing down, Ron decided to do a series of donuts in the gravel dirt road, claiming his victory over the young wanna be hood rat. At the end of the final spin Angel’s head fell down into Heather’s lap. She was out of breath from laughing. Her eyes gazed up at Heather. A star cast night sky lay in the background behind Heather in the backseat window. Heather’s hand glided across Angel’s face, smoothly caressing her cheek.

“Hey dollface,” Heather said as her fingers played with a lock of her blonde hair. Angel giggled as if on some natural high. Her eyes sparkled when a shooting star reflected itself in her dark pupils.

* * * * *

Monroe pushed stop on the recorder. He sat for a moment and looked up to the ceiling as if processing all the information Angel had told him. She sat timidly on the other side of the small table not saying a word. The room was silent. Monroe gave a look to Red that suggested it was time to get down to business. They nodded in agreement at each other.

Monroe sat up and leaned his elbows on the table. He had a very serious look on his face. It frightened Angel. She felt cold.

“Ms. Larson, you have to understand that we found a hatchet inside the garage that was covered in blood; blood from the three victims. And when Sherriff Brown found you lying on the side of the road this morning you had Heather Smiths blood all over you. We received a report from forensics just before this interview confirming that it was in fact Ms. Smith’s blood on your body. It seems pretty cut and dry to me and the evidence is obvious.”

She sat stunned and speechless. “Do you think I did this?” *I should have known. Ron was right*, she thought. Her mouth hung open in shock.

“Ms. Larson you can make this really easy on yourself and everyone else if just admit what you did.”

She shook in head in disbelief as the tears fell from her eyes.

“Something was in that garage,” She said with genuine terror in her voice.

“Ms. Larson please,” Monroe was becoming annoyed.

“You have to believe me, it was...”

“What, the big bad wolf or your imaginary fucking friend?” Monroe yelled.

Red stared at Angel in amazement thinking how dare she lie about such an atrocity. He saw the blood. He saw the carnage. He smelled death in all its black glory smothering the inside of the garage. And for her to sit there and try to weasel her way out made him want to jump across the table and plant his hands around her neck. But still to his astonishment of Angel’s innocent like demeanor, that look of cold fear still showed itself in his eyes. He leaned in towards Monroe and whispered, “I’m gonna get some coffee.”

“Make that two,” Monroe nodded.

Red left the room. Angel held her head down with her hair falling into her eyes. Monroe let out a stressful sigh as he cocked his head to the left and to the right trying to relieve some tension. He tapped his fingers on the table and stared at Angel. “What about your blood Angelica?” He said calmly. “We did find your blood as well. Can you explain that?” She hung her head low and to the side as if trying to look away from something hideous. She had a shameful frown and said nothing, just stared downward with her hands in her lap. Monroe let out a breath of frustration. “Ok, it’s obvious you’re not gonna talk about it,” Monroe said.

Red returned with two styrofoam cups of hot, black coffee. Tension and an awkward silence lingered in the room for a couple of minutes. Monroe glanced at the two way mirror as if for approval to keep going.

He pushed record on the tape player. “All right Ms. Larson, the floor is all yours. Tell me your story. What did you see in the garage?” She hesitated for a moment and then spoke.

“It was around ten thirty when we got to the garage...”

Angel’s thoughts drifted on a river of blood back to just ten hours ago in the garage, when life as she knew it ended and an endless hell began. Indeed there was something in the garage that night... something. And everything went black.

Part 4

Angel Bloody Angel

1974

The engine of the Chevelle unearthed a low rumble as it turned down the narrow dirt path between the cornfield off of 750 W. The tall stalks of corn going slowly past the window reminded Angel of driving through the carwash with her Dad when she was little. The headlights shined outward into pure darkness

revealing nothing. After about fifteen feet or so a tiny glimpse of something white showed itself in the black of the cornfield. Steve rested his left arm on a cold case of beer. "Ah, there she is," he said and took a swig from his can. "Home sweet home," Ron affirmed.

As they crept closer the exterior of the garage came fully into view. The secluded and cozy brick white building had cobwebbed decorated windows. There were scattered sections of chipped paint on its brick walls. The small garage seemed claustrophobic amongst the tall stalks of corn. But it was their place. It was a gift to Ron from his uncle Jack. He had no use for the garage anymore. It was just sitting there in his cornfield so he handed it down to his nephew Ron. He wanted him to have a place where he could work on cars. Jack was busy these days with his new night job as owner of a new dance club called Cherrybombs on the outskirts of Bludenhale. Although he still ran his farm during the day.

Highway Star played at a low volume as the car sat in front of the garage with its beastly engine rumbling. Steve got out and opened the garage door. Heather suddenly felt a burst of excitement. The thought of her and Angel alone with Ron turned her on for some reason. She wasn't attracted to Ron and had no intention of ever messing up Angel's relationship with him, but it still excited her. *Wanna jump back here and fuck us with that horsecock of yours Ron?* She thought.

Steve guided Ron inside the garage. Once inside the car took up most of the space but there was still room enough for a workbench, a small refrigerator, a cheap leather love seat, two metal stools, a turntable and an old 1950's jukebox in the corner that had been out of commission for some time. They all got out of the car. Steve flipped on the lights. Four sets of long tubular lights hanging in the middle of the ceiling flickered on one after another. They made a buzzing sound as its bright white light revealed the tools sitting on Ron's workbench; a multitude of wrenches, screwdrivers, ratchet sets, a couple of hammers, a small hatchet.

"Christ it's hot here. Thank god for this thing." Ron turned on the window air conditioner. It blew out cool smooth air.

Heather stretched. She had put on her blue jean jacket again with the hand drawn picture of David Bowie on the back. Her breasts puffed out when she stretched out. It caught Angel's eye, but she looked away with a feeling of embarrassment, hoping that Heather didn't see her. Angel was slightly jealous of Heather's tits. They were at least a full C-cup and Angel was a standard B. Angel thought hers were too small, but Heather would always tell her she had nice 'girls'. It was Angel though who had the ass and those long fucking legs. Heather never envied her shapely features or curvy waist. Heather herself possessed these similar traits but she could barely keep herself together sometimes when she was around Angel. Her round ass, her legs, those big puffy lips all drove Heather crazy. And every night while the girls were hanging out upstairs in Heathers bedroom, Heather could always smell the sex on Angel from the quickie she had with Ron before coming over. After Angel left, Heather would masturbate until her hand cramped and ached. She would smell the bed sheets where Angel had sat and talked about how Ron fucked the shit out of her. Heather would watch Angel showering after gym class when they were teenagers. It was then when she secretly fell in love with her best friend and never once before in her life did she ever have any attraction to another girl. As far as she knew she'd always been

attracted to men and men only. She was heterosexual. But for reasons beyond her (ones that would keep her up many a night), she was viciously attracted to Angel and only Angel and she didn't understand why. One time her senior year she tried masturbating to the homecoming queen; a pretty faced popular girl with a nice body. She wanted to see if she truly had gone 'leftfield' but halfway through rubbing herself she felt disgusted and immediately thought of the guy she was fucking at the time, and then of course Angel. She tried over and over again at different times to think of other girls in her school, but she ended up feeling guilty not because she felt gay but because she wasn't thinking of her best friend. One night she got so excited while fingering herself thinking of Angel and listening to 'When the levee breaks' by Zeppelin that she soaked her bed sheets. How in the hell would she explain that one to her Mother. *Sorry mom I was masturbating while thinking of my best friend who happens to be a girl and got a little carried away.* The sheets were better off in the garbage. Why did she feel this way about Angel? Why did she feel the need to devour her body every time she walked in the room? What was the attraction? Was it because they were so opposite? Heather had blonde hair, Angel had black. Heather was short, Angel was tall. Heather was the wild one, Angel was mild mannered (but never really an 'angel'). Was it possible to have this weird bi-sexual attraction to the girl she once played house and barbies with as a kid and still love to suck cock at the same time? Heather wondered if Angel suspected her hidden love for her. Up until now she always tried her best to hide it and she did a good job. That is until tonight.

"It's great your Uncle let you have this place man," Steve told Ron as he was putting cans of beer inside a small white refrigerator on the floor.

"Yeah I know. We've had some good times in here haven't we Angel," Ron said slyly. His white t-shirt was wet with sweat.

Angel was standing at the other end of the garage with her arms crossed giving Ron her best 'fuck me' eyes. A quick memory flashed in her mind to just three days ago when he was fucking her hard from behind as she was bent over the hood of the running Chevelle and 'Black Dog' was playing on the radio. Her face was buried into the hood and she was laughing from multiple orgasms. The scent of her pussy clawed its way up to Ron's face making him want to fuck her all the harder. Aroused by this thought another popped into her head with her once again bent over the rumbling Chevelle, wearing only her black Zep tee. Her round ass was backed up to Ron as her hips puffed out like two flesh balloons. He wrapped her long black hair around her neck and then reached around her and stuffed three fingers into her moist opening, rubbing her vigorously until she popped a fountain all over the warm hood of the Chevelle. It made a sizzling sound like water in a hot pan.

"We sure have had some good times," Angel smiled.

The garage was all of theirs, but it was Ron and Angels fuck hut as well. Angel didn't mind getting her hands dirty helping Ron work on his car. She loved his Chevelle. But when they were alone in the garage, Ron would usually end up with his face buried between her legs and she loved it. It was easy being a sex junkie.

* * * * *

Heather sat down on the love seat. She wondered how many times Angel had sex on it. "I kinda feel a little bad messin' with Timothy like that ya know, showing him my tits and all," she said as she played with her hair, curling it around her finger.

"Yeah right!" Angel smirked. She laughed and said, "You knew what you were doing you tease." Heather laughed to. She knew Angel was right.

Steve raised the hood of the Chevelle. He and Ron began trying to figure out where that rattling sound was coming from. They first he heard it in the parking lot of the 7-11 when Timothy went inside to get their beer.

"Smoke time," Heather said. She took out that joint she'd been saving for later. The time had come. A cold beer sat between her legs. Steve peeked from behind the hood. "Now we're talking," he said. Angel was sitting Indian style on the floor flipping through some records in a milk crate next to a record player.

"What the hell!" She said in surprise at first sight of a black album cover with four monster looking characters on the front.

"Oh yeah, that's some new group called Kiss; I think they're from Jersey or something," Ron said from across the room.

"He's cute," Angel remarked looking at the album.

"Who, the one with the star?" Heather asked.

"No," Angel said, "The silver one."

Steve walked over to Heather. He put his hand out motioning to her for the joint.

"Jesus, that stinks." Angle scrunched her nose at the putrid burning odor of pot.

Heather was on her second beer. It was her night to kick back and get loaded. She told Angel that she needed a break from all of Amy's poopy diapers and her insistence on waking up at six a.m. like clockwork every single morning ready to play. Angel understood. She knew it was hard on Heather raising Amy all alone without a father around.

Angel continued flipping through the records in the milk crate naming off the groups under her breath, "Zeppelin 2 sexy, Physical graffiti rough, Alice Cooper creepy," and then, "Ah here we go." She shuffled out the round vinyl from its sleeve and placed it on the turntable sitting on the floor. Sex driven rock and roll came to life through two large wooden stereo speakers when the words 'I'm a street talkin' cheetah with a heart full of napalm' came roaring out.

"Oh my god I fucking love Iggy," Heather moaned. "Don't worry fuzzy I still think you're cute." She nicknamed Steve 'fuzzy' because of his curly red hair.

Angel grabbed a beer can and started singing into it like a microphone. Heather let out an alcohol buzzed laugh at Angels antics. She envied how Angel could break free on a whim and just be herself without the use of drugs or alcohol. Angel hopped up onto the trunk of the Chevelle and bent over stretching her slender, sexy as hell legs to Heather all while singing the words to 'Search and Destroy'. She hopped off the trunk and winked at her. *She's fucking flirting with me*, Heather thought. She could feel herself getting wet. Angel made her way over to the guy's and jumped on Ron's back continuing singing into the beer can like a fourteen year old. Her playfulness didn't even make Ron flinch. He knew how she was and even though he was four years older than her at twenty six, he let Angel

be Angel. She nibbled at his ear and jumped off his back. She got obnoxiously close to Steve's face with the beer can. She popped it open and forced it into his mouth. She smacked him on his ass and headed back over to Heather. Steve's face turned red.

The chorus kicked in as Angel swayed her hips sensually to the music right in front of Heather. 'Honey gotta help me please, Somebody gotta save my soul,' howled Iggy through the crackling late 60's speakers. They were Ron's Uncles. Heather sat up bowl legged with her knees touching. Her arms carelessly lay in her lap. Her heart was beating fast. She watched Angel dance and run her hands slowly through her black hair. Heather felt like she was going to pass out from sexual frustration and arousal. Angel moved in closer and then straddled her. Shock and excitement seized Heather's entire body. She couldn't believe what was happening much less Angel having the guts to get on top of her. Heather loved the feeling of Angels long legs wrapped around her waist, confining her to the love seat. Angel pushed her hands onto Heather's shoulders making her lean back into the couch. Angel whispered, "Do you like this?" Heather's face went frozen with shock but she was smiling. "*Oh my God, maybe she does know. Maybe she wants me as bad as I want her. Please let it be.*" An evil smile formed on Angel's face. "Well that'll be one hundred and fifty bucks bitch cuz I don't dance for free." *Typical tease Angel*, Heather thought and then busted out laughing. That laugh was mainly from pent up sexual frustration. Angel jumped off of her. Heather could smell the lingering sweet scent of Angel's sweat as she got off of her. She took a sip from her beer and sat back.

* * * * *

Angel plopped down in the love seat next to Heather. She was out of breath as she cracked open an ice cold can of coke. Thin, sweaty black strands of hair stuck to the sides of her face. Her hand swiped across her cheek removing the spider looking strands. She slapped Heather on the knee.

"That was fun wasn't it?" She laughed still a little out of breath.

Heather told her, "What can I say sis, you always keep me entertained."

"Good," she said and got up. She walked over to the jukebox in the corner.

"Does this hunk of junk work?" Angel asked.

Ron peeked from behind the hood, "What, that old thing? Hell no! My Uncle just left it here. You can try kicking it if you want."

As he explained the situation with the jukebox the air conditioner in the wall began rattling until it kicked off.

"Aw shit not again." Steve scowled at the worthless machine.

"Muggy city boys, you might want to take your shirts off," Heather remarked.

"You first hot stuff," Steve told her.

"That's ok. I'm comfortable."

"Oh brother," Angel said and flipped her hair over her shoulder. She put her hands on top of the juke box and bit at her bottom lip, thinking. A few good pounds on the top with her fist and the jukebox amazingly came to life.

"Ha! Guess I have the magic touch."

I bet you do. Why don't you come show me some of your tricks my dirty little sex fiend. Heather thought.

A small 45 record dropped onto the turntable. The Rumble by Link Wray began to play. Ron looked up from the engine and saw Angel staring at him with sex in her eyes. 'I'm going fuck you tonight', she mouthed to him. Heather was watching them both. Ron looked at his watch and gave Angel an unsure look like he wasn't sure if they would have time. Then he waved a large wrench in the air as if to say working on the Chevelle took priority. He was obviously fool of shit but it shocked Heather making her think, *'Uh, hello. Get over there and fuck your hot ass girlfriend. If you don't I will.'* Angel stuck her tongue out at him like a little girl and then flipped him the bird with a semi pissed yet sexy smile on her face.

The Rumble crackled like fire through the jukebox. It hissed and popped until it finally sizzled out leaving the garage baptized in late night blues bliss. It was 11:30.

The next hour drifted by. It consisted of girl talk on the love seat and the guy's with their heads still under the hood of the Chevelle. Steve had migrated to the underbelly of the beast; occasionally yelling out for a certain tool. There was a point within the hour when Angel and Heather were given a lecture on routine engine maintenance by the guys. They even helped Ron and Steve do whatever it was they were doing for a whopping two minutes and then it was back to the love seat and conversations about hair, nails and bra's until the annoying sound of clinking metal had gone on long enough.

"Jesus, are you guy's done yet? You're like two girls in a restroom," Heather complained.

"Settle down blonde we're almost finished. Why don't you grab that deck of cards from the work bench. We'll play some strip poker." Steve said.

"You are so hilarious Steven." Heather remarked.

* * * * *

Angel was sitting on one of the metal stools watching the alcohol fueled and buzzed banter between Heather and Steve. They sounded like brother and sister arguing in the back seat on a long trip. It was funny and made Angel laugh. There were other matters at hand though in Angel's mind other than drinking and playing cards: it was getting laid tonight because it had been three days since Ron had fucked her. The other was hearing some Zeppelin. She knew that when the needle dropped it was her secret code for: Please, fuck me now. And Ron knew it. So did Heather.

She flipped through the records once again and picked the Zep album she thought was the most raunchy, that being Physical Graffiti of course. Hotter than Hell by Kiss caught her eye. She didn't see it earlier from that first dig going through the vinyl records. She liked the album title. It was how she felt in between her legs at the moment; burning for some action. That freak sticking out his tongue did sort of freak her out a bit though.

She grabbed it and placed it on top of the Zep album so that it would immediately drop when Zep was done. She wasn't about to give some new band she'd never heard of first dibs over Zeppelin. She went back over to the stool and propped herself up on it, crossing her legs just as the needle hit the vinyl. Ron looked up when the opening riff of 'Custard Pie' began to play. It was then when he

knew it was time. He gave her a big smile. The kind of smile she'd been wanting from him all night. The game had begun.

No one said a word. The only type of communication was that of sexy eyes, tongues sliding across lips, and silent mouthed words of sex. Heather was watching the sexual play in the theater of loud engines, heavy rock and motor oil. And it was pissing her the hell off to. She would have been on her third round by now with Angel if she had it her way. Instead she was being tortured with this stupid thing her and Ron were doing. Either way, Heather thought Angel looked hot as fuck sitting on the stool with her legs crossed and her hair over her shoulder. In fact this is the hottest she's ever seen Angel. Heather had been noticing it all night. Angel seemed to be glowing.

Heather knew that she was entering Angel's storm where it rained audio sex and thundered loud engines. These two elements had come together. Something was brewing but Heather didn't quite yet know what it was. Both girls could feel it. Heather kept watching in excitement. 'Custard Pie' segued into 'The Rover' and it went into 'In my time of dying'. Angel was getting restless and becoming more agitated in her nether regions. She mouthed something to Heather but Heather couldn't make out what she was saying. She was sitting on the other stool across from Angel just a few feet away.

"What?" Heather mouthed back shaking her head in confusion with an alcohol buzzed smile on her face.

"I'm so fucking horny," Angel said under her breath smiling.

Heather's eyebrows raised and she felt a sudden flash of excitement down below. They were like two school girls trying to be quiet during study hall going back and forth whispering dirty secrets to each other.

Then, Angel looked around the garage as if to make sure no one was watching. The guys were still buried under the hood of the Chevelle. She mischievously smiled at Heather and quickly looked down in between her legs. She raised her head up fast and mouthed the words: 'dare me,' to Heather.

Oh my God, Heather thought and inhaled quickly.

Without thinking, Angel's middle finger found its way down into the scrunched up middle part of her white shorts, where she pushed her finger in the middle. She shut her eyes and released a sigh of relief. It showed on her face. Heather's mouth opened in slow motion surprise. She couldn't believe what she just saw. *Did Angel really just touch herself?* She thought. Angel opened her eyes and immediately covered her face in embarrassment. The palms of her hands smoothly went over her cheeks. She was still smiling but she felt the humiliation of what she just did. It made her face flush. The guilt she felt was washed away from the sudden surge of arousal coursing through her body. She peeked around again and gave Heather another daring look. Angel mouthed, "dare me again?"

Heather was on her third beer and was almost at the maximum of what her 5 foot 116 pound body could handle. One more and she'd be in drunksville. She decided to hold off. She was beginning to enjoy the show.

This time Angel pressed two fingers deep into her shorts. She exhaled a breath of warm air from her mouth and moaned. She couldn't believe what she was doing but it felt so good. It didn't help either that the rumbling engine of the Chevelle and Led Zeppelin were fucking each other simultaneously. These two elements

together stirred Angel's pot of juices into a raging whirlpool of hot burning sex that was ready to boil over. She kept rubbing herself, pushing a little harder into her shorts.

"Do it sis, make yourself feel good in front of me. Go on, touch that sweet pussy of yours and get those fingers sticky. It's ok, it's only us." Heather thought. This thought alone was enough to make Heather come. The idea of them being alone out in the middle of nowhere, deep in the cornfield, was a turn on in itself for Heather. No one knew they were out there or really where the garage was. They could do whatever they pleased, be it work on a car, drink some beers or in Heather's case watch her best friend bang herself right in front of her. Heather experienced a sensation between her legs that tingled with bright excitement and challenged every previous arousing thought she ever had of Angel. Something extraordinary was happening in this strange yet exciting situation she was in. *Could tonight be the night; the night I finally will get to taste Angel*, she thought.

Angel continued rubbing herself even as her face turned five shades of red from embarrassment. She couldn't help herself. She'd been masturbating on a regular basis since the age of thirteen and sometimes every day for weeks at a time. That would explain that tired, over sexed look she had about her. Even after those two hour fuck fests with Ron in the garage, she would later orgasm herself to sleep at home. Getting off wasn't anything new to Angel. But doing it front of her best friend was.

Ron peeked above the hood of the Chevelle. Angel saw him looking at her and she turned her head away quickly. Steve saw her to. He looked at Ron and busted out with a nervous laugh, "What the shit is your girl doin' man?"

Ron took a quick swig of beer and wiped his mouth with his greasy forearm. He just smiled and said, "That's my Angel."

Robert Plant wailed away on 'In my time of dying'. Angel was transfixed by the music as if in a trance. She was under Zeppelin possession. Her forehead was damp with sweat. The air inside the garage was getting thicker and hotter ever since the air conditioner crapped out. She reached up with her hand to wipe the sweat away from her forehead and she could smell her sex on her hand. It drove her wild and she immediately put her hand back down without hesitation.

She pushed down hard into the metal stool as her other hand gripped the edge for leverage so she could really grind down on her middle part. She was sweating pretty heavily and her hair was sticking to the sides of her face like earlier. She was really getting wet in between her legs. The outside of her shorts were damp from her wetness. Soon they would be soaked. She could smell her sex and it made her rub harder.

Heather was watching with an intensity that rivaled a stare down between two boxers before a fight. The sound of her breathing was almost deafening in her ears.

* * * * *

There are certain things in life that humans should never witness. One of these things would be watching your best friend masturbate in front of you, regardless if your best friend is a sex junkie. The other Heather was soon to find out.

Angel was in the midst of a rubbing frenzy as Heather continued watching her journey into the unknown. The sound of moaning and heavy breathing accompanied the sexy aroma coming from her vagina. Then, Heather noticed something peering out from Angels white shorts, something other than her glistening wetness. Her look of sexual curiosity turned to concern. Angel took notice and sat up straight in her stool.

“What? What’s wrong?” Angel said in a shaky voice, still rubbing herself.

Heather nodded at Angels shorts. Angel looked down and gasped in horror. She stopped her rubbing motion and quickly moved her hand away from her crotch. As she did, small droplets of blood flung from her fingers. With her hand held up close to her face, she stared back at her bloody fingers. Then it finally hit her. She let out an elongated and pissed off “Fuck”. She had started her period.

Heather covered her mouth in disbelief. Then barked out an alcohol fueled laugh from behind her hands. It was a nervous ‘holy shit’ kind of laugh. She looked at Angel and mouthed, “*Now what sis’?*” Angel’s mouth hung open in awe. She gave a helpless look to Ron. He just shook his head and laughed and pointed his finger at her like she was a bad girl. And of course he had that evil smile that turned her on all the time, some help that was. Then she looked at Heather for reassurance. The look on Heather’s face gave her the answer.

The low end growling of the Chevelle, Led Zeppelin on the stereo, and the smell of her sex was all too much for Angel. It whirled around her hissing its evilness like a serpent of Satan, mocking her to indulge in blood soaked sin with her body. Robert Plant bellowed, ‘I never did no wrong’. Time had come to a standstill in the garage. She was to in the moment to stop yet to in shock to keep going. There was a buzzing in her ears and something had to be done to relieve the ache she was feeling in between her legs and soon. She looked at Heather again and then back at her bloody fingers. Jimmy Page’s guitar solo kicked in and it was then when Angel tilted her head back with her eyes rolling into her head and let the blood flow.

She continued her act of self-love but with the help of her menstrual blood to keep things lubricated. She felt disgusted and aroused at the same time. Her facial expressions were a manic mix of frowns, smiles, gritting teeth, and even terror. Blood escaped from under her white shorts onto her inner thigh looking like ink spilling out of a bottle. As it did, she grabbed a chunk of her shorts and squeezed. Blood filtered through her fingers like a sponge extracting water. Her hand was almost completely covered in blood. The flow became heavier the harder she rubbed. It splashed onto her wrist from her frantic hand movements. It looked like she slit her wrist. A quarter size drop of blood had formed on the seat of the metal stool. She inhaled the heavy fragrance of her vaginal secretions and blood. Mental waves of humiliation and guilt collided with the pure pleasure she was feeling physically. Her face flinched in displeasure at the thoughts going through her mind. She suddenly had a memory of her Dad sitting with her at the kitchen table helping her with her math homework when she was fourteen, telling her how well she was doing. Then there was the proud look on her Mother’s face at her high school graduation. How would she ever be able to look her parents in the face after tonight, or even Heather? It didn’t matter. She had submerged herself in uncharted and bloody waters of an act there was no turning back from. She hadn’t

reached orgasm yet. It was on its way, she could feel it. The more she rubbed the farther away those guilty feelings drifted from her mind. She let herself go and let pleasure take over. Lust won.

“Holy shit, check out Angel!” Steve took notice when he popped his head out for a second from under the hood. Ron didn’t respond. He just looked on in amazement at what his girlfriend was doing to herself. The sight of her blood was too much for Steve. He threw up in his hand and then passed out. Heather sat across from Angel watching her masturbate herself into bloody oblivion. The thought of them being all alone out in the cornfield entered her mind again. It aroused her even more now and she was getting wetter. She’d never felt this turned on before. She wouldn’t dare try to emulate the bloodlust taking place in front of her. Instead she had her own dark fantasy’s lurking deep within her mind. They floated on secret black clouds that no one knew about. Not even Angel.

* * * * *

In her mind’s eye, Heather exited her physical body like a ghost of her former self when she stood up and walked slowly over to Angel. She turned around and saw herself sitting on the stool with her legs crossed and her elbow resting on her lap; her chin sunken into the palm of her hand and the tips of her fingers tapping across her teeth. Ron and Steve stood motionless like mannequins during her hallucination running black in her mind.

Hotter than Hell dropped on the turntable and ‘Parasite’ filled the hot, humid garage with its eerie heaviness. Crickets chirped outside among dew soaked corn. Dark blue clouds floated across the star cast night sky. She stopped and stood in front of Angel, whose legs were spread and had two thick lines of blood streaming down them. Heather placed her hands on the seat of the stool and gazed down at the small quarter size drop of blood that had formed between Angels legs.

Angel looked at Heather her with uncertainty. Her face felt clammy with sweat. She was nervous she wasn’t doing it right. She kept rubbing. Heather gazed down at Angel’s bloody shorts.

“Good job sis,” She said smiling at Angel and gently caressed her cheek. “Look at you, all bloody making a mess of yourself. Little bloody sis’ knows how to make herself feel good down there.”

Angel smiled and lightly bit at her lip. She shook her head and moaned, agreeing with Heather.

Heather laid her arms on Angel’s shoulders and cradled the back of her head with her hand. Together they looked down at her bleeding middle part. Angel continued masturbating as Heather spoke softly to her, just above a whisper.

“Feels good doesn’t it sis’. I mean it feels good to be bad. It’s kind of exciting isn’t it, just the four of us out here in the middle of fucking nowhere. No one knows we’re out here. No one even knows that this place exists. We can do whatever the fuck we want.”

Angel responded only with her moans and heavy breathing. Heather dipped her finger into the blood puddle on the stool. She began smearing it around as if it were finger paints. She raised her finger to Angel and gently inserted it into her mouth. “Taste,” Heather said. As Angel sucked on the bloody finger her eyes disappeared into her head in red ecstasy.

Heather squatted to the floor. Her legs opened up and wrapped around the legs of the stool. Angel's bloody white shorts were directly in her view. The smell was intoxicating. She took Angel's bloody wrist and moved it to her side. It dangled dripping with blood by her creamy white leg. Heather gazed up at Angel and smiled. "*Time to be bad sis.*"

The other Heather sitting on the stool across the garage watched her other deviant self push her face into Angel's blood drenched shorts. The warm and wet feel of blood came in contact with her mouth when she pushed deep into her shorts. Her forehead pushed into Angel's lower abdomen firmly. Heather released herself and looked up at Angel again. Red splotches ran from the middle of her eyes to her chin. She went forward again into the bloody wetness. She pushed her face deep in Angel's mid-section. This time her entire face was covered in blood. Angel let out a weak cry of joy as did Heather when she leaned her head back. Red lines of girl blood streaked down her neck.

Like a sexual demon, she pulled Angel's shorts down over her hips and buried her face in her blood soaked gash. Her mouth suctioned itself around Angel's red opening. She sucked hard trying to get as much blood in her mouth as she could. Her reward for succeeding was the warm taste and feeling of Angel's blood running down her throat. She released again and sighed loudly with a long gasp as if to catch her breath. She forced her face inward again, making Angel yelp with surprise.

The force of her thrust made her face sink about an inch into the pillow like softness of Angel's vagina. She sunk further and further into her. Her entire head soon became engulfed with wet bloodiness. Gripping the walls of Angel's vagina she pulled herself in slowly. She slid up inside her like a lamb being devoured by a boa constrictor. Now she was completely in. Heather twisted her body around and faced the narrow opening of Angel's vagina. She saw her real self still sitting on the stool a few feet away in the garage. Dark red engrossed her peripheral vision. Angel's opening closed shut like thick black curtains being drawn together, sealing out all reality, leaving Heather entombed in the red theater of Angel's womb.

The garage was thick with a hot mugginess that felt suffocating. Kiss spun on the record player as the real Heather watched herself disappear inside her best friend.

Once inside she could feel the warmth of Angel's womb, (the hot garage). She floated angelic and euphoric like in Angel's blood, (Heather's body was wet with sweat). She could hear the muffled sounds of Angel's moans, (Heather's slow, heavy breathing.) She felt pressure as the walls of Angel's vagina pushed inward from touching herself, (Heather's vagina ached from sexual excitement). Heather needed to release. The sexual intensity was overwhelming. But first she had to be released from her overpowering sexual hallucination.

Angel's moans became more frequent and audible. The pressure inside her was building. Like a volcano nearing the point of eruption, Heather could hear a long orgasmic howl coming from Angel on the outside. Heather felt her body push forward as if in a tidal wave. The black curtains had opened and her body came slithering out of Angel. She had orgasmed Heather out.

Heather was lying face down on the garage floor with the palms of her hands lying flat. She was covered head to toe in a slimy, goopy mix of blood and vaginal secretions. It seeped out from under her body swirling into pink swirls.

And then it was all over. There was nothing. No blood. No moaning. Only the sound of Heather's breathing and her wetness down below and that incredible need to run across the garage and devour Angel's body. Heather's hallucination had disappeared as quickly as the flash of a camera. Now it was just her again sitting on the stool watching Angel masturbate in her menstrual blood.

Blood poured out from in between Angel's legs like a broken faucet, gushing all over the stool and on to the floor. She was a goddam mess down there, stinking of her own menstrual blood. It looked like a large, blood red paint ball had exploded between her legs. She had been unaware how badly she was bleeding and that there was a medium size pool of blood forming on the floor beneath her as the blood dripped down her legs. Her hand started to cramp and ache from the constant rubbing motion. The mix of her blood and vaginal secretions frothed up around her hand and shorts. It turned a pretty pink.

Heather almost asked her if she was ok. She'd never seen that much blood before, especially during a monthly period. But she knew how those heavy days could be. Ron had a similar look on his face as well; that being of shock and concern of what his girlfriend was doing to herself. He didn't intervene though. He was too mesmerized by blood and aroused by the smell of sex. Heather saw him watching Angel. *He wouldn't understand*, she thought. It was a girl thing.

Then, Angel did something that broke the barrier of frustration and the unknown that confined Heather for so many years. She nodded to Heather and said lightly, "Come here." Heather's hopes were realized when Angel nodded to her again, but with an honest look of knowing. Angel knew of Heather's feelings for her. She's known all along. She continued masturbating, and it was the look on her sweaty face that let Heather know that she'd known all these years and that it was ok.

"Come here," Angel said again softly.

Heather covered her mouth trying to hold in a cry of joy and elation. A tear fell from Angel's eye as did Heather's. She wanted Heather to come over to her so she could take her in her arms and love her.

Ron stood with his head down with a hurtful look on his face because he knew. He knew it ever since he started dating Angel back in 1970 when she was eighteen. She couldn't wait to introduce Heather to her new man. This, Ron found a little odd. But he just thought that's what girls do. They share all the facets of their lives including the men they're dating, especially if they're best friends such as Angel and Heather.

They were on a double date one night in 1970 at Macs drive-in and that's when Ron first noticed. It was Ron and Angel, and Heather and some grease monkey named Bobby Cole; Amy's Father to be but he left Heather high and dry in 1972. No one knew exactly why he split. Sometimes babies scare boys. Ron felt bad for Heather. He had grown to like Heather, just as a friend. She and Angel were always together so he really had no choice but to accept her. He introduced his buddy Steve to her just after the birth of her daughter Amy. Angel thought it was too soon but it made her love Ron all the more knowing that he cared.

On their date at the drive-in he couldn't help but notice the playful like banter between the girls. The light hair pulling, the little pecks on the cheek, all the "hey sweetie" and "love ya sis". Later, after the movie while at Angel's house, Ron asked her what all the shenanigans were about and if he should be concerned about his and Angel's relationship. She laughed like it was the funniest thing she ever heard. She just slapped him on the knee and told him that's how they were and it meant nothing. She said, "Heather's my sis'. We've been best friends since we were five. Don't worry." Her confidence shocked him a little. She sounded completely honest and real when she talked to him about it. He really didn't believe his new girlfriend was into girls. She proved that by unleashing her lioness sexuality on him on a daily basis. Still though, he saw it and he felt it. But he let it go. He was banging the hottest girl in Witchington county and he was the lucky one who got his ten inch prick saturated on a nightly basis with her sweet cherry and long legs wrapped around him. The problem was he fell in love with Angel and he wasn't about to let her go.

Now as he stood in the garage he wondered if this was the reason why Bobby Cole left Heather. Maybe he knew it to and couldn't handle it.

Ron shuddered at the thought of the three of them lounging around town in his Chevelle with the girls hanging out the window laughing, sharing one chocolate shake with three straws, each one on his shoulder as they walked through town with a big and bright flashing light above him screaming, 'Hi, we're the freaks of Bludenhale!' Then a feeling of dread went through his stomach when he saw himself working at 'Salem and Sons', Bludenhales only wrecker service. It was the last resort for an out of luck shop rat that couldn't get a job at a real body shop.

He hated this. Ron knew he was the odd man out. Blood, tears and estrogen swirled around him in the garage at that moment. This situation was amongst the females.

Heather glanced over at Ron sorrowfully. She was rubbing her moist eyes. "I'm sorry Ron." Her voice sounded faint and light over the big engine of the Chevelle that was still running. Ron then turned it off. Now the garage was silent. He looked at Heather, then at Angel. She was still at it but now rubbing herself not quite as hard. Ron took off his shirt and had only one thing on his mind. A warm and excited feeling washed over Heather when she saw the sweat on Ron's chest glisten, but then she realized. A mania filled voice spun in her mind like a raging tornado.

"Oh my God, he's going to fuck her. And I'm going to miss my chance. Maybe the only chance I'll ever have to be with Angel. He's gonna throw her bloody ass over his shoulder and bend her over the Chevelle just like he always has and fuck the shit out of her right in front of me, blood and all. I can't let this happen. Think Heather you dumb blonde, think. Fuck! Oh my God Heather why are you eyeing that hatchet over there? Are you fucking crazy? Stop it, stop it! You're not gonna fucking kill him are you? Get a grip blonde! You like Ron, remember? Ok, killing him is a little extreme. Scratch that. Besides, Angel would never speak to me again. Shit! What do I do? If it wasn't for Ms. Carolyn fucking Jones over there with her sweaty bambi face banging her twat and bleeding all over the fucking place, I wouldn't be in this god awful predicament right now. Dammit Angel! Why are you so beautiful? And why am I so in love with you? I need to feel you, taste you, and he's not going

to stop me. He can kick me in the stomach and knock out my teeth for all I care if he gets pissed. You know better though blonde. He wouldn't; Ron's not the violent type. I'd let him fucking rape me while I was nailed to a goddam wall just as long as I can taste you, my sweet and bloody Angel."

Ron moved forward towards Angel.

"Wait." Angel said anxiously. Her hand movements stopped.

"Heather," she paused. "I love Ron. You know that. And Ron, I've been with this girl every day of my life since I was five. I'm going to see her tomorrow, and the day after that. The thing is, I love both of you and I need you both in my life. Heather we're always going to be best friends no matter what happens and Ron, I am your girl, forever. I fucking love you both and if someone doesn't get over her and fuck me right now I'm going to explode."

"Well blonde, looks like we're sharing," Heather thought.

"Looks like I'm sharin'" Ron said out loud.

Angel resumed rubbing herself between her red splattered legs streaked with blood. Her mouth was ajar slightly. Facial flares of sharp smiles and laughs alternated with the almost painful look of ecstasy on her face. All the rubbing and hand cramps started to pay off when she tilted her head back and let out a long, howling fusion of a cry, scream and a laugh. And then BANG!

Part 5

The Bludenhale Massacre of 1974

*Oh, Saint Peter, at the gates of heaven... Won't you let me in
I never did no harm. I never did no wrong*

Something hit the roof of the garage. The impact was forceful and very loud. Heather jumped up from her stool and screamed. It was the kind of scream a girl does in a haunted house at Halloween when a ghoul jumps out in front of them. Ron ducked down as if he suffered from shell shock, stretching his arms out with his hands up.

"Oh shit what th..." It was loud enough to wake Steve from his fainting spell.

Angel sat on the stool with her legs crooked and bloody. Her hand was covering her mouth. She had a look of terror on her face.

Heather followed the trail of blood that lead up to the legs of the stool where Angel sat. It was a long and rigid line. Angel's fingers trembled lightly over her lips. She did one of those shaky 'oh shit!' kind of laughs.

"Did I... oh my god." Angel quickly covered her mouth again in shock. (clean hand)

"You sure as fuck did sis," Heather said looking at the mess of blood on the floor like a gawker at an accident scene. For Angel had ejaculated a bloody orgasm onto the floor at the sound of the loud bang on the roof. Her heart was racing. Oddly,

the only thought in Heather's mind at the moment was if Ron had some of that sawmill stuff janitors use to soak up kids vomit after they've puked up their lunch.

Heather's eyes reached Angel and she couldn't help but notice how beautiful she looked considering the bloody fun she just had with herself. That glow of hers from earlier seemed to have reached its peak now because she was glowing like a hot yellow light bulb from her intense sexual experience. A sheen look from sweat covered Angel's face. It looked like porcelain to Heather.

Angel did her best to compose herself. She'd never felt so vulnerable and humiliated yet so turned on at the same time. On the outside she was bloody. On the inside she was a hysterical whirlwind of emotions. Angel cleared her throat and sat up, tugging at the button of her shorts. She looked around the garage as if coming out of her sex daze. And for the first time in thirty minutes she noticed the amount of blood and how badly of a mess she had made herself. She looked at her hand in disgust and began shaking it slowly, like she had got something horribly nasty on it.

BANG! The loud hit sounded again, but louder this time. Heather screamed and jumped once more.

"What the hell is that?" Angel asked with a scratchy throat and still out of breath.

"I have no fucking idea." Ron said looking around the garage, eyeing the ceiling corner to corner.

Angel continued examining the female bloodshed she unleashed on herself. That's when she noticed a tiny half inch cut on her inner left thigh. She hadn't noticed it before. She was completely unaware that her hand slipped and her fingernail sliced through her leg from the startling bang on the roof. Her orgasm masked the pain.

BANG!

"Goddamnit, what the fuck!" Heather yelled. This time the bang was followed by a long screeching sound like something metallic was being dragged across the roof. Angel stood up and blood rushed down her legs. No one noticed. The harsh screeching tone made her cringe in discomfort.

"Does anyone know we are out here?" Heather questioned.

"Hell no. We've tried to keep this place as secret as we can." Steve said with a watchful eye on the ceiling.

"Whoa,whoa,whoa, hang on." Ron had a confident sly look on his face. He laughed to himself. Heather found Ron's humor troubling.

"What the hell is so funny?" she asked sharply.

"Watch this," Ron said as he pointed to the ceiling. "OK Timmy, you got us boy. Come on down off of that roof now."

Angel smiled at Heather and said as reassuringly as she could, "See." Ron whispered to the girls as he pointed at the ceiling with confidence that it was a vengeful Timmy on the roof. "It's fucking Timmy. He's just pissed that I whooped him on Devils Blu ... BANG!

Both Heather and Angel screamed in unison at the loudest bang yet.

"All right fuckwad. You're a real buzz killer you know that. Get off the damn roof now!"

“Ron, I don’t think it’s Timmy.” Angel noticed a change in Heather’s voice. Heather truly felt like something wasn’t right. A rush of fear came over her like a cold blanket of doom.

“Well what the hell is it then!” Ron raised his hands in frustration.

Heather didn’t know what to say. She was stunned by Ron’s sudden irritableness. So was Angel. She’s never heard Ron raise his voice in anger.

“Well I’m waiting blondie.” He said.

“Ron, take it easy. It probably is Timmy and,” Angel intervened but Ron interrupted.

“Oh come on Angelica, no one knows about this place and you know that.” Ron hasn’t called Angel by her full name in four years. He was smart enough to know that it wasn’t Timmy on the roof or meteors falling out of the sky, and he damn well knew that He, Angel, Heather and Steve were the only ones that knew about the garage, other than his Uncle Jack. Angel could smell the fear on Ron, almost taste it.

“Let’s just go check it out Ron.” Steve said.

Both Heather and Angel yelled a high pitch ‘NO’ in unison at Steve’s not so great idea. Their female voices elevated in pitch.

“Please don’t go out there guys.” Heather pleaded. Her face had turned pale with fear. The flushed look of hot sexual excitement that she wore just ten minutes ago was gone. She knew something was wrong. Then a certain and haunting thought had come back to her. That dreaded thought she’d been trying to get out of her head ever since she woke up this morning.

“Yeah guys, we don’t know what’s out ther...” Angel’s sentence was cut off when a thump pounded on the roof. It wasn’t quite as loud as the banging but softer, more thud like. It crept across the roof thumping from one side to the other like a slow pulse of a dying heartbeat.

All eyes stared upward at the ceiling; watching, wondering and fearing what could be out there. Terror had taken over the night.

* * * * *

Angel’s stomach turned queasy at the thought of whatever it was outside on the roof could possibly be the thing that scared her the most as a child: A sixteen year old girl buried in a tall tale from long ago by the name of Audrey Armsworth. The girl that once lived in Angels house and the girl in Angel’s ten year old imagination that wore the white, bloody night gown and would float up to her window at night after she had fallen asleep and stare at her through her window with that frown face of terror, all stitched up and bleeding. Her mind temporarily fell back in time.

“Angelica, uncover your eyes sweetie,” Her Mother told her just before kissing her goodnight at bedtime. “Baby, there are no such things as ghosts, especially Audrey.” She gave Angelica a kiss on the forehead and told her she loved her.

“Mommy and Daddy are right out here in the living room, ok. Night baby.” She shut the door with a feeling of anger at the brats at Angel’s school; the ones that tormented her daughter with the ridiculous myth of Audrey Armsworth. Angelica snuggled herself under the covers, holding her soft pink rabbit with big floppy ears. “It’s just a stupid,” “legend,” Angel said softly to herself as she sat on the bloody stool in the garage. She quickly dismissed the Audrey legend as bullshit and

focused her thoughts on what really was scratching and thumping across the roof of the garage.

* * * * *

“Maybe it’s a coyote or something,” Steve said.

Angel looked at Steve like he was an idiot. “I seriously doubt that it’s a coyote Steve. Whatever it is, it sounds big, real big.”

“If it is an animal and I doubt it, then it must have led weights for feet.” Ron said.

Angel looked at Heather and was immediately concerned. “You ok Heather?”

The sides of Heather’s mouth creased downward into a frowning position. She looked pale and terribly frightened like she was the last skydiver on the plane and was having second thoughts. A sick and heavy feeling formed in her stomach at the sound of the thumping on the roof; which she knew in her mind could be only one thing: footsteps. She cupped her mouth and began to cry.

“What it is Heather?” Angel asked as she got up and went to her. Heather’s hand trembled over her mouth as she spoke softly through her fingers. “I think we’re gonna die.”

Angel’s eyebrows slanted down in distress and confusion. She shook her head not really grasping what she was hearing.

“Angel, we’re going to die tonight. We’re not getting out of this garage.” Her crying elevated.

“What are you talking about Heather?” Angel put her hands on Heathers. Tears were falling down Heathers face. Her sobbing became uncontrollable. “We’re gonna die Angel, I can feel it.”

“NO, no, listen sweetie,” Angel put her hands to Heather’s face. Her bloody handprint covered Heather’s left cheek. Angel had been amazingly calm throughout the growing intensity and fear hovering in the garage since the banging on the roof began. She sounded almost motherly when she tried to calm Heather down. “No one is going to die. It’s just some jerk playing a trick on us.” Angel glanced quickly up at the ceiling and then back at Heather.

Angel’s hands fell from Heather’s face. Heather began shaking her head back and forth while sobbing. “No Angel you don’t understand. Something horrible is going to happen to us. I saw it.”

Ron and Steve had their attention on Heather now and her prophecy of death. All of a sudden she shrieked and inhaled like waking from a horrific nightmare. She covered her mouth with a wide eyed terrified look in her eyes. It made Angel back away from her.

“What, what!” Angel cried out frantically.

Angel’s heart started beating quickly as the first signs of fear were settling in her mind.

“It happened last night,” Heather said in a loud whisper.

“What happened last night Heather? Please, you’re scaring me.” Angel pleaded.

As Heather was melting down, the slow thumps on the roof continued as well as the metallic screeching. Heather broke into another crying fit as she told Angel of the horrifying dream she had last night. It came out in short crying breaths.

“Angel, do you remember earlier today at my house when you and Amy were dancing around on the floor?” Angel nodded with a scared look on her face. Her stomach was boiling with fearful anticipation of what Heather was going to tell her.

“Well you had asked me if I was ok and I can tell you now that I wasn’t.”

“Why Heather,” Angel said slowly shaking her head.

“Last night I had a nightmare. A god awful nightmare Angel, the worst I’ve ever had. I don’t know where I was. It was in some weird room or something. It was really small. There was blood everywhere, all over the walls and the floor and all I could hear was screaming. Dear God, that screaming.”

Heather’s eyes were haunted as she paused and covered her mouth, trying to hold in her sobs. All eyes were on her.

“I saw a body hanging upside down on the wall. There were knives sticking out of it every which way. I couldn’t tell who it was at first, then I realized.”

Angel said nothing. She just shook her head slowly in disbelief.

“It was you, Angel.” Heather said in a light crying whisper.

Angel’s arms went cold with chilling fright like she had just seen a scary scene in a horror movie. Heather’s black mascara ran down her face. It felt hotter now in the garage to Angel and the noise on the roof wasn’t letting up. Ron stared angrily at Heather. Drops of sweat fell from his face onto the floor.

“Steve,” Ron said calmly with his eyes on Heather. “You better tell your girl to shut her damn mouth.”

Steve didn’t respond. He looked stunned and had a nauseated look to him, as if Heather’s words made him sick.

Heather fell apart like a house of cards, sobbing hysterically as she balled her fists up to her mouth. Tears and mucus ran onto her hand. She raised her hands to the sides of her head and squeezed her blonde locks in torment. “Jesus, that screaming, someone was screaming, but it wasn’t you Angel, it was someone else, another girl. It was awful. I don’t what could make someone scream like that. It was so fucking terrifying Angel! Oh, God, We’re gonna die in here, we’re all dead,” Her morbid chant was scaring the hell out of Angel. She’s never seen Heather act like this before. Angel’s chest began to tighten. Anxiety was rising in the garage like a flood. Angel turned to Ron. She was trembling. “Ron,” she said lightly, almost crying. She sounded like a little girl that was lost and didn’t know what to do.

“Steve, tell that bitch to shut up!” Ron yelled.

Ron’s voice finally knocked Steve out of his daze. “All right man, chill the fuck out! Heather, shut the fuck up!”

She kept crying and the thumping on the roof continued. It seemed endless.

* * * * *

Screaming, yelling, crying, and angry verbal assaults all whirled around Angel like some bloody carousel intent on death. She was trapped in the middle of the quarreling frenzy like a lamb among wolves. Tears and building anger, cries of horror and hysteria now ruled the night. She felt a slight headache coming on due to drastic drop of her endorphins and the rise of her anxiety colliding. Just twenty minutes ago she was in a blood drenched haze of sex, ready to unleash it on both

Heather and Ron. Now she stood in the midst of a downward spiral into madness. Everyone was screaming at each other and cursing. The fear of what was outside combined with the raging hot garage (not to mention a bloody sex fantasy cut short), was bringing out the maniacal tendencies of the four in the garage.

Ron began screaming. His fit of rage was accompanied by Heathers nonstop hysterical crying. Steve paced back and forth continually crushing his beer can in his hand. And Angel thought this very well could be the end. She started to panic when her fears began to get the best of her. A terrifying vision ran through mind of her best friends turning on each other, ripping each other apart, killing each other like prison inmates in a riot. Something was happening in the garage. They were losing their minds because fear was crippling them. The four of them vowed to keep their secret hangout a secret. Now, that secrecy was being challenged. Ron started to accuse Steve of blowing the whistle and telling someone. Steve pointed the blame at Heather. Ron knew though that not one of them would dare say anything about the whereabouts of the garage. He knew Angel would never give away their fuck hut and he trusted Steve. And he knew Heather wouldn't give up her secret hideout for getting high.

"Ron baby, please just calm down. We're all ok," Angel cried to him. She tried to sound confident. Ron knew her too well though. She was drowning in fear.

The heat and anxiety became too much for Ron. He ran to the workbench and grabbed the hatchet. Angel saw the look of determination on his face. He was going to kill whatever it was outside on the roof. Heather screamed in horror when he came barreling toward her with the hatchet firmly in his hand. She was in his path of death. "I'm gonna kill this motherfucker!" He yelled. Heather jumped off her stool to get out of his way just as Steve grabbed him by the arm. Without thinking Angel got in between Ron and Steve. She put her hands on Ron's shoulders begging him to stop. The two men towered over her. Steve got in Ron's face and began yelling at him to cool down. Spittle flung from his angry mouth onto Ron's forehead. Heather stood speechless with eyes as big as the moon. Ron was like a bull trying to bust through a gate as Steve tried holding him back. Somehow, Heather finally came out of her hysterical state and joined Angel and Steve's efforts to subdue Ron. All three were now on him as the cursing and yelling continued among flying sweat.

"Drop the damn hatchet!" Steve yelled. Ron gritted his teeth in rage and anger. He raised his arms high with the hatchet firmly in his grip. Steve punched him in the stomach, winding him severely. He didn't want to punch his good friend since the age of fourteen, but something had to be done. Angel yelped in surprise when Ron keeled over gasping for breath. "I didn't want to have to do that man," Steve said out of breath. Ron still had a death grip on the hatchet. He guarded the small bladed gadget like a child not wanting to give up its favorite toy. He was hunched over trying to hide it. Steve put his oil covered hands over Ron's. He tried prying his hands apart with all his might. Ron gave him a good couple hits in the gut with his elbow, but Steve never let go. Angel was to the left of Ron. Her hands lay on his back, almost guiding them as they wrestled. Heather stood just behind Steve with her hands out as if to keep from getting hit. She yelled for Ron to just let go. Her voice was a distant cry falling on deaf ears. Ron wanted only one thing: to break free and kill the unknown thing that was driving him mad. With all his

strength, Steve pulled Ron's fingers one by one from the hatchet handle. "I almost have it," he said as if lifting a one hundred pound weight over his head. He took a deep breath for the final pull, but his oily hand slipped from Ron's grip. Steve's hand went swinging back violently almost hitting Heather. She got out of the way just in time. But Ron, with the hatchet still in his hand, followed the path of Steve's backward swinging hand. It swung outward very fast, flashing in front of everyone's eyes like a bolt of lightning and then there was a quick, wet gouging sound.

The grappling had ceased and no one moved. The hatchet was out of Ron's hands. He stood up. Not a word was spoken. Sweat dripped from their foreheads and down their faces as eyes shifted to one another for one intense silent moment.

* * * * *

Angel's face fell toward the garage floor. Then she rose up with a terror in her eyes that Ron wished he would have never seen. Her mouth was agape in horror and pain. She shrieked a high shrill of a scream at the sight of the small hatchet sticking out of Heather's abdomen. "What Angel?" Heather said, completely oblivious to the protruding blade sticking out of her stomach. They backed away from her covering their mouths like she had a disease. Ron fell to his knees as his eyes flooded with tears of disbelief and Angel's screams filled the garage. "Oh my God, Oh my God," Ron said with trembling hands, weeping.

Heather gazed down at her belly. A short line of dark red blood oozed down the indent of her stomach around her belly button. Angel was holding her hand and crying. Heather looked up at Ron, stunned.

"I'm so sorry Heather, I'm so sorry." He wept heavily, unable to speak.

She looked again at her stomach and laughed under her breath with a faint smile, and then back to Ron. "You dumb shit. At least it doesn't hurt that ba...." Her eyes went back into her head as she collapsed to the floor. Steve and Angel broke her fall, holding her up under her arms. Her head drooped down. A blanket of blonde hair swayed back and forth in her face. Angel burst into tears. "She's all right, just passed out that's all." Steve said to Angel. Heather awakened after a few moments and Angel cradled her in her lap. They both cried.

Steve felt a sudden surge of intense anger at his longtime friend. He lunged at Ron. "You fucking bastard! I'm gonna..."

BANG!

The treacherous banging started again. Only now it was hitting the garage door. Ironically, the unknown phantom sound that Ron had set out to destroy five minutes ago had somehow saved him from Steve's wrath of hatred.

"Fuck! It's back." Steve yelled.

They all quickly moved to the back wall of the garage. The Chevelle was to their left, but the garage door, with its four sections of windows, was in plain view.

BANG! It hit again slamming hard into the door, shaking it and vibrating the glass. Something was trying to get in. Angel gave Steve a frantic look. "We gotta get this thing outta her." She said without looking at Ron. He watched with a terrible look of guilt on his face.

"I know, I know." Steve said as he rubbed his forehead. "You just can't yank it out of there." Heather's head lay in Angel's bloody lap. She started to moan as the

pain settled in. Angel bent over to get a better look. "I think I can get it out. It doesn't look too deep." Her confidence bewildered Ron. She nodded to Steve, "Grab that t-shirt behind you." It was Ron's t-shirt he had taken off twenty minutes ago when things were somewhat normal; even with the flow of blood gushing between his girlfriend's legs.

"You're going to be ok Heather." Angel said trying to hold back a cry. She caressed Heathers face. "I'm gonna get this out of you."

"Remember sis' this ain't operation." Heather said jokingly in a daze.

Despite the hellish moments they've experienced so far, hearing Heather in her usual smart ass and sassy self, gave Angel a much needed sense of normalcy. And the confidence to pull out the hatchet stuck inside her best friend's stomach. She pushed on the handle just to test how much it would move. Then she gently tugged at it. BANG! Her hand flew back. "Fuck!" Angel cursed. "Be careful Angel." Heather slowly cried out in pain. Angel's hands shook and trembled but she got up enough courage to grip the handle all the way. She lightly rocked it back and forth. "Don't move." Her tone was serious. "Almost there."

Ron squinted his eyes and turned his head away, unable to look at the half inch gash he put into Heather. Angel on the other hand stared straight into the bloody slash as she gently pulled out the hatchet from the girl she once played house with as a child and was going to let devour her bloody vagina moments ago. Angel let out a sigh that sounded more orgasmic than relieving. "Got it!"

* * * * *

CRASH!

A section of glass of the garage door suddenly shattered onto the floor. Heather sucked in a gasp of horror laced air. Angel screamed quick and sharp. "Holy shit!" Steve shrieked. He quickly put the t-shirt on Heather's wound to help stop the bleeding. She was able to sit up. She leaned back onto Angel.

"Did anyone see anything?" Ron finally broke his silence.

"There's nothing but glass on the floor," Steve said. Then they all sat quietly, too scared to move. The only audible sound was the eerie buzzing of crickets and cicadas and the wind sifting through the corn outside.

Then, an appendage resembling an arm that was cloaked in black slithered out from the darkness into the opening of the broken window. A frightful scream soared from Angel's mouth like a witch on fire. A large, severely burnt and blistered hand felt around on the inside of the garage door like it was searching for a way to get in. It had sharp metal finger nails and long rusty nails sticking out of its knuckles. A brown piece of string (the type used to wrap bales of hay with) was wound tightly around its wrist, constricting the material of its ragged black shirt. Unsuccessful in finding a way in, the hand of the unknown clenched its fist in anger and pounded the garage door. Angel screamed and kicked her legs out as if warding off crawling spiders at her feet. Following its anger was a low roaring sound, almost like a lion. It growled. The arm of the unknown disappeared back into the muggy night. Steve saw the hatchet lying in front of Heather. With a burst of courage and left over anger at Ron's mishap, he went with haste to pick up the hatchet. Heathers fresh blood still dripped on the blade.

Angel shook her head rapidly in a 'no' motion to Steve. He paid no attention. He crept up slowly to the garage door and leaned his shoulder against it careful not to make a sound. The hatchet was firmly in his hand. He raised his finger to his lips making a 'sshhh' sound to the others. Heather was sitting up now on her own. She held Ron's t-shirt tight against her wound. A look of intense worry was on her face.

Lines of sweat ran down the sides of Steve's face as he waited for the unknowns hand to show itself once more. Angel felt like throwing up from the anxiety of watching Steve stand next to the garage door; waiting for what she believed to be his final moments on this earth. Her intuitions would prove her right when the unknowns hand reappeared and then Steve gave it a hearty whack right in the middle. There was a small moment of triumph for all of them as they watched blood gush out of the unknown's hand. "HA! You fucker!" Steve yelled. It was short lived, because the burnt and bloody hand grabbed Steve by the wrist and pulled him hard into the garage door, making him go head first into the opening of the broken window. It happened so incredibly fast that by the time Ron got to his feet to help him; Steve's body was half way through the window. All they could see of him was half his body hanging through the window with his legs thrashing and kicking on the garage floor. The girls screamed out a frenzied duet of throat ripping terror. His manic yells for help became muted when a wet and gurgling sound replaced his pathetic begging. Angel's eyes widened as she cupped her mouth at the violent sound. Steve continued thrashing about until finally his body went limp and fell to the floor; headless. Heather released a tornado siren of a scream; the kind that starts low and ascends to a piercing high that goes on and on. Angel suddenly felt weak and hot all over. And then she screamed out loud. Unreality filled the garage along with the screeching female screams of Angel and Heather. No one would ever hear those screams either. *We're out in the middle of fucking nowhere, remember blondie*, Heather thought. The force of Steve going through the window tore apart the garage door even more, leaving a larger hole big enough for a human head to come flying in straight at Heather. The unknown menace from outside threw Steve's bloody, decapitated head through the hole where it rolled fast like a bowling ball on the floor, speeding past the milk crate full of vinyl records. It splattered blood across the first Kiss lp bloodying their painted faces. His head stopped just inches in front of Heather. His tongue was sticking out to the side of his mouth. Suddenly the unknown thing appeared through the hole. It growled deeply. But as quickly as it showed itself it had disappeared back into the shadows of the corn.

"Oh my God Angel, what was that?" Heather said sobbing uncontrollably as she covered her mouth in terror. All Angel could make out of the unknown was a large dark mass. Or at least that's what she tried to tell herself; that is was just a dark mass of something, and not really a horrid and hideous, burnt and charred face with red eyes staring back at her from across the garage through the hole. Angel was motionless, stiff as a board. Her bottom lip hung open in awe and her eyes welled up with tears. "*Hung upside down, impaled with knives huh?*" she thought. "*No future for you kid. You're dead fucking meat... we all are.*"

* * * * *

The growling had started again and that's when Angel knew they weren't going to make it out alive. The thing started kicking the outside wall where the hole was. Pieces of wood and old brick skidded across the floor. The thing busted all the way through finally revealing itself. Angel shook her head in disbelief not sure if what she was seeing was real or not.

The beastly thing wore a ragged black shirt and potato sack looking pants. It had big black boots covered with hardened mud. There was straw and hay bulging from its shirt and pants making it look overstuffed. Its face had that same potato sack material just like its pants, but with a small bear trap mouth and slits cut out for its eyes. Dead black crows hung down the sides of its face and over its shoulders like hair from under a tall witches looking hat. It moved forward and belched out a low roar showing it seven inch, nail driven tongue.

The ghastly creature reminded Angel of that creepy guy sticking his tongue out on that Kiss album. And the mysterious screeching sound that was coming from the roof earlier was from the barbwire whip that the beast was holding firmly in its burnt hand. It drug along the garage floor emitting hot sparks as the beast lurched toward Heather, Ron and Angel all huddled together, screaming and kicking their legs.

It lashed the whip at Heathers feet. She howled in horror as it came within inches of slashing her. It heaved it once again onto the cement floor, landing it in the pool of Angel's blood puddle under the stool making it splatter out. After each belt on the floor, the beast would stick its head out and inhale deeply as if smelling something. If it was Angel's blood that had brought him here, then it was Heathers that he craved. Her scent was intoxicating. It needed to satisfy its hunger. A roar thundered out from its jagged mouth. It lashed its whip at Heather again. The barbwire scraped her ankle leaving a jagged scar.

There was nowhere for them to go. They were up against the wall as far as they could go. And the thought of jumping over the Chevelle trying to escape was as good as suicide. "*It would grab us one by one as were sliding over the hood and snap our bodies in half.*" Angel thought. She cringed at the sound of breaking bones in her mind. It crashed the whip down relentlessly again and again until it finally wrapped itself around Heathers ankle like an angry snake made of metal. The beast released a triumphant roar and clenched the handle of the whip firmly. The thorny metal barbwire sunk into her ankle attaching itself deep in her skin. She gritted her teeth in agony and screamed. The bastard creature stuck out its nail hammered tongue and roared again. It sounded sinister. It jerked the whip flipping Heather over with her bosom touching the floor.

"Angel help me!" She shrieked. Angel placed her hands on Heathers. Ron jumped up with every intention of saving Heather, releasing her leg from the constraints of the barbwire whip. But the beast clawed viciously at him making it impossible to help her.

Ron's intentions weren't driven by his incredible fuck up of gouging Heather in the stomach with the hatchet, but rather by his love for Angel. He knew that she needed Heather in her life and how much she loved her. He loved Angel so much he would do anything for her, even if it meant putting his own life at risk for Heather.

The beast turned around and faced the hole in the wall. It growled deep and low and then yanked the whip, pulling Heathers leg hard. She screamed and it began to drag her across the floor. Her pink fingernails scraped and clawed at the cement floor making them break off. Scattered pink nails lay about.

Angel screamed as Heathers body pulled away from her quickly, barreling down the garage floor toward the hole. Heathers face seemed to shrink the farther she got from Angel, like she was falling down a well. Both Ron and Angel ran after her.

The beast stopped in front of the hole, roaring and growling as Heather screamed trying to claw herself away. Angel grabbed Heathers wrists and Ron gripped under her arms. They began to pull. It was like a human tug-o-war as her body was pulled both ways, being lifted off the ground. Short breaths of terror weaved in and out of Heather's throat as she hyperventilated, trying to make her words come out as she spoke to Angel.

"I don't wanna die Angel." Heather cried out in pain. Angel broke out into a desperate cry as she helplessly pulled with all her strength. Ron did the same but the beast was too strong. The thing tugged at Heather's ankle tauntingly like it was enjoying their screams. Angel could have sworn she heard the beast laugh.

Angel fell to her knees, exhausted from pulling. She laid her hands on Heathers head and cried while she gently stroked her hair. "I'm sorry Heather," She whispered.

"Angel," Heather said in a choking tone. "Please take care of my baby. Tell her Mommy loves her so much. Please watch over Amy."

Her daughter's name was the last word she ever spoke. It turned into a long drawn out scream of horror as the ugly beast violently pulled her through the hole and out into the night. The force was so tremendous that a chunk of Heathers hair ripped away from her head. It came out in Angels hand as she slid away screaming her daughter's name.

* * * * *

One thousand memories suddenly flashed in front of Angel's eyes as quick as lightning: Her and Heather playing cornhole, eating hot dogs in the summer of '68 at one of the many Smith/Larson family get-togethers—getting chased by seventy five year old Mrs. Pritchard for playing in her rhubarb patch when they were nine—Heather sitting on her bed crying to Angel of how she lost her virginity to Jeremy Adams and that it hurt and made her bleed-walking the midway at the county fair, teasing boys and eating cotton candy—watching Heather give birth to Amy, seeing that look of complete happiness on her face at the sound of Amy's first cries—when they first met at age five and rode their bicycles around in circles for hours and Angel feeling so shy—just one hour ago when she gave Heather that look of knowing how much she loved her.

* * * * *

She gazed at the lock of blonde hair in her hand. She was trembling and shaking as if she was ice cold. Angel turned to Ron, "She's gone." And with that she ran through the busted hole out into the corn screaming Heather's name hysterically. Ron followed behind her. Minutes went by. They both screamed themselves into a fit of heavy worn out breathes as they hunched over gasping for

air. And then the screams came. Heather's screams from far off in the distance, somewhere in the corn. Angel released a howl of agony. "Heather," she screamed from the top of her lungs. Their voices echoed back and forth, floating over the corn. Angel flew into the cornfield with determination to find Heather. Ron went after her and pulled her out with his arms tight around her waist, yelling to her that Heather was gone and there was nothing they could do. "We need to help her." She said, kicking her feet out resisting him.

Heather's screams were bloody and torturous. It was agonizingly brutal for Angel to hear. She fell to her knees and sobbed. The light from inside the garage shined through the hole. It cast a white light on Angel as she listened to her best friend die. And then something changed. Heather's screams morphed into a wet, choking and gasping sound. Angel raised her head in horror at the blood curdling sound. Like a scared child she covered her ears trying not to hear the horrific sound far off in the corn. It was just as loud as the screams. A bubbling, gurgling sound floated across the corn to the garage. They were accompanied by more screams. But now they were dying screams, wretched and full of blood and pain. Angel stood up and began pacing around in manic circles with her hand still covering her ears. Then it all came to a sudden abrupt stop. The only noise now was the chirping of crickets and the light, wind rustled tone of swaying corn. A black cloud passed over a near full moon. Angel uncovered her ears. The sound of death was gone.

* * * * *

Sluggishly, they drug themselves back into the garage; zombified and in shock. Ron tripped over Steve's headless corpse. A hot and sour liquid rushed up his throat and out his mouth at the sight of him. He wiped his mouth on the side of his arm and then layed his hands flat on the hood of the Chevelle. His head hung low, his face dripped with sweat. Angel stood behind him lifeless like with her arms crossed and her hair in her face. Heather's lock of blonde hair was still in her hand all curled up. She put it in her pocket and wept softly. Minutes passed by without a sound. They were either too scared or in shock to speak. Ron raised his head; his sweat coated back facing Angel.

"We need to get the hell outta here before that thing comes back." He said somberly.

"We need to go to the police." Angel responded quietly in a tired voice.

Ron paused and then turned around facing Angel with a look of bafflement. "Are you crazy?" He shook his head as if coming out of a daze. "You saw that thing Angel; whatever the fuck it was. The police will never believe us."

Her eyes were big and full of concern. "Well we just can't run away." Her voice elevated, sounding more alert.

"The hell we can't, look Angel..." His hands went to hers but she jerked them away annoyed by his gesture. Her touchy, feely mood was long gone. He continued, "I know we just witnessed something that was pretty fucked up and I know you're in pain right now. But the reality is that there is a guy lying over there with his head chopped off and your best friend is missing. The police aren't going to believe some evil monster from the corn came out of nowhere and went on some bloody killing spree."

Her arms were still crossed. The blood on her hand from her menstruation was beginning to dry. It turned an ugly brown. Her head lowered and she began crying. "She could still be alive Ron. She needs us."

He didn't have the heart to tell her that he was for sure that Heather was dead. Somehow Angel knew it to. Ron's eyes told her everything.

"I'm gonna try to get this thing started." He nodded to the Chevelle. He kissed Angel on the forehead. Her salty sweat tasted good to him and reminded him of better times in the garage. Times that didn't involve the smell of blood but rather the smell of Angels sex between her legs.

He began working quickly on finishing up the job he and Steve were working on before hell came into the garage. Angel was overcome with nausea at the sound of Heather screaming and that thing doing unthinkable things to her. A dreadfully sick feeling attacked her stomach. "How am I going to tell Mrs. Smith. My God, Amy." Claws of pain sunk deep into Angel.

Suddenly the Chevelle came alive. It rumbled loudly and then leveled to a low, steady hum. "C'mon, get in." Ron nodded tiredly to the passenger seat. Angel crumbled emotionally and started to cry. "Angel, we have to go," Ron struggled, trying his best to use compassion. She threw her arms in the air as if giving up. "Where are we gonna go?" She said hopelessly. He extended his hand to her. "Anywhere but—" BANG!

The bloodbeast had returned. It slammed onto the roof with its hefty boots creating a small hole in it. Dust fell from the ceiling. It began to slam its boot into the hole furiously. Ron slammed his fists on the hood. "Dammit, we have to go now Angel!"

She looked at him sharply. "We are dead if go out there! We just can't run out outside. That thing will kill us both." Her hands ripped and tore at her black hair. "Why don't you just leave us alone!" She screamed at the ceiling in frustration but mainly at the feeling she had that the beast was playing some sick and twisted game with her and Ron; terrorizing them as if that's all it knew how to do. "*This thing was born to scare,*" she thought. The beast eerily stuck its arm through the hole it created and felt around with its scaly burnt hand. "What did you do to Heather you fuck!" Angel howled at the beast. She heard that low, deep laughter once again. It was disturbingly evil. It roared at the night sky in response. Its heavy black boot came crashing down on the hole. It pounded with the might of a psychotic demon trapped in heaven. The hole grew bigger and wider with each crushing stomp. Debris flew down hitting Ron and Angel in the face. Ron stood next to the Chevelle with the hatchet in his hand, waiting for evil to come crashing down, but the pounding came to a halt and there was silence once again. He gave Angel a 'sshhh' gesture and motioned with his palm up for her to stay still. Disregarding his warnings, she inched her way under the hole. Ron waved his hand frantically at her but she paid no attention. Her eyes were fixed on the hole as if in a trance. She felt drawn to it as if it were some weird magnet of morbidity channeling her curiosity. She felt the warm and humid night air rush in as she gazed up into the hole. The black sky was sprinkled with stars, but within the mass of glittering white were two gleaming red eyes staring down on her. She reached up to the hole as if to touch something, then a series of warm wet drops

trickled onto her fingertips. *"Please God wash away this nightmare,"* she thought. If rain were to bring hope, then it was blood that would bring death.

Two drops of blood fell onto Angel's arm. They trailed downward, crisscrossing each other. She didn't realize it was coming from the beast's tongue. It crouched down lowering itself to the hole. Unafraid, Angel stood calmly under the hole with that same intense feeling of curiosity as she looked into the beast's red glowing eyes. It snarled wickedly and put its horrid face right up to the hole. The thing stuck out its tongue and more blood dripped down onto Angel's fingertips. Ron waved his hands frantically at her and hissed a loud whisper telling her to get away. She turned to him, giving him a look that suggested this was her fate. Her eyelids fluttered up and down nervously like a butterfly and warm tears streamed from the corner of her eyes. She returned her attention to the hole again and looked up just in time for a gush of hot red blood to shower down on her from the mouth of the beast. A nonstop flood of red gore rained down, soaking her entire body. She was frozen and unable to move. She stretched out her arms and held her head back. The beast's blood filled her mouth. Only it wasn't blood from the beast. It was Heather's, for the beast had sucked every last drop of blood from her body. This horrid realization dawned on Angel when Heather's lifeless and bloodless body came crashing to the garage floor. It made a terrible cracking sound and a high pitched 'pop' when it hit, landing at Angel's feet. Heather's body lay crooked with bones pushing through her skin as if her skeleton was trying to escape. She was a virtual skin bag of broken bones. No blood, no innards. She was nothing but skin and bone. The sight was sickening but Angel couldn't scream. Her mouth was wide open but she couldn't release the unholy terror she was feeling inside. She just stood there covered in her best friend's blood, horrified by the tangled heap of hair and skin that was once Heather Smith. The rank stench of death lingered like an undying disease in the garage. *"I bathed in her blood,"* Angel thought before collapsing to the floor.

* * * * *

Moments later she awoke to the smell of burning wood and the deafening sound of crackling flames. She didn't know how long she was asleep or really if she was awake or in a dream. A blazing hot wind rushed through her hair as she sat up; her body completely clean of all blood and gore. The entire garage was ablaze with fire, yet she felt nothing. She surveyed the area with distant eyes and through the hot orange haze of rising flames she saw the beast atop of the hood of the Chevelle, crouched down over Ron's gutted stomach. The bastard beast growled menacingly at her. Its red eyes brightened as it scooped up a handful of Ron's innards, stuffing it in its horrid jagged mouth. Two naked and bloody female fiends, wearing black masks with tightly pulled back blonde hair ponytails, sat at the sides of the beast. They were on their knees feeding each other Ron's guts through their zippered mouths. Gore slathered over their breasts. Still, Angel felt nothing. She was just a catatonic witness in this haunted dream. The fiends had long, blood red fingernails that sunk deep into each other's blood smeared vaginas. Their arms crossed over Ron's eviscerated corpse. Angel turned her attention to the fire engulfing the garage. More hot wind coursed through her black hair when she noticed the fiery walls of the garage disintegrating;

disappearing all at once only to reveal a landscape made in hell. In the horizon, Angel saw scattered farmhouses and barns that leaned toward the black Indiana dirt they were built on and slanted weathervanes that spun rapidly from tornados made of fire and blood. The sky was red and its eerie rays of blood light shined down on the cornfield below. Stalks of corn stood at attention pointing towards midnight blue cumulous clouds drifting across the blood red sky. Flaming scarecrow crucifixes emerged from the earth as evil black crows swarmed above.

“Join in the bloodbath Angel, your fate awaits you.”

Angel heard the haunting voice from somewhere out in the corn, in the distance. Then, the small sound of a child crying came from the corn. The blazing cornfield in front of her opened up revealing a long narrow path that seem to stretch for miles. She saw a small boy of about seven at the other end of the path sitting on the ground with his knees up to his chin. He was crying.

“Hey there. Its ok, don’t cry.” Angel said softly. The little boy raised his head to her. His eyes were glassy and scared.

“It’s ok, what is your name?” They were a mile apart but their voices came through to one another as if they were standing face to face. The boy wiped his eyes and told her his name.

“Eldon.”

She smiled. “Hi Eldon, my name is Angelica.”

She reached her hand out to the little boy to show she was safe but then an old man with an unkept beard, holding a brown leather strap slid out from the corn and stood next to the boy. Eldon held his head down and began crying again. Angel snapped her hand back in a fast motion at the sight of the old man. He looked down at Eldon and then to Angel.

“Who are you? What the hell are you doin’ in my field little lady?”

Angel gasped and stepped back. She looked over her shoulder and the blazing garage had returned. Oddly she felt it was a safe place now, considering the old mans wicked tongue and hateful demeanor.

He spoke viciously again to her. “Can’t you see my boy is tryin’ to work. Why are you hear?” He spat out tobacco juice.

“Please, you have to help me.” She pleaded with the old man.

“You tryin’ to steal my corn missy. Are you one of them?” The old man scowled.

He quickly took a few steps forward. It made Angel’s heart speed up with terror.

“Well I be damned boy. Look, she is one of them. Her hair is as black as the devil; she runs with the crows. GET HER!”

Angel put her hands up as he started walking down the path toward her. “No,no wait. I’m in trouble. You have to help me!”

Eldon cried to his Father, “No papa, she’s not one of them. She’s good.”

She turned around and started running towards the garage. As she reached the flaming building she turned and saw the old man running with a limp. He screamed, “She’s a crow!”

And then the horrid images surrounding her of the little boy, the old man, the blazing garage and the bloody girl fiends, became trapped in a wooden picture frame of fire. It eerily drifted away from Angel, leaving her in a black void of nothingness. A crash of thunder exploded in the blackness with titan strength and then rain followed. Angel could see her hands in front of her from bright blue

flashes of lighting. With each flash she realized that it wasn't rain falling but blood. Small pea sized pellets of blood soaked hail began falling all around her, crashing into her body. It felt like fire on her skin. It was raining blood and hail. Then like a cruel joke in the devils bag of tricks, it began raining glass. Shards of long triangular shaped glass cut into her body leaving her bloody and in pain. The high pitch whistle of falling glass was deafening in her ears. It ripped and slashed at her skin violently. Thunder boomed again and lighting flashed. Then suddenly the garage began to reappear, forming itself around Angel like a canvas being unrolled. She woke up.

* * * * *

The sound of crackling fire was gone but the sick image of the beast crouched over Ron, eating his guts, was still there. This indeed was real. She felt the need to vomit at the sight of Ron's gutted stomach. But only a weak scream that sounded wore out came through her sweaty hand that was covering her mouth. The beast continued scooping up Rons innards into its mouth all while rumbling its low growl at her.

"You fuck!" Angel screamed at the beast. "Come and get me. It's me that you want." The beast stopped engorging itself for a moment and gave Angel a curious look. It stood up and roared violently at her. Wet guts fell from its mouth, plopping onto Ron's slashed open stomach. The bastard beast jumped off the hood of the Chevelle. Its hulking mass of a body towered in front of Angel. Her trembling hands dripped blood onto the floor. It roared again and moved in on her, slowly pushing her back to the wall. She cried with defeat as it got closer holding out its large hand, swinging at her as if to snatch her up. Her body jerked with each sob as she pleaded for her life. Her only thought now was that this was going to be the complete end to this night of horror. And that she hoped the police would be able to identify her body after the bloodbeast slashed her up into little bloody chunks.

She thought, *"This is it sis', adios. No more goodtimes. Goodbye Ms. Fuck me all night long to the hammer of the gods. I'm so sorry Amy. Your mommy loved you so much and with all her heart. And I loved you to. I'm on my way Heather. See you soo—*Her left foot hit something on the floor. It made her lose her footing and she almost fell backwards. It was the hatchet. She picked it up quickly and the beast roared again.

She laughed insanely as she weakly swung it at the beast; the blade swiping through the air, inches in front of its face. Angel knew she was losing both physically and mentally.

"The girls gone crazy Bob. There's the wind up. She swings and oohhh she misses. She ain't givin' up yet folks. How much fight does she have in her Bob? Well Dave I'll tell ya, the things this girl has endured tonight are beyond comprehension. I mean she saw a guy get his head tore off for god sakes and then saw it come tumbling at her like a bowling ball; her boyfriend's guts were ripped out and if that's not enough she bathed in her best friend's blood. I don't know Dave, we'll have to see what she's gonna do now. Ok, there's the wind up. She swings and oohhh damn, missed again. Well kiddo you had a good run, no more Mrs. Smith's sugar cream pie for you. Hey hot shit, did you remember to drop off that pie at your house, you know the one Susan gave to you six hours ago. Ah well forget it. Oh shit long

legs watch out for that—The beast swung its claws at Angel, ripping her Zep tee. It grazed her ever so lightly between the breasts. It stung. And then something came alive in Angel. The fucker ripped her favorite Zep tee. It was miniscule compared to the earlier bloodshed but it was the push she needed over into the ‘stay alive sweetheart, don’t go down yet’ side of the fence.

“You dumb fucking bastard!” She scowled at the beast and gripped the hatchet handle hard; her knuckles turning white. She raised it up and aimed for its head but the beast grabbed her wrist on the down swing. Angel screamed in terror when it pulled her close ramming her hard into its big mound of a chest. A death breath of rage exhaled from its jagged mouth. It roared into her face and swung her around making her hit the floor. She landed hard on her bottom but the hatchet never left her hand. The beast went in for the kill. She got up as fast as she could, almost slipping on the blood drenched floor. It was coming at her, huffing and growling, ready to devour. She clenched her teeth and screamed her bloody girl rage at the bastard beast. She raised her arm up high with the hatchet in her hand and closed her eyes. “This one’s for you sis” and she threw the hatchet with her last bit of strength. It hurled through the thick, humid air in the garage, cutting it as it twirled. The blade landed right between the beasts eyes, stopping it dead in its tracks. It let out a loud and painful screech with its arms out stretched in anger. The thing swiped at the air as if trapped in a dark room. Angel let out a triumphant yet small laugh. She was more in shock than anything; shocked that she persevered over the creature from the corn.

The beast fell to its knees, still slicing its hands through the air at nothing. Its manic hand gestures finally ended as its arms fell limply to its sides. On its knees, the beast breathed heavy with defeat. A straight line of blood that looked black to Angel, seeped down the middle of its face from the impact point of the hatchet. Its face hit the floor and the beast’s forehead sunk slowly into the blade like a large sinking ship.

Heather’s blood was splattered all over the floor. Angel was standing right in it. The need to vomit came upon her again. She was standing next to the Chevelle. She leaned her hand on the blood coated hood to turn herself around, but as she did she lost her footing again and slipped in Heather’s blood. She fell backwards and hit her head on the hood. Lights out. Sweet dreams fallen Angel.

* * * * *

4:22 a.m.—Angel lazily opened her eyes as she laid on her side next to the Chevelle. The blood on her face had begun gelling around her eyelids, making it difficult for her to open them. The throbbing ache in the back of her head from hitting it on the car was tremendous. She opened one eye and could see the garage from a sideways view. Once her eyes were fully open, she could see Ron’s arm dangling lifelessly over the edge of the hood. Dark lines of blood shadowed themselves against the flat black finish of the Chevelle as they sloped downward.

Disoriented and bloody all over, she slowly pushed herself up and leaned on her left hand. Her legs were interlocked and twisted, making her look like the goddess of this blood fortress. Her face winced painfully at the throbbing knot in the back of her head. The image of those bloody girl fiends eating Ron’s guts out on top of the Chevelle flashed in her mind. It gave her a cold chill. She prayed she would

have amnesia and would be able to forget this nightmare. *“Just knock out the bad stuff, keep the good”* she thought. With the might of a dying soldier she held onto the Chevelle and carefully pulled herself up to a standing position. She glanced around the garage and shook with cold fear when she remembered that thing (whatever it was—scarecrow, demon, monster) who mutilated her best friend and boyfriend had suddenly vanished from the spot in which it took its last breath; or so she thought. Angel gasped with fright when she thought she saw something move from the corner of her eye. *“Nothing there sis’, just the first of many demons to haunt you in many a dark night to come, that’s all.”*

She suddenly heard that loud crackling sound of the blazing garage from her dream. It was only the jukebox. The old music player had kicked on. The needle on the inside scraped across the dusty black Link Wray 45, transmitting the satanic blues tones of ‘The Rumble’.

Angel slowly skidded her feet through a pool of blood on the floor, making her way to the wall. The white rims of her black Chuck Taylors were stained red. She was exhausted and moved with the gusto of a pitcher who just lost the World Series. She pressed her hands against the wall and leaned against it with her cheek touching the warm concrete. Her breasts flattened through her ripped Zep tee when she leaned against the wall. Her eyes were swollen and bloodshot. Her breaths were slow and soft. And then she cried. Her tears plowed a path through her blood painted face revealing her pale white skin underneath. She cried because she was tired and her head hurt, and because her boyfriend was gutted and then eaten. She cried because she was never going to see Heather again and the last image of her best friend in her mind (now and forever) was seeing her in a bloody mound of hair, skin and bone on the garage floor. She cried because she knew Ron was right when he said that no one will believe her—that some bloodsucking scarecrow from the corn came in and slaughtered everyone. Her cries were rich and thick with sadness. But mostly, she cried because she could feel the hot breath of the beast blowing on her neck behind her with its fowl stink of musty old corn circling around up into her nostrils, making her want to heave. She was truly crying now because she knew that when she turned around to face those red gleaming eyes, that this was going to be the end.

Slowly she turned around. She had her eyes shut tight and could feel and smell the rank hot breath in full force on her face. Like a frightened child too afraid to look at the monster in the storybook sitting in their lap, she reluctantly opened her eyes. The beast was standing just inches from her. The hatchet was still firmly lodged in between its eyes. But that fucker was as alive as ever. “I...I...killed you,” Angel sobbed. The beast raised its hand to the hatchet; its long burnt fingers curling tight around it. Its continuous low end growl reminded Angel of when she was seven year’s old, riding in her uncle’s pickup truck with her Dad. The old truck spat and sputtered exhaust and belched blue fumes to high heaven and rumbled like a devilmade earthquake as they made their way to Sam’s Hardware to pick up some farming supplies and to deliver those—

The beast began to pull the hatchet from its head. Angel’s eyes grew big with horror. The thick metal object started to pull away from its skull, but not without a vile, wet sound to accompany it. It sounded like a large peanut butter and jelly

sandwich being pulled apart. It popped out and black blood washed down over its face and rusty metal trap mouth. Angel released a high pitched falsetto of a shriek.

Filled with a sense of curiosity, the beast moved in closer to Angel. She was pinned in between the beast and the wall. She turned her head away with her cheek facing its horrid face. It sniffed around her neck, grunting as it did. She felt the coarseness of its hands when they wrapped around her thighs. It was like hot sandpaper on her skin. Her eyes squinted in fear as the beast felt its way around down there. It touched her sex. More tears fell from her eyes. The thing inserted two fingers up inside her. They went up and in as far as they could go. It's sharp, pointy fingernails pierced the walls of her vagina. Her mouth opened wide in horror and pain but nothing came out; just a loud and scratchy whisper of a girl scream.

Hot, devilish blues guitar blazed from the jukebox in the corner. Finally, the beast released its fingers from Angel's vagina which was now in pain. It raised its blood coated fingers to its face and began to smell them in an examining kind of way. Then it put its fingers in its mouth as if to taste her blood. A few seconds in and it quickly pulled them out, roaring at the ceiling as if dissatisfied. Angel was crying frantically in short breaths, still with her cheek to the beast. The scarecrow slammed its hands into the wall just above her head. She yelped in terror and began pissing herself in fright. Her legs trembled as her pee ran down her leg. And then she heard it again. That twisted, dark and low laughter from the beast as it towered over her. It caressed her face gently with its scaly and pus coated hand. She got a whiff of her sex on its fingers as they slid down her cheek. It was a disturbing scent stinking of both her and Heather's blood; a witching formula made of death and menstrual blood and blended with fragrant white cream of warm female sex. She could also smell the sweat from her hand on there as well.

Get those fingers sticky

Then in a black haze of horror the beast spoke.

"Your blood, no good."

The scarecrow beast was right up in her pretty face when it's gravely and sludgy voice spoke to her. It laughed again at her wickedly. She felt the hot flushness and dizziness one feels before passing out.

Then the beast stuck out its seven inch nail tongue, slithering it around like a cut off appendage squirming with a mind of its own. The leather like tongue slapped onto Angel's cheek. It slimed its way up the side of her face. She shook and trembled and wanted to scream. Her urine stunk, mimicking the ghastly odor of the bastard in front of her. She wanted to vomit and pull her hair out from going crazy and claw the fucker's eyes out with her newly manicured fingernails, (thanks Tina). She wanted to slowly rip its head off and laugh at its tortured screaming. It all played in her mind as the beast's nail driven tongue drug along her face leaving a thin, blood red scratch that burned. She did nothing though but stand there in her best friends blood and her own piss, wishing that she would have opted out of going out tonight and that it was better to stay at Heather's and play with Amy until her two year old self fell into dreamland where there was no blood, broken bones, metal trap mouths or blood sucking creatures hiding in the corn.

The beast sucked its tongue back into its mouth.

“Sweet dreams Angel,” it said in a nail gargling voice that was black and wretched. *How does it know my name? Has it been watching me?*

She felt the weight of its girth remove itself from her body and the horrid stench of blood, corn and crows distance itself from her senses, but only vaguely. Her eyes were still shut tight and her head was turned, but her ears told her that the thing was moving away from her. She heard that thudding heartbeat again, just like on the roof from hours ago as the beast slid away from her, creeping backwards filling the garage with its deep, heavy steps.

Angel could hear its low and heavy breathing from across the garage, even over ‘The Rumble’ which was now fading out. And at last the beast stepped through the hole in the garage door and back out into the cornfield from which it came, under a star cast night sky.

The walls of the garage dripped with warm, dark red blood. It had become a virtual blood swamp that was suffocating. Hot and sticky, early morning June air rushed in from the hole in the roof. The stench of gasoline, blood, and oil filled the air. The odor was vile. Steam ascended from Ron’s eviscerated corpse and Angel stood stiff as a board up against the wall with her eyes still shut tight, too scared to move. Trembling and crying and thinking.

Mommy, is she gone? Is she still there? Mommy, she’s at my window again. Mommy! Mommy! She’s crawling in. Mommy! She’s crawling on the floor to my bed. Mommy! Please Mommy please make her go away. Mommy, she’s floating upside down at the foot of my bed! She’s bleeding, she’s bleeding! Angelica there is no such things as monsters and there is defiantly no ghost named Audrey at your window, now give Mommy a kiss and go to sleep.

Mom? Is it gone? Is that thing still in here with me? Am I still alive? Did I pee myself? Why am I wet? Today’s Friday right, no its Saturday. What was that? Did you hear that? Shut up Angelica. Gotta go talk to Tina today about that thing I was talking to her about—It’s coming—Shut up—I’m behind on laundry, need to—It’s coming back- Shut up!—I wanna pick up that adorable outfit for Amy later—It’s out there and its coming back for you Angelica—Please shut the fuck up.—It’s such a cute little dress, she’ll look so—Do you hear it? Out there in the corn, yeah, just right out there, if you open your eyes you can see it just beyond that gaping hole in the garage, Jack is gonna be pissed. It is, it is coming back for me. Its gonna bust through that wall and rush right up to me and kill me- its fucking jagged metal mouth coming right at me with those red gleaming eyes and a bloody pitchfork in its hand. Stop it, stop it, stop it Angelica! Wait, Heather will know what to do; she’s really good in situations like this, really hot shit? Don’t think so. She’s a part of this garage now, will be forever. And don’t think about asking Ron or Steve for help, Ron ain’t got the guts for this kind of shit and Steve, well Steve would just lose his head over this. Angelica are you laughing or crying? Get ahold of yourself kid, just run. Run dammit run! Mom, is it still there? Can I open my eyes? Can I run for my fucking life right the fuck out of here? It’s out there Angelica. Christ not again, shut up! God I’m hungry, absolutely shouldn’t be, but I am. Oh God, sugar cream pie sounds so good ri—FUCK, I forgot the sugar cream pie!

* * * * *

She opened her eyes slowly, absolutely positive that the beast was standing there across the garage in front of the hole staring at her. She turned her head like a possessed porcelain doll that's sitting on a dresser staring at its youthful owner in the middle of the night. "Nothing there sis', see look." There was nothing there, just a busted out garage door with glass and small white wood chips on the floor, and three torn apart and mutilated bodies scattered throughout the garage. The reality of the night's horrors began to sink in; sinking harder than that hatchet going into the scarecrows head. Angel cupped her mouth with her quivering hand and sank to the floor sobbing. She began to cough and gag from the voracious smell of blood. She finally gave in and threw up. Her vomit splashed in wet heavy chunks in front of her on the floor. "*You have to get out of here,*" she thought. "*Run, run, run for your life!*"

She stood up with her knees shaking and feeling dizzy. Her tears and sorrow were endless. "Oh my God, Mrs. Smith, you only daughter. Dear God what about Amy," "Run ANGELICA, just run!"

She began walking slowly to the hole in the wall, ready to make her final exit from the garage. It felt like she was walking in slow motion as she passed each gruesome image of the three bodies in the garage. It was like a slow stroll through a museum of blood. She made it to the end of the garage. She turned and gave Ron one last look. "*He was going to fuck me tonight, blood and all. Say goodbye to that sis'.*" And then she saw Heather at her feet. Angel knelt down to her tangled mess of a body. She cried and cried and cried some more. Cried more than she's ever have in her life. "Oh Heather" she wailed with grief. "Amy will know about you, I'll make sure of it. She will know how much you loved her." She gently caressed Heathers blonde hair as she talked to her. "Susan, Mark and I will love that little girl like no one else. She'll be raised right." She cried more. "I have to go sis', I love you."

She stood up with a horrible knot of grief and depression in her gut. She would never see Heather again.

She glanced around one last time and ran out into the night; the black corn mocking her quick steps to nowhere.

* * * * *

She made it to the end of the dirt path and could see the lights from inside the garage shining dimly over the corn. She didn't know how long she had been running. She just ran. Ran her ass off, ran for dear life. She ran until she could run no more. Her legs were giving out and her side had a splitting pain shooting through it after about a mile or so. Her energy and adrenaline were wilting away. Her stamina was dwindling fast. She stopped and fell to her knees on dusty Indiana dirt. It was almost 5 a.m. and a hint of the morning sun began to show through morbid blue clouds. The sun would be coming up soon, but Angel was down for the count. She collapsed on the side of Devils Bluff Road. The corn towered above her in the already muggy early morning air. She slept contently with the sound of cicadas buzzing loudly in her ears. Her eyelids lowered playing the reel of bloody black murder in her dreams over and over again.

Part 6

A grisly Discovery (the lasting glitch)

Sundown by Gordon Lightfoot filled the inside of Red Browns patrol car early Saturday morning as he cruised down the back roads of Bludenhale. 900 E., 950 S., 700 E., 750 W., and so on. "All's quiet this morning," Red said to himself. It was a hot and muggy lazy morning, but already it was 73 degrees at 6:05 a.m. Heat and the hot rising sun ruled the morning but in four short months an October rust would paint the surrounding cornfields a milky brown and dead stalks would rustle together sounding crisp in a cool autumn wind.

Red whistled with the song playing on the radio through his teeth and tapped his fingers to the beat on the steering wheel. A hot cup of Folgers nestled in a cup holder (black, two sugars) rippled gently in its Styrofoam cup from the vibrations of the moving patrol car. His mood was high and carefree this bright Saturday morning. He was on the brink of vacation the following week and had the option to have this Saturday morning shift off. He chose to work it so one of the rookies at the station could have some family time. Red didn't have children but he understood the importance of family. He was a good man and officer. He had saved two lives back in '69 by performing cpr on two separate occasions. One was an older man of sixty eight who was having a heart attack and the other was some nineteen year old hippie who did too much blue cheer one night. Red was a community kind of guy. Everyone knew him and respected him. He was the fair and honest cop that never had to pull his gun to solve a problem but used his words, along with his calm and unthreatening demeanor to ease out of control situations. Then again 'out of control' in the little town of Bludenhale in 1974 meant the occasional call for a drugged and stoned out paranoid teen or the little old lady complaining about the loud cars speeding down her street or the punks passing through her garden at night. Red loved being a cop and Bludenhale loved Red. Good 'ole honest, clean cut, never been married, forty one year old Red. Good job son!

The only glitch he couldn't shake (concerning his career as an officer) was a call he and his partner received back in 1958. Red was a twenty five year old rookie fresh out of the academy and was wide eyed with enthusiasm and had the energy of a wild stallion. They were called out to Devils Bluff road early one morning. When they got to the scene Red begged his partner to let him go check it out with him. His partner refused firmly because dispatch had told him that there was a deceased body involved; something that he didn't want Red to see on his first run since graduating from the academy. Red was young and ready to dive head first into his first major call. Writing parking tickets had become cumbersome for Red. "I'll wave to you if I need your assistance, ok," his partner told him. Reluctantly Red waited in the patrol car for his partner. *Once again at the kiddie table, let the adults eat*, Red thought. His partner left, but returned to the patrol car a few minutes later looking like a ghost, saying nothing. He got in the car and stared catatonic like through the windshield. Red asked him what was wro—

A cool and smooth voice broke in over the radio. "That was Gordon Lightfoot with Sundown and speaking of sun, it is gonna be a hot one today folks, were looking at a high of..."

"Ok we know it's hotter than the devil's tail out here." Red chuckled and shook his head annoyingly at the radio.

There was more than just the upcoming and well deserved two week vacation on Red's mind. There was Maria Gomez, the new and pretty receptionist down at the B.P.D. She was of Hispanic descent with the silkiest black hair Red had ever seen and had a face as bright as the sun. She was thirty five and a city gal from Chicago. When she was a kid her Father played baseball in the minors with hopes of going to the majors. But dreams never paid the bills and she had it hard growing up. She decided she had enough of the city life and packed up and moved to Indiana with her twelve year old son in 1973. Five times in the sack was more than enough times to consider her and Red's relationship steady. He hoped to solidify their relationship by popping the big question after dinner tonight at that new fish place in town, and after a late evening stroll through the park just as the sun was falling and the moon was rising, shining its white rays on humidity soaked leaves of old oak trees.

Red kept his speed at an even thirty miles per hour. There was no need to rush. Especially on mornings like this when you were already sweating from the dog day heat and nothing but blind possums scurried across the gravel road. "The corn is sleeping. Ain't nothin' much goin' on here," he said lazily. Red slowed his car down with the intentions of turning around and heading back to the station. And then his radio cut in with a quick burst of static and dispatch came through, sounding thin and airy through the crisscrossed silver and grey panel covering the speaker.

* * * * *

"This is dispatch, you there Red? over.

"Yeah I'm here, go ahead." over

"We got a call about a girl lying on the side of the road." over

"What? Did you just say a girl was lying in the road?" over

Red was shocked. His tone suggested that the dispatcher was crazy and that it wasn't possible for a girl to be lying on the side of a country back road in Bludenhale, Indiana. But there was. Oh sweet mother Mary there was, and she stunk of piss and blood, and she was now slowly waking from her slumber only to remember her un-normal and very long, long night.

"Yes sir I did." over

"Where at? over

"Over on Devils Bluff." over

Red paused for a moment tapping his finger nervously on his cb radio, confused by what he had been told. "A girl lying on the side of the road?" He quietly said to himself with an expression of disbelief.

"Ok. I'm on 750 W. now. Devils Bluff is coming up. I'll check it out." over

"Ok Red. Oh and Red."

"Yeah dispatch."

"Caller said there was a lot of blood on this girl. I mean a lot." over

"A lot of blood huh?" over

“Be careful down there Red.” over

“Will do dispatch.” Over

He turned the steering wheel as far as it could go, turning his car around. He headed west towards Devil’s Bluff.

* * * * *

“A girl, bloody? No, can’t be. Not in this county.” Red’s mind whirled around this thought as he turned onto Devils Bluff road. In the distance he saw an old pickup truck. It was old man Larry Thompson’s and he was standing next to the cornfield which Angelica Larson had been lying in since four this morning, sleeping and dreaming the color red. As Red approached the eighty three year old man, he hit his lights. The colors blue and red lit up faintly against the morning sun light. He killed the engine and stepped out. His brown leather boot crunched across hot gravel. A feeling of foolishness washed over him for not believing the dispatcher, for indeed there was a girl laying on the side of the road all covered in blood. “*But how?*” Red thought. “*Ain’t shit out here but corn. Farming accident perhaps?*”

“Howdy Larry.” Red said.

“Hey there Red. You ever seen anything like this hear before? I reckon you haven’t.”

“Can’t say I have. You find this girl?”

“Sure as heck did. Was headin’ into town, big sale at Sam’s today ya know. Looked like a dead dog from a distance. Got a little closer and hooooly shit-n-shinola, that’s a damn human bein’.”

“Yep, your bout’ right Larry.” Red moved towards Angel and kneeled down.

“Ma’am, can you hear me, Ma’am.”

She twitched slowly and moaned. Red’s eyes shifted to the big tree limb looking stick in old man Thompson’s hand.

“What’s that for?” Red asked looking at the big stick.

“Not every day a man stumbles upon a busted up human bein’ dressed in blood the way she is Red, especially in this county. Gotta be safe ya know. I poked at her just a few times just to see if she was alive. Well, she’s alive all right, and godamn does that girl smell.”

“C’mon now Larry, you know you can’t be doin stuff like that. Throw that thing in the back of your truck.”

“Can’t be to safe these day’s Red. A brown line of tobacco spit shot from his mouth and hit the gravel.

“Tell you what Larry, I’ll take it from here ok. You go on into town know, all right.”

“I reckon you be right Red.”

“Now I hope to see down at the legion next Wednesday Larry. They got a grand in the pot for that bingo game I hear.”

“I’ll be there as long as you have that pretty Mexican gal by your side.”

Red laughed embarrassingly like a teenager. He waved his hand at Larry.

“All right now Larry, you be careful and thank you for callin’ the station bout’ this. You take care now.”

“You bet Red. You need my stick?”

Red half smiled and shook his head.

“Good day Larry.”

Red stood up and watched old man Larry Thompson drive away with swirling devils made of dust behind his pickup.

* * * * *

He let out a long sigh and wiped the sweat away from his forehead. A bird cried somewhere in the distance. It was just him and the bloody girl. “Jesus girly, how’d you get so damn bloody?” He knelt down again. “Ma’am, can you hear me. What’s your name? Are you hurt?” Her moans continued but her eyes began to slowly open. She mumbled some words that Red couldn’t make out. “Heather...Heather...Heather,” she moaned weakly. “Is your name Heather?” Red asked. “Can you sit up for me?”

He helped her sit up. His hand gripped around her arm. It felt sticky from warm, melting blood in the sun. Red’s face scrunched with displeasure from the gel like feeling of her wet arm. Her piss stink didn’t help any either. Slowly she sat up, still moaning. Her hands covered her head as if she had a terrible headache. But she felt no pain at all. The ache in the back of her head was finally gone.

“There we go, nice and easy know.” Red calmly said. She sleepily gazed around coming out of her stupor. But she still mumbled her words. “Where’s Heather. Heather please come back.”

“Ma’am, who is Heather?”

She jerked her head sharply to Red’s face giving him surprised eyes as if his voice startled her, only she didn’t see Red’s face but the beasts. Angel screamed in horror and jumped up with white fright. “Whoa there little lady, it’s all right now, calm down now,” Red reassured her as she screamed and then sobbed horribly on his shoulder, getting warm tears on his brown work shirt (starched collar, thanks Maria). Angel sunk back to the ground still holding onto Red. “I gotcha now, there we go, nice and easy.” He tried to speak as calmly as possible. She looked all around her; to her sides and up in the sky and then past Red’s shoulder at the cornfield across the road. She gasped and looked into his eyes. “It’s coming back. It’s coming back for me.” Her voice was fearful, anxious.

“What’s coming back Ma’am, did someone hurt you?”

“It killed Heather,” Angel cried. She covered her mouth trying to contain her grief. “Oh my God, it killed her.”

“Ma’am, you gotta help me out. Who is Heather?”

Angel’s face was close to Red’s. She shook and cried and then frowned at him. Her tears ended. Her face went chillingly blank. Red still had both his hands on her shoulders holding her up. She felt like a wobbling, lifeless sack of potatoes.

They both stared at each other in silence for what seemed like a lifetime. Red’s face was disgruntled with disbelief and fear. Angel was exhausted, lifeless and in a daze. Then she began bobbing her head up and down slowly in an odd motion. Her bottom lip hung open and her eyes were fixed on Red. His mind scrambled for an explanation. “Blue cheer, gotta be blue cheer.” He noticed that Angel’s eyes were not dilated and she didn’t smell of alcohol, only just the heavy, damp odor of urine. That strange head bobbing continued with her eyes still on him. Now her mouth twitched itself into some kind of sick grin. Red said nothing. The antics

abruptly stopped. Her lips were drawn to his ear and she spoke five words that would forever change the course of Red's life.

And she said, "I bathed in her blood"

She spoke again in a soft whisper.

"I bathed in her blood"

A small rise of a laugh followed by a nightmare hiss.

"I baaathed in her blood."

Speaking louder

"I bathed in her blood."

Laughing crazy

Angel's eyes clinging to Reds

More laughter

"I bathed in her blood."

Faster

"I bathed in her blood!"

Faster Faster

"I bathed in her blood!"

"I bathed in her blood!"

Sick bloody girl laughing

Sharp and violent

"I bathed in her blood!"

"I bathed in her blood!"

Dizzy drunk female cackle

Angel rises, Red hangs on

Faster Faster

"I bathed in her blood!"

"I bathed in her blood!"

"I bathed in her blood!"

"I bathed in her motherfucking blood!"

Gibble gibble gobbily gook sugar cream pie scream at the sky!

All hell broke loose in Angel's raped and torn mind. Lunatic demons flew from her mouth spreading their wings of insanity. Her dark brown eyes were unscathed by the bright morning sun shining in them. Puffy white clouds sat frozen in the sky watching the schizophrenia show down below. Such a pretty day to lose your mind isn't Angel.

fuck fuck fuck and suck suck suck dumb pretty girl that's all you are what are you gonna do with your life your blood no good big girl now your twenty two beauty school fuck queen loser loser sit around bored all night watch heather get high god I love her does she know I love her senior year bored timothy got a hard on won't stand up when that bell rings you forgot the sugar cream pie honey how can I focus on the spanish inquisition when all I wanna do is fuck fuck fuck and suck suck suck splash my girly goo on rons chevelle sounds like fun sittin on heathers bed saturday night painting fingernails blood red waaaay down inside yooouuuu need it jungle exotic rhythm sex trip mind fuck heathers trippin angel clear head laughing oh what a night shhh don't wake baby amy corn swaying hot wind blowing bloody nightmare come to life I bathed in her blood scream scream scream high and loud angel just like when you get fucked mrs smith sucking on a

“Jesus H Christ Red, you all right? All I here is screaming!”

Red had Angel facedown to the ground with his body over hers trying to subdue her maniacal, shrill screaming fit.

“I need backup now Bill!”

“Hang tight Red, I’m sending someone over right now.”

“Ma’am I really don’t wanna have to bust you in the head,” Red shouted at Angel’s. He wrestled to get his handcuffs from his belt. His forearm pressed into the back of her head. The side of her face pushed into the gravel road. He managed to get the handcuffs on but she was still screaming “I bathed in her blood!” over and over. Red started to ‘sshh’ into her ear as if she was a child throwing a temper tantrum. It worked. She slowly began to quiet down and a saddening cry replaced her insane screaming. Red’s heart was beating like an out of control freight train. He felt sick with horror by Angel’s terrifying screaming fit. She cried out “I bathed in her blood” just above a whisper. Red was breathing heavy. He sighed with relief when she finally gave up and just laid there, crying lightly to herself.

* * * * *

“You’re ok now, you’re ok now,” Red said with heavy panting breaths. He spoke gently and softly to her when he told her he was going to pull her up. Red lifted her from under her arms. She rose up lifelessly; her head drooping to her side from exhaustion. She wasn’t able to sit up on her own so she leaned into Red as they sat on the dirty ground. Her head fell into his chest and she began to cry. The sound of her cries tugged at Red’s heart when he felt an unexpected wave of sadness for Angel. Red suddenly looked up to the clouds as if in search of an answer of how he should deal with this intense yet awkward situation. He slowly put one arm around her and patted his hand across her back gently, feeling like a nervous, inexperienced new parent holding their baby for the first time. “It’s ok now, I’m right here.”

* * * * *

A distorted roar buzzed in Red’s ears from Angel’s fit. He could see an approaching squad car a few yards away but his ears still rung like loud angry snakes hissing. Red and blue lights began to spin around from the roof of the police car. They looked faint in the hot sun. An officer got out and walked cautiously to Red and Angel. Another officer, some rookie, exited the passenger side. Angel’s face was still buried in Red’s chest. Her cries were muffled. Officer Williams’s look of complete shock didn’t even phase Red, for he himself had seen and heard enough screaming and blood to last him a lifetime.

“Jesus Christ Red, what the hell happened?” Williams said slowly in awe. His partner officer Meyer was bug eyed and silent.

“I got a call about fifteen minutes ago,” Red said trying to catch his breath. “Dispatch said there was a girl lying on the side of the road. Old man Thompson found her. He radioed in to the station.” Red glanced upward at the clouds above him still with that look of ‘God help me’. He seemed on the verge of tears.

“You all right Red?” Williams asked and then knelt down.

Red shook his head reassuringly. "Yea, yea I'm fine. She had quite a moment though just before you pulled up. Damn!"

"How's that?" Meyer asked .

"Well she," Red paused and swallowed dry spit.

"Did she attack you?" Williams asked as her placed his hand on his gun. Red waved his hand at Williams.

"NO, hell no. But she did tell me that... well you see all this blood on her right? She kept saying over and over again that she bathed in someone's blood."

Williams felt the short hairs on the back of his neck stand straight up from what Red told him. That bug eyed look that Meyer had quickly turned to that of an overzealous rookie who was ready to see some action.

"Who's blood?" Williams asked.

Red's eyebrow lifted up at Williams's question. Red shook his head with a distressed look. "I don't know," he said uneasily.

Williams knelt down to Red's level. He slowly removed his hat with his eyes on Angel.

"Ma'am, can you tell us your name? We're not gonna hurt you now. We just wanna find out how you got yourself covered in all this blood, and to make sure you're ok, that's all."

A line of spit hung from Red's shirt to Angel's mouth as she slowly pulled herself away from his chest. She sat with her knees up to her chin and her hands covering her face like a scared child. Meyer's kneeled down and gawked at her like she was some kind of science experiment. Red stood up. Williams helped him. One by one Angel's fingers slipped away from her face and that's when Meyer's stuck his head out a little closer to hers and gave her a thoughtful stare. She was still trembling and looked at him with horrified unknowing eyes like there was a giant tarantula behind her; or something else. He snapped his fingers struggling to get his thought out, but couldn't quite pin point what it was. And then it hit him.

"What is it Meyer's?" Williams asked.

"I know this girl." Meyer's said as he pointed at Angel.

"You do?" Red said in amazement.

"Well heck yeah I do. We went to high school together. She was a couple years behind me I think."

"Do you know her name?" Red anxiously asked the rookie.

Meyer's thought out loud, "Angie? Angelina? No, no it's Angelica. Angelica Larson, that's it!"

Williams gave Red an assuring confident look.

"You sure that's who it is?" Red asked uneasily.

"Oh yeah, I'm sure," Meyer's told Red confidently and then continued. "Everyone called her Angel. She use to run around with that Smith girl all the time too. Heather was her name I believe. I think maybe they were best friends. They were always together now that I think about it, I mean alwa..."

Red broke in, "Wait a minute Meyer's. Did you just say Heather?"

"Well yeah, Heather Smith; long blonde hair, pretty hot." The rookie stopped himself and felt his face turn warm and red. "Well I mean she was a really pretty girl. Just like Angelica here..." Meyer's looked down realizing the best thing he could do now is to zip it.

"You on to something here Red?" Williams asked.

"The whole time since I've been here she's been saying the name Heather over and over again and where's Heather, Heather come back."

Red gently asked Angel if she was with someone named Heather last night, particularly Heather Smith. Angel shook her head with sorrow and fear telling Red in her shaking voice that she was with Heather last night.

Red stood up and gave the officers a look of what needed to be done. Williams agreed with just a nod.

"Meyers, go get a blanket from the trunk for her and get her inside the patrol car," Williams ordered. Meyers adhered to the order and went to get the blanket.

"Now hang on Fred." Red pulled Williams aside, away from Meyers.

"What is it Red?"

"I don't know if the rookie is ready to get his hands dirty yet. I mean he's a good kid and a good cop, but dammit Fred that girl is covered in blood and we don't know wha...."

Williams broke in. "Listen Red, I trust you. You're one of the best we have in the B.P.D. He'll be in good hands."

Red kicked at the gravel with discontent and looked once again at the God like clouds in the sky.

"AH hell Fred!" Red said stress in his eyebrows. "I gotta bad feeling about this."

"Look Red, do you remember that call you got back in '58?" Williams said.

"Well sure I do. It was right here on Devils Bluff."

Meyers was walking slowly with Angel to the patrol car. A dark, ugly brown blanket lay over her shoulders.

"Do you remember how excited you were to finally get a call that didn't involve writing a parking ticket or chasing a cat out of a damn tree? The kid has to get his hands dirty sometime. He's in good hands Red." Williams put his hand on Red's shoulder giving it a squeeze. "You take him. I'll stay here with the girl. She ain't going anywhere. She looks as frail as a baby deer anyway."

Red thought about what Williams was saying. Meyers was walking back towards both officers and Red could see that 'go get'em look' in Meyers eyes. It reminded him of when he was a rookie back in 1958. His mind drifted back to that night on Devils Bluff when his partner sat in the squad car, looking white as a ghost, staring out at nothing in the dark of night through the windshield...

"Well, how'd it go? Well what was it Brody? Yoohoo, Brody. Look, I'm gonna go check it out"

Officer Brody firmly put his hand on Red's leg, squeezing it, making it hurt. "You ain't going nowhere son."

"Oww, Brody let go. I said let go dammit!"

Brody released his grip and returned his ghost like stare through the windshield. The engine of the squad car hummed a low tone as they sat inside, not saying anything for a few moments.

"What the hell did you see out there Brody?"

His partner didn't respond.

"You all right Brody?"

Brody turned to Red. Wide, moist eyes that were filling up with tears gazed frightfully at him. "We need to get back to the station," Brody told him in a lifeless

tone. Red forced his head in agreement but it was gnawing at him on the inside. Why won't he tell me what he saw? For the rest of Brody's time at the B.P.D. he never spoke of that night to anyone, especially Red.

"So, what's the plan guys?" Meyers stood attentively waiting for orders to begin a search. Red studied Meyers for a moment and knew it wouldn't be the right thing to do, letting him go with him on the search for Heather Smith. *He's just not ready. Probably better for him to stay with the girl*, Red thought. Williams broke Red's train of thought when he told the rookie, "All right kid, time to get your hands dirty."

Soon both Red and Meyers were walking briskly down the edge of Devils Bluff road in search of the mysterious garage Angel had told them about just minutes ago. She sat in the back of Williams's patrol car with her head leaning up against the window, her bloodsoaked hair sticking to the warm glass. The radio was on and the dj broke in with an announcement about free tickets to see Three dog night.

"So, what happened back there Red? She looked like she seen the devil five times over," Meyer asked as he tried keeping up with forty one year old.

"Don't worry about that kid. Maybe she did see the devil, maybe she didn't. We just need to find that garage; Heather Smith to."

Red turned around and could see the lights on the patrol cars becoming more distant and faint the further they walked. Roughly three fourths of the way down on Devils Bluff from where he found Angel, a dark, shadowy opening in the corn lay just ahead of them on the right. Red came to a dead stop. "Wait!" he told Meyer as he put his arm up in front of the anxious rookie.

"What is it Red?"

"Look right there up ahead. See that opening. I think that's our spot."

Cautiously, they went to the large opening in the corn. Once there Red looked down at the dirt road and then to the right. His eyes followed a dirt path.

"It looks like we found our garage kid."

Up ahead about twenty feet, well within the smothering corn, was the old white garage.

Meyers couldn't help but have an excited, ambitious smile on his face. Lil' pup!

"Well, C'mon let's go!" Meyers said.

"Hang on now," Red said firmly.

"You get behind me and just follow my lead Ok. That girl back there is covered in blood and she could have just very well sent us into a very dangerous place. So let's take this slow all right."

It was a slow and creeping trek down the dark, long path and only a faded white building in the middle to guide them.

Williams tapped his fingers across the arc of the steering wheel and let out a bored sigh. He eyed Angel through the rear view mirror.

"Mind if I smoke?" He asked.

She didn't say anything. She was half crying and mumbling something to herself, still staring catatonic like out the window.

"Well, all right then." Williams said unenthusiastically.

He lit up and blew a cloud of smoke through the crack in his window.

“Look kid, whatever happened to you last night,” he stopped in mid-sentence, and then continued—“You’re safe now,” He did his best to sound as caring as he could. It’s not every day you stumble upon a scared and shaking, bloody young girl lying on the side of the road screaming, “I bathed in her blood”

The dj broke in again on the radio—“*Don’t forget about the big sale today down at Sam’s Hardware.*” A chorus of overly happy forty something house wives sang a jingle claiming great savings and service at Sam’s. Angel snickered faintly at the cheesy commercial; her eyes still staring out the window at nothing. She frowned when she remembered the sound of Heathers screams.

Red and Meyers were moving in on the garage unaware of the bloody horror show inside.

“Christ, you smell that?” Meyers cupped his nose at the smell of rotting death just a few feet in front of him and Red.

“Keep it together kid. Looks like someone kicked a hole in the door. You see that?” Red pointed to the busted out hole in the garage door.

“Yeah,” Meyers said, “Maybe someone was trying to get out.”

The both looked at each other for a moment. Red felt his arm turn chilly by what Meyers said. A screaming, bloody Angel popped into his mind.

Red cautiously looked around. “You just keep that piece steady you here. Don’t get trigger happy.” They slowly pulled their guns from their belts and moved closer to the garage. Seconds passed and they were standing right in front of the busted out hole. A quick gust of warm air burst through the engulfing corn around them. Red ducked his head and stepped through the hole.

* * * * *

Williams took another puff from his cigarette.

“Are you from Bludenhale ma’am?”

No answer.

“Are you going to school?”

No answer, only vacant staring and light crying.

“Were you with anyone last night, or by yourself?”

The officer’s voice sounded far off in Angel’s ears. She was too weak and tired to talk anyway. Seeing your best friend in a mutilated state will do that to you. Williams was trying to show his compassionate side, but was becoming annoyed. He looked at Angel again through the mirror.

“Look kid, Officer Brown is very good at what he does. When he gets back he will get you to talk. Just help us out and tell us what happened.”

Again no answer.

“I’m gettin’ paid to babysit a freakin’ zombie. Oh well, easy money as they say.” He took another puff from his almost burned out cigarette.

* * * * *

Both officers were inside the garage and the smell of death was thick. Despite the blazing sun outside, it was completely dark on the inside, but it had cooled down just a little. A sudden blinding effect took over Red and Meyer’s vision because of the sudden darkness. They got out their flashlights, but were still

struggling to see. Unbeknownst to them the horrors of the blood museum would soon show themselves.

“Hell Red, I still can’t see nothin’” Meyers said.

“Me neither,” Red responded.

They skidded across the floor in the dark like two kids in a haunted house at Halloween. Then suddenly the front part of Red’s boot kicked into something on the floor. It made a wet, squishy sound.

“Jesus, what the hell is that?” Red aimed his flashlight to the floor. “What in God’s name?”

His boot had entered the opening of Steve’s neck. The tip of his boot was covered in red and sticky gore.

“What is it Red?” Meyers asked with fear in his voice.

Red moved the flashlight up and its white light revealed Steve’s body lying in front of him.

“Jesus, oh Jesus!” Red shouted.

“What, what!” Meyers shrieked.

“It’s a body Meyers. The damn head is gone to! Oh, Jesus!”

Red swung the light upwards and was waving it shakily around the dark garage. He got a glimpse of something red on the walls and then realized it was blood. He felt his heart racing as he scanned the bloody walls. “What In Jesus name went on here last night?” He said fearfully under his breath. The flashlight moved sporadically around the garage until it stopped on Steve’s decapitated head. “Oh God!” Red shouted.

They moved further into the garage. Meyers bumped into the Chevelle. They followed along the side of it, using it to guide them to whatever sick horror would be lurking in the dark next. Red’s vision was coming more into focus now. Although he wasn’t sure if he wanted to see what this blood museum had to offer. His flashlight ran over top of the Chevelle and then the front.

“Oh God,” He said sickeningly, “Oh my dear God!”

Red shrieked and covered his mouth hoping not to throw up at the sight of Ron’s gutted mid-section and innards falling over the side of the Chevelle. The rookie on the other hand couldn’t hold his wife’s meatloaf he ate before heading out this morning. From his mouth came soupy wet chunks of discolored meat, stinking of onions and ketchup. The warm pile plopped onto the bloody garage floor next to Heather Smith’s bloodless body. Red’s hands trembled fiercely when he angled the flashlight on her body; if that’s what you would call it, because what Red saw was nothing more than a heaping clump of blonde hair and sagging skin. His eyes bulged in horror. Meyers was wiping meatloaf vomit from his mouth when he saw Red slowly pick up Heather’s skin and bone body. Red lifted it up slowly with the flashlight shining on it, showing its drooping skin bag of a body. Bones clinked and clattered on the inside of her sounding liked marimba bars being thrown around in a pillow case. The rookie Meyer’s let out a long, dull screech, like a mother grieving over her drug overdosed son in his coffin. “*Wheres her blood?* Red thought. Where is her goddamn blood!” He yelled and let go of the skin bag and let it drop to the floor. It made a loud clattering, crashing sound (similar to what Angel heard as Heather came crashing through the roof). Red fell to his knees and backed away quickly on his palms like a backwards crab and huddled

in the corner of the garage; wrenching and sobbing long gasps of disbelief. He sounded like an eighty year old man being tortured. More and more his vision was becoming clearer and he was able to see everything in the garage: the blood drenched walls and floor, Steves decapitated body and his head lying in the opposite corner with the tongue sticking out to the side, Ron's slashed open gut on the Chevelle, and the image that will rid Red of all sleep for the rest of his days—the heaping mass of hair, skin and bone which once housed the life of Heather Smith.

Red sat in the corner shaking and listening to Meyer cry in terror. A sick feeling of guilt came over him for letting the rookie go with him. *Kids gotta get his hands dirty sometime.* This was too much for the kid. He was twenty five but still young and had never seen a dead body, other than at his great uncles funeral last year all made up in a nice brown suit, sleeping peacefully. The horrors of the garage were grotesque and mind numbing. Red thought of that night back in '58 when he begged officer Brody to let him go with him. Now Red knew why. It was a glitch he just couldn't shake (Brody making him sit and wait in the patrol car like a child), but some things in life you're not supposed to see and some things you can't un-see. He wished he knew now what Brody knew then, whatever it might be, *"Surely nothing like what me and the kid just saw"* Red thought. But now this glitch, this new and scary glitch was forever. Sorry Red no refunds, but as owner of your new glitch you will receive a lifetime supply of nightmares for freeeee! How will he ever be able to forget the atrocity's he just witnessed? This lasing glitch will be the cause of many sleepless nights filled with terror, and will wake him in his sleep, sweaty and screaming in the dark at three a.m. at the ceiling, rubbing his eyes in confusion not knowing for sure if that was a shadow outside his window or Heather Smith crawling out of the corn, dragging her skin bag body across his yard and up to his window.

Angel pulled her head away from the window. Her eyes were hazy with exhaustion. It had been such a long night. Although completely sober, she felt dazed and stoned like that burnout two rows behind her and Heather at the Zeppelin concert last year. She squint her eyes at the early morning sun shining through the window just as the dj graced the listening public once again... *and they will be on the Mike Douglas show next week and I'm sure all the housewives out there will love that; just as long as they don't bring their ridiculous painted faces around Indiana anytime soon. Here's Led Zeppelin with Friends.* William's could see Red and the rookie walking in the distance back to the patrol car. It looked as if they had run a marathon from how slow and sluggish they were walking. Williams got out of the car and went to them.

"Well, anything?" He asked as he adjusted his belt buckle.

"Christ Red, you all right? You look as pale as a gho..." He was cut off by the sound of Meyers vomiting on the road.

"Good God son! What did you boys see down there?"

Red paid no attention to Williams's voice or Meyer's second puking episode. He stared in horror at the back of Angel's head through the window of the patrol car. Then, Red walked sluggishly over to the car (disregarding Williams hand on his shoulder asking him if he was all right) and stared like a haunted soul at Angel from a few feet away.

“What have you done little girl?” He quietly said under his breath. She saw him staring at her. A fit of hysteria claimed Angel as laughing, crying, frowns and smiles all morphed together on her face as she trembled and shook and spoke the words: “I bathed in her blood” softly under her breath. And then her vision was blotted out by the endlessly bright and burning sun.

Part 7

A Foretelling of Blood

1994

What seemed like an eternity had in reality only been ten minutes since Amy sat down at the bar and slammed her shot of hot whiskey that Jack gave her. *It's on the house kid*. She had gotten lost within her dark world where the shadows of painful memories eerily cast themselves in her thoughts. The black memory of that awful day at Sam's ten years ago, replayed in her mind over and over again; and of course other demons were lurking around in those shadows, demons guiding her down unknown paths wet with blood, leading her into acts yet to be realized and casting upon her a murderous mindset. *Bloody demons!*

The Bludenhale massacre news special was playing on the tv set above the bar. Photographs of the slain victims began to appear on the screen. The sound of the news reporter warning folks at home that the following images were of a graphic nature startled Amy out of her trip down bloody memory lane. She jumped just slightly and gazed up, seeing the wooden ceiling fan spin around: the ceiling fan made of blood soaked scythes courtesy of her dark world from roughly three hours ago. She glanced at the tv and saw the black and white pictures. Her eyes squinted as she looked away with disgust and horror and that's when Jack put his foot down. “All right kid, you've seen enough.” He reached up and clicked the television off. The only sound in the bar now was the fading of So What by Ministry, and then the hillbilly twang guitar of Johnny Cash's Folsom Prison Blues. Jack shook his head wearily like he was worn out from hearing loud and annoying rock music all night long. He waved to Jimbo (in a saluting kind of way) who was manning the dj area. Amy sat at the bar with her arms resting on the freshly wiped wooden surface. She was eyeing Jack and knew he was upset. He stood in front of her with his palms lying flat on the bar.

“Why don't you go on home now, get some rest.” He had his head cocked to the side and spoke with the concern of a worried Father. “Don't worry about tomorrow night. You have the night off.” A soft smile formed on his face and he swung his damp wash cloth back over his shoulder.

“Jack you don't have to...”

He broke in, “This ain't about sympathy kid. You just need a little break and it's ok. In fact take Sunday off to.”

They looked at each other silently for a moment. Amy puffed away a damp wavy lock of hair from her face. Hot whiskey breath blew from her mouth.

“C’mon Amy, don’t look at me like that. Just do it, please.” She smiled wanly and responded lightly with closed eyelids. “Fine”. A familiar and distant rumble from outside shook the walls of Cherrybombs. Jacked looked up.

“It looks like another round is coming through. You ok to drive?”

She sat up and stretched, then waved her hands reassuringly at Jack. “Yeah I’m good, no worries. Bed sounds great right now.” She was relieved that she didn’t have to come in to work the next night. PMS had its stranglehold on her all week and soon she would be bleeding a river. She thought that wouldn’t go over to well with her bloody pussy in some fat fucks face, smelling her stinking girl blood. But on the other hand this was Bludenhale and those factory workers and warehouse boys loved their pussy, be it well done or raw and bloody. Plus she would be able spend some time with her grandma; something she hasn’t done in a very long time.

Jack nodded to Amy, “Go on. I’ll see ya next Friday ok.”

She gave him a smile “Thanks for being there for me Jack,” and squeezed his hand.

“No problem kid.”

She stood up and walked to the back, but not without waving bye to Jimbo.

* * * * *

A low boom of thunder spread throughout the muggy night as Amy walked through the parking to her car. She had this horrible feeling that someone was watching her. But there was no one around, just an empty parking lot lit by a dull orange streetlight. Then a sudden eeriness rushed through her when she felt as though it was the thunder watching her from above in the black clouds, almost reading her thoughts, rumbling its discontent at her, or possibly heeding its warning to her: *There’s trouble waiting for you Amy, three counties over. Big, bad, bloody trouble—best stay in Witchington county where it’s safe and warm. Stay home, have some of grandmas sugar cream pie.* She made it to her car and opened the door, but looked around before she got in. Nothing there sweetheart—or is there? *Might be a bloody winged demon flying high, ready to swoop down and grab you and carry you away, sucking the life and blood right out of you and drop you in a cornfield under the black sky where farmer fucking Fred will find you the next day all slashed up with a look of ungodly terror on your face and—*“Jesus just get in the damn car Amy!” She told herself.

* * * * *

After compulsively checking the back seat for about a minute or so, she stepped inside her car. *Why so paranoid blonde?* She drove out of the parking lot with every intention of going home and crashing her tired body on her bed. There was just one stop she had to make though. It was her garden of eden; a place she needed to be for strength and guidance to help her carry her own bloody cross up the mountain. Can’t Speak by Danzig played like a suicidal hymn as she drove through the ghost like downtown of Bludenhale, where red flashing lights blinked on and off and scattered sections of the Bludenhale Reporter blew helplessly

around in the street. The dull orange glow of the city streetlights began fading away as she drove further out of town and into 'cornville'. Shadow like walls engulfed Amy's car on both sides when she drove down 750 w. heading towards Devils Bluff. And once she was on the once revered hot spot for sex crazed teenage boys with loud engines and too much testosterone (now just an old dirt road leading to an unwanted memory) she drove slowly, keeping an eye out for that dreaded opening in the corn. The popping sound of gravel under the tires came to a slow stop when it reached a wide dirt path on the right. Her cavalier sat idling for a moment in front of the dirt path; a faint white building sat at the end of the path. She let out a sigh sounding as if she was letting herself know she made it this far and she was ok. Then a hint of anger seared at her insides at the sight of the old garage. *Why the fuck is it still standing?* She thought angrily and felt a tear fall from her eye. She wiped it away and with a brave heart drove down the dark, dirt path.

* * * * *

In 1976, two years after the horrendous and bloody findings in the garage, (and once the media frenzy that took over the town during the trial of Angel Larson had died down) a local committee of town officials rallied around their well thought out report and petition urging the Mayor of Bludenhale to condemn the garage and have it destroyed. A still grieving Susan Smith gave her thoughts on the issue at a town hall meeting saying that the garage was the last place where her daughter spent her final hours on this earth and that it was sacred ground to her. Susan was well aware of the bloodshed that took place in the garage and the unreal like way in which her daughter had died, but yet she couldn't bare the idea of destroying the garage. Heather was a part of the garage now and tearing it down would mean an absolute closure of her memory and life; something Susan wasn't ready to deal with. Both the committee and Heather's parents came to an agreement on leaving the garage standing and untouched.

* * * * *

Like a slow moving vehicle at a funeral, Amy crept down the dirt path leading to the garage. She stopped in front of it and killed the lights on the Cavalier. She got out and sat on the hood and stared bravely at the old and rotted building; all its horror and blood now a distant long gone memory. Amy kept the radio on and *Going down to die* oozed morbidity from the speakers. Somewhere in her mind the witch's bell rang, but only faintly. She was strung out and her mind was shot from her previous dark world trip from earlier. *"Oh dear Mother, the Mother I never knew; was it you that gave me this gift; this gift of blood and nightmares."* The voice of Danzig soared in the night, *"It's so loud, it drowns my mind."* Amy sat in the dark, surrounded by stalks of corn swaying gently back and forth—a distant sound of thunder still lingered far away. She held her head down with sorrow and began to cry because her dark world *had* returned. Only on this trip there would be no blood or deranged acts of sex. This was a foretelling; a message from Mother to Daughter.

In Amy's eyes, she saw Heather standing outside next to the garage, leaning up against it, laughing with a joint in her hand and a sparkle in her eye. She could

see Heather's boyfriend Steve drinking a beer; and then Ron with his arm around Angel. They were four kids with nothin' to do but get high and work on cars. It was dusk and the sun was beginning to set. Its rounded girth of fire started to sink into the earth, shadowing the four friends in a dismal blanket of darkness. Their faces were barely visible but Amy could see them clearly. Amy looked on as tears fell from her eyes, then that witch's bell rung just a little louder when Heather looked directly at her daughter as the others kept talking, drinking and laughing. Without an ounce of fear, Amy looked into her Mothers eyes. Heathers face turned to a hate-mask fit for the devil. Her eyes glared out across the dirt path to her daughter. A dark orange light glowed onto Heathers face as she began to speak. Angel, Ron and Steve continued talking and laughing as Heather began to speak to Amy.

"You know what you have to do honey. Do it and do it well."

Heather turned her face to Angel and then back to Amy.

"I know you can do it. Make mommy proud."

Twenty two year old Angel Larson had her back against the garage, not giving a fuck about anything but hanging out with her best friends on a Friday night. And then maybe laughing her ass off at Heather getting stoned out of her mind later, and also the great possibility of getting the shit fucked out of her by Ron; even if she was about to start her period. Her black hair seemed to shine in the darkness around her.

Angel, with the same eerily glowing orange light on her face, suddenly looked at Amy. Angel waved, smiled and said, "You stupid little cunt," and returned her attention back to Ron and the others. Amy's expression was blank. She was unmoved by Angels words and felt as if she was witnessing some kind of haunted play in the middle of hell. Her mind was the playhouse.

"Honey," Heather said in a gentle yet serious tone to Amy, "Angel murdered your mommy. She killed me Amy. You were just a baby when she took my life. She robbed us both Amy. Do you understand?"

"Yes I do Mother," Amy said to an empty old garage in the middle of the night, sitting by herself on the hood of her car. "And I know what has to be done Mother."

Then Angel speaks. "Oh dear sweet Amy, if you could have only been there to see your mommy ripped to shreds. It was a beautiful sight and oh how she screamed; screamed her pretty little face off. It was a lovely sound sis' made when I tore into her flesh with that hatchet and ripped her fucking flesh from her bones and then sucked all her cuntng blood from her body. Sweet bloody sis'." Angel paused and smiled brightly at Amy. Then she said, "All skin and bone Amy, all skin and bone." Amy heard Red Brown's voice rather than Angel's. Her dark world trip was twisting and colliding, becoming a tangled mess of confusion. *Where's the light switch? Gotta find it and turn it on quick*, she thought.

Amy covered her mouth in sheer terror of what (she thought?) she was hearing and seeing in front of her. *Nothing there blonde, just an old shack of a building with a bloody tale to scare and haunt you with while you're brushing your teeth or taking a shit or injecting that holy heroin or laying your head down for a long nights sleep. But you will never sleep again girly because Angel will be there right at the edge of your bed and the screams of your dead mother (the mother you never knew) will fill*

your ears with her throat ripping lullabies of torture and helplessness. And you will never be able to turn on that light switch in your dark world, ever.

“Go honey, go take care of business. Mommy loves you.” Heather said to her daughter. Amy shook her head in an obeying kind of way. But she was still scared out of her wits sitting there alone in the dark. She had to get out of there soon.

The four of them began to walk inside the garage, one by one. The sound of their laughter echoed over to Amy as she watched them step inside. Amy jumped off the hood of her car. She ran to the garage crying and pleading for her Mother not to go in. Her screams spread throughout the cornfield but no one could hear her. Not even the people in her head. Then suddenly the garage started to move away from Amy, getting further away from her.

Angel was last to step inside the garage. She stopped with her back to Amy, and then slowly turned around. A devilish and twisted grin lay upon her face.

“You know Amy,” she said.

The two females were a mile apart but Amy could hear Angel loud and clear. Angel stood in the doorway with one hand holding the door and the other stroking her silky black hair over her shoulder, (classic Angel). Amy was standing right in front of the garage. Not a soul was in sight. She covered her eyes with her sweaty hands. She peeked through them and could see Angel’s shadowy and sexy outline in the doorway from a distance.

“You know Amy.....***I bathed in her blood! I bathed in her blood! I bathed in her blood! I bathed in her blood!!!!!!***”

Angels face came rushing at Amy in the dark hell of night. Her face was dripping with blood as she came charging. Her voice was wretched and old sounding. And her cadence was chilling: ***I bathed in her blood I bathed in her blood!*** Over and over again in a triplet like rhythm.

And then there was nothing. Amy’s dark world trip finally released its stranglehold from her mind. She peeked again through her sweaty fingers. The smell of her sweat was sweet. And then she lowered her hands from her face. Like some ancient ghost, the garage seemed as though it was staring at Amy; digging into her soul with its boarded up windows as eyes and the chained up doorway as its mouth. *Come on in Amy, the bloodbath awaits you.*

She had to pee but wouldn’t dare squat and piss at the site of her Mother’s death. “You can hold it sugar,” she said to herself. She got in her car and began to back out. As she did, a cold chill of fear pricked at her skin when she thought at any moment Angel Larson was going to jump out from the corn, swinging her hatchet trying to break her window and drag her out by her blonde locks and chop off her head. *Not gonna happen sweetie. Did you forget? That crazy bitch is locked up three counties over and can’t hurt you.* Amy knew what she had to do. Now more than ever.

* * * * *

When she got home the house was completely dark except for a flashing of light and color coming from the living room. The tv was on and Susan was cuddled up asleep on the couch with a blanket. A box of tissues sat on the coffee table in front of her. She had been crying all day and had cried herself to sleep. But it was after

midnight and the twentieth anniversary of the Bludenhale Massacre had come and gone and she had grieved and shed her tears once again.

After Amy had relieved herself in the bathroom, she went into the kitchen and quietly turned on the faucet to get a drink of water. She tried not to wake her Grandma. She tipped toed into the living room and stood by the couch where Susan was sleeping. A vacuum cleaner infomercial was playing on the tv. As she watched her Grandma sleep, she couldn't help but think how beautiful she looked, even as she was nearing sixty. Amy never thought of Susan as a typical Grandmother; the kind that wore a red sweater with all sixteen of her grandchildren on it—but more of the kind that likes to smoke Virginia Slims, and loves her long island ice tea, and plays cards and likes to get her hands dirty while working in the garden.

She sat down on the couch at Susan's feet and leaned back on the couch. Amy suddenly felt a wave of guilt as she watched her sleep. Even as she slept she looked exhausted and worried, and here her granddaughter was out till one a.m. taking her clothes off for money and shooting up heroin in the bathroom and having weird sex in an abandoned farmhouse down the road. A lump formed in her throat when she vowed right then and there to make a change, because she knew she couldn't live like this forever. But not until after tomorrow when the devil queen of blood and murder would be dead and gone forever and maybe, just maybe then, she will be able to flip that light switch on in her dark world.

Amy never felt more close to Susan than she did right now. It broke her heart to see her Grandma cry and grieve every June 17th over her daughter for so many years. She gently leaned over and laid her head on Susan's shoulder. Slowly she awoke and her eyes fluttered open.

"Hey S'that you. You all right?" Susan asked sleepily.

"Yeah, it's just me." Amy's voice was small and meek sounding.

"You sure?" Susan began to stroke Amy's hair softly.

"Yeah Grandma. Sorry if I woke you."

"That's ok baby. You have a good night?"

"Yeah, made three hundred." Her voice was still small and almost childlike.

"Well I reckon that was a good night with money like that."

Susan knew exactly what her granddaughter did for a living, and she didn't need appreciate the local townspeople gawking at her with disgust when she was trying to have a drink with her husband Mark down at the legion or when she was at Sam's or the grocery store. It was always the same look of shock and disbelief on their faces that screamed: *Do you know what your granddaughter does for money. Are you aware of that 'thing' she does?* Susan just wanted them all to fuck off and mind their own business. But this is Bludenhale baby, everything is everyone's business. Susan never confronted Amy about her choice of work, just like she never confronted Heather about dancing at Cherrybombs in 1974, even if it was just a few times. She was well aware of what her daughter was doing, but blocked it out just like she does now with Amy. And it has nothing to do with wanting to be the 'cool, understanding grandparent' either. She figures it's better to keep the peace rather than have daily screaming matches over what's best for her young, out of control granddaughter. As much as it sickens Susan to see Amy destroying herself, she is all she has. So she just lets it be.

Susan continued stroking her granddaughter's hair when she asked Amy if she wanted to go have breakfast in the morning. This came as a surprise to Amy. She hadn't been to breakfast with her grandparents for what seemed like ages. She used to go with them every Saturday morning but stopped when she was around fourteen. She was too busy up in her room with those dark world trips to be thinking about pancakes and bacon. But now breakfast sounded great. And so did crashing out on her bed for a good night's sleep before the oncoming storm of revenge.

* * * * *

It was twelve thirty in the afternoon when Amy and her grandparents returned home from a most fulfilling and delicious breakfast at the local waffle house. Amy ate like a starved homeless person as her plate was full of fluffy pancakes and syrup drenched crispy bacon. As she ate, she went over in her mind of her soon to be meeting with Angel, three counties over. And not once did the idea of eating pancakes and thinking of murder cross her mind as demented. Pancakes and murder: a winning combo!

Mark pulled up to their house in the same old Buick they've been driving since 1980. Both he and Susan couldn't help but notice Amy's unusual upbeat mood and her *extremely* unusual conversational ability she displayed in the car on the way home. The car came to a stop. She told Mark and Susan thanks for breakfast and that she loved them. She got out and went inside. Her grandparents looked at each other like they just took a complete stranger to breakfast. "Damn," Mark said in surprise, "We haven't seen that for a while." They both smirked and shook their heads and got out.

Mark could never understand why Amy was the way she was: defiant, ultra moody, quiet, angry, and especially now when she was as an adult. As far as he knew, Amy had a good childhood and grew up 'ok' despite never knowing who her biological Mother was. He believed he and Susan did a great job of raising her and Heather would be proud. "*But why?*" he thought as he was walking up to the house, "*Why is she doing those things she shouldn't be doing? Did we fuck up somewhere? She was always a good spirited kid and did well in school and had friends. And we've always showed her love and got her that damn puppy she cried about when she was seven. So what happened?*" Of course he knew the little incident from ten years earlier at Sam's, but never thought it made too bad of an impression on her (apparently he forgot all the nights Susan would run down the hallway to the sound of Amy screaming "Angel!" in the middle of the night). If he only knew.

Happy endorphins were running rampant throughout Amy as she was getting herself ready in front of the mirror. A full belly of warm pancakes and a hot shower will do that. She felt a sense of awakening and excitement of her soon to be new life: a life without Angel Larson. And of course a life without her stripping gig (even though the money was great) and that nasty little heroin thing she started four months ago. She was a newbie to the world of heroin and addiction, but somehow managed to not look like a strung out, toothless slut that stunk; she wasn't there yet. She was a skinny minnie, but a curvy skinny minnie with nice tits and was ok with the occasional comment of 'girl you need to eat a sandwich'.

She was ready to end the heroin fling because she was throwing away all of her hard earned stripping money, but mainly she thought it made her pussy and pee stink. What chic wants a stinky pussy anyway?

* * * * *

The sweet aroma of sugar cream pie filling filled the entire downstairs area of the house as Amy flew down the staircase wearing a short blue jean skirt and her tight little pink blouse she bought the other day. Susan stirred the heavenly mixture in a yellow bowl as she puffed on her Virginia Slim.

“Oh Amy, we just got home baby, and now your leaving,” Susan sounded broken hearted and it made Amy feel guilty again for just a moment. But there was no time to waste. She had to get going if she wanted to make it in time to the Indiana State Mental Hospital three counties over before visiting hours were done and kill Angel. *Kill her dead dead dead in the head head head! Make Mommy proud.*

“Oooh, I’m sorry Grandma. I had plans for tonight but I promise I’ll be home all day tomorrow.”

Susan forced a smile and said, “Ok, just be careful,” she sat the bowl down and walked over to Amy and put her hand on hers, “Maybe not so late either huh?”

Amy felt like a shithead for running out like this and making Susan worry once again about her. *Business is business though*, she thought. She squeezed Susan’s hand. “Ok Grandma, I won’t be too late,” she said with a guilty smile. Susan gave her a quick peck on the cheek and said, “Maybe you can help me pull those weeds out back and then work in the garden.” Her sarcasm was received by Amy who put her thumbs up and retorted with “Yeah, sounds like fun. Love you Grandma”

“Love you to baby.” Susan smiled. Any other time Amy wouldn’t be caught dead digging up weeds with her Grandma on a Sunday afternoon. Hot girls and yard work don’t mix. But on the inside she couldn’t wait.

Part 8

Nightmares come true

1994

Amy entered Develenue County around two thirty, Saturday afternoon. Her back tires puffed brown dust up into the hot June air as she drove over a gravel road. That dust was left far behind as she merged onto the smooth blacktop road of route 11. The midsized factory town of Blare was up ahead four miles. And the Indiana State Mental Hospital was only a fourth of a mile up on the left, buried within a semi new industrial park. The large three story brick building was built in 1931 and was originally a hotel called the Lawrence Inn. It housed over two hundred and fifty guests, but was shut down after seven years of business

because of a sleazy prostitution operation. It lay dormant and vacant for three years until 1941 when a high profile real estate company bought the building.

The facility for the original I.S.M.H. in northern Indiana was running out of space for patients and was in need of major repairs; which the state of Indiana would never assist in. They relocated to southern Indiana in 1942, occupying the once prospering Lawrence Hotel with its underground whorehouse, making it home for schizos, ocd patients, druggies, manic depressives and the now forty two year old Angelica Larson for the past twenty years.

Amy turned into the parking lot and followed the 'Guest Parking' signs. She was thrown off by the buildings quaint and well-kept appearance. It was a far cry from 'One flew over the cuckoo's nest' and other barbed wire fenced in nuthouses she had seen in the movies. Two large flower pots with pink roses sprouting out graced the front entrance as she made her way inside.

It was eerily quiet as she entered the main lobby. A water fountain made of concrete shot out water from two fish's mouths and relaxing orchestral music was playing from the speakers in the ceiling. *She murders three people and they send her to schizo sally's fucking health spa*, Amy thought. She made her way to a large and rounded front desk where an elderly woman (who looked to be as ancient as the building) was scribbling in a large print crossword magazine. The old woman looked up as Amy approached the desk. Her eyes widened at Amy's pretty face and overall pretty self; must have been the pretty pink blouse.

"Hi there honey, can I help you?" The old woman asked brightly in her old woman voice.

"Uh, yeah, I'm looking for Angel—I mean Angelica Larson's room."

"Oh Angelica, she's such a nice girl; been with us for a while. She does such a good job with my hair. Let's see here."

The old woman began flipping through a rolodex of patient names and room numbers. Amy had a somewhat confused look on her face as she waited. *What is she a goddamn hairdresser?*

"I know she's changed rooms a few times. You have to excuse me, I forget some of the patients room numbers sometimes." *That's ok lady, I've been waiting ten years for this; a couple minutes won't kill me.* The woman spoke under breath as if talking to herself. She paused for a second and then returned her attention to Amy. *Oh shit, she's going to ask why I'm here. Just remember the plan.*

"What is your name sweetie?" the old woman asked.

"Amy Smith"

"And in what regards is your visit today with Ms. Larson?"

I'm going to kill her for murdering my Mother. I might strangle her with her long black hair or I may just punch her in her worthless cunt till my fists are fucking red with her blood. No Amy, the plan remember?

"I'm her niece." Amy said cheerfully with confidence.

* * * * *

Moments later she found herself on the third floor of the hospital, gazing at a rectangular gold plaque with the number 112 engraved on it. She was contemplating going in and then she heard a voice behind her that made her jump.

“That’s Ms. Larson’s room. You lost honey?”

She turned around. An older black women in her mid-sixties, dressed in a long white skirt and a white sweater that was draped over her shoulders, stood in front of Amy. She was about an inch shorter than the five foot young blonde. A large metal cart on wheels was by her side. A plate full of steaming hot food was in the middle.

“Uh, yeah,” Amy said feeling foolish but still smiling. “I’m Angel’s niece.” *No you’re not you lying slut face! Shut up Amy!*

“Well hello, I’m Angelica’s nurse, have been for the past twenty years. Did you say niece honey?”

Amy’s nerves began to rattle slightly. “Yes, I haven’t seen Angel since I was little.” *Well at least that part is true.*

“Well oh my goodness!” said the nurse excitedly. *What, what! Oh holy hell what?*

“Angelica talks about you all the time.”

“She does?” Amy said in a stunned tone.

“Why sure she does; talks about when you were little and how cute you were and how you use to love to dance,” She trailed off and Amy stood there shocked and in disbelief of what she was hearing.

“And now look at you, all grown up. I bet Angelica will be thrilled to see you now.” The nurse smiled at Amy.

Amy had to work extremely hard to put on a believable smile, but she managed.

“Yeah I can’t wait to see her to.” She felt sick to her stomach.

Amy glanced down and read the nurse’s nametag, it said Anita.

“How old are you now honey?”

“I’m twenty two.”

“Well it has been a long time since you’ve seen Angelica, hasn’t it? I remember when Angelica first came here. She was so quiet and scared like, didn’t talk to anyone. I remember her parent’s came to see her just about a week after she was here and oh lord, that was such a terrible time for her. They turned their back on her; abandoned her, said she was dead to them because of what she did. And oh my goodness did that child cry. I never seen a young girl look so pitiful and cry like that. It was heart breakin’. But boy oh boy, she sure did go off the deep end after that.”

Astonished by her own curiosity, Amy asked Anita what she meant.

“Well you see, Angelica became very active if you know what I mean.”

“I’m not sure I follow you,” Amy shook her head in confusion still with that look of wanting to know more from this wise old woman telling her story.

“Let’s just say she was active with some the faculty,” Anita glanced downward with a slight look of embarrassment and said, “down there.”

* * * * *

Later that night after the cruel visit by Angel’s parents, when they permanently cut themselves off from their daughter forever, leaving her a snotty, tearful mess crouched in the corner of her room, she realized the dark reality of the words spoken by the judge the day of her sentencing: *You are hereby sentenced to life at the Indiana State Mental Hospital*, and as she sat on the floor of her small room, she balled up her fists in anger and slammed them on the floor, gritting her teeth.

And like a hopeful ray of sunshine she began closing the blinds shut in her mind of that horrific night in the garage, temporarily leaving behind its haunted painting of blood and mutilated bodies and red gleaming eyes. And as she went into survival mode she began to touch herself and do the thing she was best at; the thing she had been engaging in daily since the age of thirteen. The flood gates had opened (literally) when she spread her legs and created a puddle on the floor that dripped from her jeans. Angel was a sex addict, plain and simple. And her condition (no matter how small and non-threatening in her eyes) was no different from that of a locked up serial killer who suddenly has the urge to kill their cell mate. Sooner or later they're going to snap and give in to their desires be it slashing someone's throat or masturbating for hours on end, day after day.

She raised her hand to her face to wipe away a tear helplessly falling from her eye. The scent on her fingers reminded her how badly she wanted Heather that night, and all of the wild fuck sessions with Ron. Angel cried and felt pathetic and disgusted with herself, but kept masturbating anyway until she came. She didn't leave her room for a week.

"Now I have to say, I've seen plenty of patients in this hospital over the years with all kinds of sexual disorders, similar to Angelica; but dear lord all mighty child, I didn't think it was possible for a young girl to," Anita was at a loss for words and sounded a little rattled, as if she hadn't spoke about Angels early years at the hospital in a very long time, and in reality she hadn't.

Months after Angel became settled into her new life at the Indiana State Mental Hospital with all the other crazies, it became commonplace and routine for the RNs (mainly the black male nurses) to have daily cleanup sessions in Angel's room, from changing the bedding to wiping up the floor to opening the window to air out the smell of sex. Those same nurses would play 'shortest straw' with their camel cigarettes down in the boiler room on their break, in order to see who would be next to clean up Angel's room on those heavy menstrual days. "AH shit, not again!" Bloody Pete ached and complained as the other RNs laughed at their unlucky as fuck co-worker. Peter Walters earned the nickname 'bloody pete' for being the one to mop up Angels menstrual blood (that she had ejaculated all over her bed sheets and floor during a fit of masturbation) consecutively for the past three months. He gagged as blood splattered white bed sheets plopped into an ugly green mop bucket. Angel walked out of the bathroom from a hot shower with a white towel wrapped around her body; her stringy black hair sticking to her back. She sat on the oversized chair and began drying her hair.

"You know Pete, I'm kinda getting bored with touching myself all day long. You need to sneak me some dick in here every once in a while." And at that, an idea was born. He wasn't sure if Angel was being serious or just coming on to him, but nonetheless Pete had an idea.

From December of 1974 to March of 1976, bloody Pete and Angel had orchestrated a unique underground business that took place under the cover of darkness, when the staff of the I.S.M.H. were quietly sleeping in their beds under well to do homes in well to do neighborhoods. Bloody Pete had taken advantage of Angel's overwhelming sexual appetite and every Saturday night a line of men would stand outside her door as Pete securely held a big wad of cash in his hand with a smile on his face. They would pay to fuck her and she would get off by them

fucking her. It was a win-win situation. Pete got his money and Angel got a few orgasms every Saturday night; a nice change from her acts of self-love. 'They' were everyone from the cafeteria cook to the in-house electrician, and even a few janitors and RN's themselves took part in Pete and Angels dirty dealings. She would grab an eager customer just as one was walking out of her room, and frantically begin making out with them as if she couldn't get enough. Her face was hot and sweaty as she viciously kissed them, pulling them into her room. They all took part in the whoring out of Angelica Larson. It was as if the good ol' prostitution days of the Lawrence Hotel had risen from the ashes and was in full swing again. And when it was all over around four a.m., the time Anita would show up for her shift—she would find Angel huddled up in the corner on the floor with her vagina aching and sometimes bleeding, crying and asking Ron for forgiveness and that she was sorry for what she did. Bloody Pete would count his earnings for the night with a big, selfish grin. But it flattened at the sound of her sobs from inside her room. He felt remorseful. *Poor kid*, he thought.

"And it was the same every Sunday morning," Anita told Amy. "She'd be on the floor all balled up like a scared little animal, crying about someone named Ron." Amy shuddered at the name Ron. "I'd help her up and get her into bed and she'd cry herself to sleep. The girl was in pain. Not just physically but emotionally to. I could see it in her that she was hiding something, covering some terrible thing up. That's really what all her sexual activity was about. She was numbing herself the way an alcoholic or drug addict would." Anita shook her head with sadness in her eyes at the remembrance of those days from long ago.

Bloody Pete's dirty little business lasted for a little over a year until he was found out and then fired in early 1976. For Angel, it was back to the daily touching sessions; so much in fact that she developed a bad case of carpal tunnel and had to wear a brace on her wrist for three months. In addition, she finally caved and began participating in those ridiculous group therapy sessions she hated going to. It helped a little. She was masturbating twice a day now rather than five times a day. Her wrist began to heal.

* * * * *

Late one Friday afternoon in May of 1978, as the faculty was heading out leaving the hospital a lonely and deserted building with only the sounds of game shows playing on small TV's from inside patient's rooms filling the halls, a young janitor of seventeen entered Angels room. At his side was a grey cleaning cart with spray bottles and rags sitting on top. A mop bucket sat waiting in the hall outside the door. He was doing part time janitorial work, mainly just to get his old man off his back, "Get a fucking job!" he'd always say. Angel's room was the last on his cleaning list. The tv was on and showing an episode of Scooby Doo. Angel was sitting in the large lounge chair with her leg over the side, looking good as ever in her new denim bell bottom jeans she bought yesterday at Pamida, along with Black Sabbaths 'We sold our souls for rock and roll' on cassette for 3.98. She was considered a level 1 patient, meaning she was a low level threat to herself. Despite her constant masturbating, she wasn't really hurting anyone physically. Because of this, she along with some of the other crazies had the privilege to ride the white bus into Blare every two weeks to shop or go to a movie or eat or whatever, but not

without heavily guarded supervision. She would joke with the bus driver Freddie as she hopped off the bus with the other good natured (real) crazies, telling him, "Don't worry about picking us up, we're all bustin' out of that place," and then make a playful gesture of shooting guns with her hands. Freddie just rolled his eyes and laughed at Angel, "Ok Angelica, be back at three." Angel put her arm around sixty year old Margeret 'the mute' and said, "C'mon old gal, lets scare the hell out of some normal people."

The kid moved the mop bucket inside her room. Angel was cracking and popping her Dentyne gum (Heather use to say it killed the cock breath) as she watched the kid clumsily push the mop bucket. She watched him like a hawk. He nervously fidgeted with the cleaning supplies on the cart. She sat up and the kid jumped. She gave him curious eyes, along with a smile. Cartoon shenanigans of Scooby Doo filled the room. Why was he so jumpy? Was it because he was alone with the blood hungry murderess from Bludenhale, the one he heard about when he was in grade school? Or because of the stories the older janitors had told him, about Angel's fits of endless sex. Maybe it was a little of both.

He started to mop the floor. Angel stood up and he jumped again, almost slipping on the wet floor, but he caught himself. A smile formed on her face that suggested she wanted to laugh out loud at him, but she didn't. She just kept staring at him and making him nervous as hell. The silence was killing him. *Just say something dammit*, he thought. She walked past him and into the bathroom. She left the door open and unzipped her jeans and sat down on the toilet. A loud and steady stream of her pee began to hit the water. Scooby Doo laughed on the tv. The kid felt his face turn hot with embarrassment as he'd never seen a girl use the bathroom. He looked down to the floor. Angel leaned forward and rested her chin in the palms of her hands all while cracking her gum, peeing and looking bored and not once taking her eyes off the kid. Her stream ended. She wiped and then pulled her Dentyne from her mouth and flushed. After standing up, she kicked off her jeans with her panties sitting in the crotch area, leaving her bottom half exposed. He caught a glimpse of her wide, black as night patch of pubic hair and felt even more embarrassed. He trembled as she walked past him and to the bed. Her heart shaped swaying back side caught his eye. She stopped at the bed and turned around quickly, making her straight black hair flip over her left shoulder. Her curvaceous bottom sunk into the bed as she sat down and crossed her legs. She cupped her knee and leaned back as if to look out the window. She smiled when she heard a car door shut, and then the sound of an engine turning on and then fading away. "All gone," she finally said with a wide smile at the kid. She uncrossed her legs and the kid couldn't help but notice something on her right hip. A tattoo. From where he was standing it looked like a butterfly, but was really the swan song logo from Led Zeppelin's record label. Angel patted the bed, motioning for the kid to come and sit next to her. He shook his head slowly in a 'no' motion as if she was crazy and he would get fired for doing so. She wasn't pleased with him being a sissy ass and hit the bed again hard, three times. Her eyes went wide at him and her demeanor was that of a girl who gets what she wants. Reluctantly he went over to the bed and sat down. His head hung down. She placed her hand under his chin and raised his face to hers. Angel smiled and hopped up onto the bed. Her knees sunk into the soft blue blanket. She pulled her

shirt over her head and flung it on the floor. Her hair was every which way. She blew black strands from her face and fixed her hair, stroking it back over her shoulder. She took his hand and guided it between her breasts and over her bra and down her stomach and then in between her legs. He could feel the heat from between her legs on his hand. She inserted two of his fingers inside her. It was the warmest feeling he'd ever felt. Her eyes shut tight and she moaned while leaning her head back. Her black hair fell off her shoulder like a feather. Blue veins popped out from her neck. She released his hand from her vagina and raised it to her lips where she began sucking on his fingers. She pulled them out of her mouth and slathered her salivating tongue all around the tips of his fingers; but she stopped. The kid had a look of terror on his face that made Angel snort out a laugh and go into a laughing fit. She slapped his shoulder and wiped away a tear from her eye from laughing so hard. "Relax, no one is here. They've all gone home. Now take off your pants."

"What!" the kid said abruptly.

"I can't fuck you with your pants on you silly shit!" she laughed and slapped him on his shoulder again.

"Look, I've never done anything like this before. I mean I haven't, you know; I never" He turned his head away from Angel with humiliation. And then she understood. She inhaled her breath and released an 'awww' like a female holding a newborn baby the first time. She slid her hand under his chin and turned his head toward her.

"Lay down," she said gently with a smile. He did as she said and then she straddled him; unleashing her female charm onto him, and a sweet feminine scent from between her legs that made him slide with ease deep into her, feeling the sensation of warm female parts for the first time.

* * * * *

Then on September 25th, 1980, the rock world lost another musical giant when drummer John Bonham of Led Zeppelin died in his sleep after choking on his vomit. Angel cried when she heard the news but cried even more upon hearing that the band had decided not to carry on without Bonzo, and had broken up. And that's when the games ended. Touching herself just didn't seem fun anymore. Angel was broken hearted by the breakup of Led Zeppelin, (both her and Heather's favorite band growing up throughout junior high and high school) just as she was broken hearted by watching her best friend being drug across the garage floor and pulled out into the cornfield, screaming bloody terror back in 1974 on a hot June night.

And with that, like an old friend showing up out of the blue to say, "Hi, how have you been" after six years, Angel looked out her window from the third floor and could have sworn she saw two red gleaming eyes staring back at her from a distance, out in the cornfield across from the parking lot. "*Shh my sweet Angel!*" is what the hideous thing had told her in the garage six years ago. *Shh Angel shh*, she thought to herself. *It might be watching.*

* * * * *

Amy stood frozen as Anita laid out the torrential past of Angels early days at the I.S.M.H. “Then the nightmares started happening.” Anita said as she continued talking to Amy. “Every night she would wake up screaming and I’d run in her room and she’d be sweatin’ up a storm and carrying on about some boy named Eldon, or her sister Heather. Sometimes she was delusional; over and over she’d say, ‘It’s coming back Anita, it’s coming for me, I know it is.’ Oh my goodness there was such sincerity yet cold terror in her voice. And none of us knew why she was suddenly having these nightmares and delusions. As far as me and the other nurses knew, Angelica only suffered from a severe sexual disorder.” Amy held her head down for a moment with a feeling of grief. *Sound familiar blonde?* Oddly, she somehow felt for Angel as Anita told her of Angel’s nightmares. Amy tried to fight the feeling of connection and understanding she was suddenly experiencing. It was hard, because she herself had endured many a dark night full of blood and horror due to her never ending nightmares. But there was something that the old nurse said that caught Amy’s attention.

“Wait, did you say her sister? Amy asked.

“Well yes honey, Heather, she died in 1974.” Anita suddenly realized what she was saying and felt remorseful. “I’m sorry honey, she was your Mother, I know. Angelica still talks about her to this day. And you to, and boy does she worry about you. I’ve been taking care of Ms. Larson for twenty years. She talks to me and I just listen. And I can hear the love in her heart when she talks about you honey.” Anita paused and looked down. Her old wise eyes were becoming moist. She looked up to Amy again. “You see Amy, I don’t why Angelica was sent here. The doctors are not allowed to discuss that kind of information with the RN’s and other certain staff. But I will tell you one thing just between you and me. There ain’t a damn thing wrong with that girl.”

Amy was speechless. She felt for the old nurse, but couldn’t shake the suspicion that Anita wasn’t telling her everything. Since she first saw her ten minutes ago, Amy had this feeling that Anita knew everything about her. And she did.

* * * * *

Anita had been unaware how long she had been standing there with a tray of hot food (mashed potatoes and gravy, salsbury steak, sweet peas) that was quickly turning cold.

“Oh my goodness, this food is getting cold.” Anita glanced at Angel’s door and then to Amy with a smile. “You ready to go inside?” Amy shook her head yes. She didn’t know why she was crying, but she was. Anita tapped on the door and opened it. They went inside.

* * * * *

“Angelica,” Anita called out. “Angelica honey, you have a visitor.” Forty two year old Angel Larson was sitting on her bed with her back to the door. She wore a grey bath robe and pink fluffy slippers. Streaks of white flowed down her black hair. She was staring out her window. Amy’s palms were sweaty and her heart raced like a horse on a winning streak at the track. She couldn’t believe she had made it this far. Anita whispered in the young blonde’s ear, “She gets very quiet and moody around this time of year, you know, her sister.” In addition to the painful

memory of that night in the garage, Angel was also suffering the passing of Margaret Hamilton a.k.a. Margaret the mute. She had died earlier in the week. The day before she died, Angel spent the day fixing the old and dying women's hair as she lay in her bed. Angel was staring blankly out the window and acted as if she didn't even hear Anita call her name, much less walk in the room. Then she saw Amy's reflection in the window. "Heather?" she gasped.

* * * * *

Without a doubt in her mind, Amy knew that in order to move on and clear the bloody cobwebs that have been sticking to her psyche for the past ten years, she was going to have to kill Angel Larson. She needed the closure; that final nail in the coffin to give her the push she so desperately needed to rid herself of the haunting enigma of The Bludenhale Massacre, and get on with her life. In addition to killing Angel, her list of things to do was prominent: quitting her stripping gig (she could always bartend at Cherrybombs), ending her affair with heroin and its unpleasant, vaginal odor causing side effect; stopping all sexual activity at the old, falling apart farmhouse down the road involving razor blades and other tools. It scared Amy when she thought of these things; the thought of ending her vices. It would be daunting and an uphill battle, but deep down she knew it was necessary. But for now, ending Angel's life was at the top of her list.

* * * * *

Amy didn't know how to respond when Angel suddenly called her by her Mother's name. She said nothing. For years Amy had gotten use to Susan calling her Heather on accident, but for her to hear it from the one she believed to have murdered her Mother, felt awkward and twisted. It also brought back an unwanted feeling she hasn't felt in ten years. "You're so pretty like your mommy" Amy winced at the thought Red Browns voice in her mind and quickly brushed it aside.

"Angelica, this is your niece Amy," Anita finally said, giving Amy a much wanted feeling of relief. "You know Amy, the one you talk about all the time."

Angel turned and faced Anita and Amy. Her eyes were big with wonder and hope as she turned around. Her bottom lip hung open in awe for a moment at the sight of Amy. Then it registered. Angel's hands began to tremble as she raised them to her mouth. A black brace was wrapped around her wrist. *Oh the joys of addiction and its ugly twin named relapse.*

"Oh my God, is that you?" Angel said in a high pitched voice shaking voice. She broke into a cry.

"Ms. Angelica I do believe it is," Anita said as she walked over to Angel and put her hands gently on her shoulders, comforting her. Angels sudden outburst of tears made Amy choke up and cry herself. Again, she didn't understand why. Angel put her hands out to the blonde headed girl standing in front of her that resembled her Mother almost to a tee, as if reaching for her. "Do you remember me sweetie?" Angel asked. Amy lightly shook her head and wiped her falling tears. Every ounce of logic in Amy's brain was telling her that she shouldn't remember Angel, because she was only two years old at the time and for most children their memory function doesn't kick in until about four or five. But she does remember.

She remembers every time she walks past that cold, white door sealing off Heather's room at home; the room that Susan hasn't allowed her to go in and that has been off limits for the past twenty years. *Willie, willie, willie won't go home* ran through her mind at every passing of Heather's room, just as it is running through her mind right now in front of Angel.

Anita whispered something in Angel's ear. Amy was unsure of what Anita might be telling her. Angel shook her head in a yes motion and squeezed Anita's hand. "You need anything else Angelica?" Anita asked as she made her way towards the door. "No, I think everything is ok for now, thanks Anita," Angel said. The old nurse stood next to Amy and nodded to Angel. With a smile she said, "Go on, she won't bite." Amy felt awkward, yet hopeful that her plan of killing Angel would soon be here. Anita left the room, quietly closing the door behind her. Amy stood there not knowing really what to say. Angel stared back at her with large eyes full of amazement, slowly shaking her head back and forth as if in awe of a house fire survivor. "Would you like to sit down," Angel asked. She jumped up from her sitting position on the bed and pushed the large visitors chair over so Amy could have a seat.

"That's ok, I don't mind sta—," She was cut off by an unexpected show of kindness from Angel, who said, "Oh, goodness, don't be silly, come have a seat." *You must be tired from being on your feet all night working at Cherrybombs. A little thin to honey. Doesen't Susan feed you? I know she does. Sssh Angel, don't forget what Susan told you,* Angel thought to herself.

Shouldn't she be rocking back and forth, laughing to herself or doing whatever it is crazy people do? Amy thought. To her, Angel looked ragged and run down, like she had been through a war almost. Her eyes were red from crying all day (something she did on every anniversary of Heather's death); she had lines on her forehead from aging. Her hair was still black as night but was showing strands of grey. But underneath Angel's worn out look, Amy couldn't help but notice how pretty she was, even at forty two. *Sorry Mother, I didn't mean to do that. It won't happen again.*

Amy finally took a seat and was surprised by how comfortable the oversized chair felt as she sunk into it. *Why isn't she saying anything. She just keeps staring at me. Is she going to attack me? Crazy people will do that.* Angel felt her eyes welling up with tears as she gazed at Amy. She wanted so badly to just give her a hug and tell her how much she misses her and that she thinks of her every day. Then, Angel once again asked, "Amy, do you remember me?"

Amy fought hard to hold back the distant memory she had of Angel from so many years ago. Some things you just can't forget. Good or bad. She suddenly remembered the weightless, butterfly feeling she would get in her tummy as she was passed back and forth between two laughing giant people; her memories eye associated them with the color's yellow and black. She remembers the fearful yet awesomely fun feeling of anticipation she would get when the giant girl with the black hair would crawl on the floor slowly towards her and then playfully pounce on her, tickling her sides as the funny sounding music played on and on. *Willie, willie, willie won't go home.*

"Yes, I do remember," Amy said tearfully. Angel put her hand out to touch her, but Amy jerked away sharply like trying to avoid being stung by a wasp.

“Sorry hun.” Angel said.

“No, no, that’s ok. I’m just nervous.” Amy said.

“I know.” *So am I.*

* * * * *

Angel wanted so desperately to tell Amy how much she cared about her, but knew by being on ‘the inside’ so long that Amy’s outside view of her was jaded. *God knows what people have told her*, Angel thought. She knew Heather’s daughter so very well. She knew about her nightmares, her drug use and her stripping gig at Cherrybombs. She knew these things because Susan had told her on one of her many visits to see her at the Indiana State Mental Hospital. For the past eighteen years, since 1976, Susan had been secretly visiting Angel, disclosing all her fears and worries about her granddaughter to her. By 1976, the pain and unreal suffering Susan had felt from the absence of her daughter was tremendous. She missed Heather with every ounce of her soul. She wanted her back. Sorry Mom, she’s one with the corn now. Somewhere out there her twenty year old memory lives on, deep in the heart of that hideous creature that loved the taste of her blood oh so very much. Sweet bloody Heather.

Angel remembers that first visit back in 1976. Susan walked into her room with a brown grocery bag. She had on a long, tan trench coat, a silk scarf over her head and was wearing sunglasses. She took every precaution to keep her identity secret. The townspeople of Bludenhale would have stoned her if they found out she was visiting her daughters murderer at the loony bin. And Angel was positive that Mrs. Smith had fallen in line with all the other small minded and hateful population of Bludenhale, believing that she was the one responsible for Heathers death. *“Maybe she does believe that I’m innocent,”* Angel thought as Susan sat across from her at the table on that first visit, sliding a grey pie pan full of sweet and delicious sugar cream pie across to her. “Here,” Susan said, “You forgot yours on our counter, so I made you another one.” She smiled nervously and lit a cigarette. “Amy is four now, gonna be startin’ pre-school in the fall, here’s a picture. Tina’s shop is doing well and...”

When Susan heard the news of Angel’s parents disowning her, it broke her heart. She felt sorry for Angel. She shouldn’t have but she did. Angel was practically Susan’s unofficial second daughter and by secretly visiting her, Susan felt like she could somehow re-connect with her daughter through Angel.

Susan would lie awake at night listening to the sound of her husband’s long snores and the crickets chirping outside and think to herself: *How did such a horrible thing come to be? How did this quiet, shy, beautiful young woman without a shred of meanness in her body and no sign of mental illness or hatred towards Heather (only love); the tall girl with long black hair that would have Sunday dinner with us, my daughters best friend since the age of five, and virtually Amy’s aunt, be responsible for taking Heather’s life? Or how Detective Monroe had put it when he spoke to Susan and Mark the next day after the murders took place “She drained Heather’s body of all her blood” Scream Susan scream! Cry into your husband’s shoulder and dig your nails into his back as you scream in distraught madness upon hearing of your daughter’s strange and bloody death!*

Now, eighteen years later, Angel is sitting in front of her best friend's daughter (the daughter she promised to watch over) not really knowing what to say. Other than maybe, *Did Susan give you the clothes I bought you?* (Unbeknownst to Amy, a lot of her wardrobe growing up was from Angel.) Or, *Susan is worried sick over you; you are better than that craphole Cherrbombs.* She wanted to tell Amy that she looked to thin and she should be taking care of herself and that Jack was really a creepy scumbag that used young girls to make a buck. And that she was sorry that she wasn't there for her all these years because she's been locked up in here, helpless and defeated. She wanted to tell Amy that she knew about Red and how he fucked her up that day at Sam's ten years ago because Susan had told her two days later. *Damn him, damn him to hell!*

She wanted to tell her that she wasn't the one responsible for taking her Mother's life. *It was that thing in the garage Amy. It sucked all the blood out... ssh Angel!*

* * * * *

The clock on the wall slowly ticked as the minutes went by. Soon they began to warm up to each other and as Amy listened to Angel tell stories of days gone by and talk about Heather (in a way that Susan never would or could), she realized, but not without a devil of a chill running up her spine that in some odd way she had a lot in common with Angel. *Sorry Mother, I'm so sorry.* She felt bad for having these thoughts. She was confused by Angel's normal like behavior. Angel talked to Amy as if she *was* really her Aunt. As the late afternoon neared dusk, Angel told stories of when Amy was a baby and how she and Heather would dance with her in Heathers room, and how she would change her diapers and feed her and loved her with every ounce of her soul. She told stories of the four times she and Heather saw Led Zeppelin (minus the time Heather was blowing Steve during Jimmy Pages guitar solo and not once taking her eyes off of Angel as she did) She talked about growing up in Bludenhale and riding bikes everyday with Heather and getting into Ms. Pritchard's rhubarb patch. And also the dream she and Heather had of opening the greatest hair salon ever, appropriately named 'Sis'. She spoke of cruising down the dusty back roads of Bludenhale and racing down Devils Bluff and hanging out at their second home known as the garage and—*ssshhhh.*

Amy felt her Mothers presence through the sound of Angel's voice, the same way Susan also did on her visits to see Angel (it was the reason why she kept going back). And then something occurred to Amy as she sat in Angel's room in the comfy chair with the daylight fizzling out, leaving a dark orange ray of sunshine cast upon the white floor: *Maybe killing Angel isn't such a good idea. She may not be the same monster in your dreams.*

Angel paused for a moment after about a half hour history lesson of what life was like for her and Heather in the 70's, growing up in Bludenhale. Angel was sitting across from Amy and noticed something about her. She leaned in as to get a better look at Amy, and then she smiled and asked pointing at the young blonde's ears, "Baby, your ears aren't pierced." Angel couldn't help but notice how pretty Amy was and yet her ears were not pierced, which she thought to be a little odd. *Most pretty girls have pretty gold and silver shining on their ear lobes.*

Embarrassed, Amy reached up to her ears, covering them as if ashamed. “*When we’re done at Sam’s we’ll head over to Tina’s place and get your ears pierced like you’ve been wanting, sound good?*” No Tina’s. After that horrible day at Sam’s, Amy never got around to getting her ears pierced. But that would soon change when Angel offered to pierce her ears right then and there in her room. The thing that Amy didn’t know about Angel was that she had been the unofficial hair stylist for the past twenty years at the I.S.M.H., along with manicuring, ear piercing and makeup tips for the level one ladies of the hospital. In a way Angel’s dream of becoming a hair stylist and having her own shop did come true. After three years of very noticeably good behavior (despite her touchy, feely sex problem) Angels doctor allowed her to paint one of the patient’s nails unbeknownst to Angel that it was an experiment in trust and overall mental stability. Next, she was permitted to do makeup and eventually hair styling. She was so good that she became known as the resident beautician on the second floor. Her doctor even smuggled his eighteen year old daughter in one night so Angel could fix up her hair for her senior prom. His daughter got the vote for best hairstyle of the night.

“You know, I can pierce those for you if you like.” Angel said smiling.

“What? Really, you can?” Amy said uneasily.

“Sure, I have everything I need right in that drawer over there.” Angel pointed to the top left drawer of a white dresser. For the next ten minutes, the dark haired girl that had been written off as the blood sucking psycho from long ago, stood in front of the mirror and gently pierced Amy’s virgin ears. As she did, Amy gripped the arm of the comfy green chair, fearful of the pain she heard about when getting your ears pierced. “Sweetie, this won’t hurt a bit.” She told Amy. No pain. Angel was a pro.

During their bonding moment, Angel saw her reflection in the mirror. She didn’t see herself in a tattered gray robe at forty two with coarse, greying hair. What she saw was her twenty two year old self in tight, hip hugging bell bottom jeans, with her soft black hair flowing and rolling over her shoulder and a glowing look of happiness on her face. In the background she could see forty-something house wives sitting in chairs with curlers in their hair. Then she heard the chiming of bells hitting together from a door being pushed open. She saw Heather and a five year old Amy at her side holding her hand. She could smell hairspray and nail polish remover and that burning smell of hot hair dryers all around. And she can hear the sound of a small radio playing and the ‘chi-ching’ of an opening cash register. Thanks, come again. *Come again Angel and witness what could have been.* This fairytale like daydream played like an old favorite movie in the mirror as Angel cut, combed, brushed and styled the older patients hair on the second floor for the past twenty years. And now, seeing her best friend’s daughter’s reflection in the mirror was no exception.

“Ok sweetie, all done. What do you think?” Angel asked.

Amy raised her hand to her ear to touch a small shiny, silver stone. The feeling of something stuck in her ear was strange, but she loved it.

She smiled shyly at Angel. “It’s great Angel. Thank you.”

“Oh, it was nothing. But you’re welcome baby.”

“Well I better get going.” Amy said. She sat in the chair and didn’t move; almost as if she really didn’t want to leave. “Thanks for talking to me about my Mother. There is still so much I want to know about her.”

Angel gave her a smile and told her that she loved her company and that she could come back anytime when she wanted to talk about her Mother. But as that dull, orange ray of final daylight shining through the window began to get darker and darker, a bloody ghost of Angels past began to speak to her. *Ssshhh Angel, Angelica, don’t!* Angel felt a blackened chill of horror go through her as she looked around the room making sure no one else was in there listening. Amy started to get up but Angel halted her with “Wait!” “*Angelica, don’t do it! Don’t Angelica! Don’t you dare! Dear sweet Amy, there is so much more you need to know. Don’t do it Angel. She won’t believe you. She never will. Shut up Ron! Leave the girl be and let her keep on believing that it was you who sucked every last bit of blood from her beautiful mommies body. If you love her you won’t tell her the truth. Just get in the car Angel, we have to go.*”

“What’s wrong Angel?” Amy could hear the franticness in Angel’s voice. It scared her. The forty two year old put her hand gently around Amy’s thin wrist, pulling her gently back down to the comfy green seat, where she would tell her of the thing that has been haunting her for the past twenty years. *Don’t do it Angelica!* Amy tucked her hair behind her ear as she slowly sat back down. She had a genuinely concerned and frightened look on her face.

“What is it Angel.” Amy said.

“There’s something I need to tell you.” She spoke quietly and her voice trembled. Amy leaned in slightly to hear her better.

“Amy, I’ve been locked up in this place for a long time now. And I’ve had many dark nights where it was just me and my thoughts and cold, black silence. I was a smart kid in school. Never made it on the honor roll or anything like that, but I’m not just some dumb beauty school queen. I know when things aren’t right. See, I’ve had a lot of time to think about things and what happened and I know when something isn’t right.” As she spoke her voice became quieter and quieter until Amy was almost directly in front of Angels face. Angel continued but now with big eyes of terror that glistened with tears. “It wasn’t me, It wasn’t me Amy.” She covered her mouth in grief and shook her head back and forth. Angel put her mouth right to Amy’s newly pierced ear and spoke just above a whisper. “There was something in the garage that night.” Amy went white with terror.

“Angel you’re scaring me. What was in the garage? Why are you whisperi” She was cut off.

“Ssshhh, Angel motioned. “It might hear us. It might be watching us right now.”

Like a fog slowly drifting across a cornfield in the early morning, Amy’s mind registered Angel’s words slowly. *Might. Hear. Us. Watching. Us. Now.* And then she panicked. She shrieked as if waking from a terrible nightmare and quickly stood up. “I really need to go Angel, I’m sorry.” She got up fast and made her way towards the door. Angel, just know realizing that she scared the living daylights out of the poor girl, got up quickly as well and apologized. She told Amy (almost begging) that she could come visit her anytime she’d like and that she would love to see her again. Angel flipped on the lamp sitting on the dresser. Amy stood by the door trying not to show how scared she was. She told Angel she would see her

again. *Bet you will blonde.* They exchanged a fast, awkward hug and said their goodbyes. Amy was out the door. *Bye sis,* Angel thought as she hugged Amy goodbye.

* * * * *

Amy trekked down the hall like a nervous whore running out of a church. She could feel a few small droplets of pee on her panties. The little incident made her wet herself a little. *What the hell was she talking about?* Why would she tell me that? Her mind went in one hundred directions as she entered the ladies restroom where she let out a fright induced pee. When she was done she cautiously opened the door and peeked her head out, making sure no one was coming down the hallway. It was clear. She walked down the hallway and found the nearest janitors closet where she settled herself in, preparing herself for phase two of her plan; the plan to kill the one who took who Mother's life twenty years ago.

* * * * *

Almost time dear Mother. I won't let you down. Amy reassured the spirit of her dead Mother as she sat in the darkness of the janitor's closet with four large meat cutting knives hidden well in between her doc marten shoes and her white stretch pants she was wearing under her blue jean skirt. She made sure to double wrap the knives with cellophane so she wouldn't get cut. *Good idea blonde, no cuts.* The plan now was to just wait. Sit and wait for the perfect time to go do what she needed to do. She did her best to calm herself from what Angel had told her a few minutes ago. Her adrenaline was running and it was hard to focus on the matter at hand. She kept thinking of the stories Angel had told her about her Mother, and how good she felt hearing them. She knew why she came here, but the current feelings she was experiencing was confusing to her and wasn't doing a damn bit of good for her plan. A headache began to form in the front part of her head. She had never felt as close to her Mother than she did when she was with Angel. It made her angry at herself for feeling this way, but she couldn't help it. *Maybe killing Angel isn't a good idea, she thought. Stupid girl, what are you doing? Go home little pup. Put on your super comfy, grey sweatpants and drink a couple Dr.Peppers and play scrabble with your grandparents and eat sugar cream pie till you're sick.* After about an hour of contemplating, Amy made her decision. She got up, opened the door and walked out.

Part 9

The bloody End

1994

A ray of sunlight pierced through Amy's bedroom window, shining it's warmth upon her face through the curtain early Sunday morning. She slowly awoke from

her deep and restful slumber. She sat up and rubbed the sleep from her eyes. Her skin was clammy from sweating overnight, even as cool and frosty air blew from the vent on the floor. She could hear the radio playing downstairs in the kitchen, as well as the sound of silverware clicking together in the kitchen sink. Susan and Mark were having their morning coffee. Amy could hear their muffled voices coming up through the floor. The rich aroma of coffee and toast tugged at Amy's senses, pulling her out of bed. She sat up and scooted to the edge of the bed. She had slept in only her bra. By the time she had pulled off her panties before bed, she had fallen face first into her soft, fluffy pillows and fell asleep. A long and fun evening of playing scrabble with your grandparents, drinking Dr. Pepper and engorging yourself on sugar cream pie was the culprit of Amy's sleepy slumber. Last night she slept without demons.

She got up and walked over to her dresser and pulled open an overstuffed drawer full of panties and bras. Still half asleep she absent mindedly grabbed a purple bra and red with white polka dot panties out from the drawer. She yawned and traipsed down the hallway and went into the bathroom. "Amy baby, c'mon down and get some coffee before it gets cold. I here you creepin' around up there," her Grandma yelled up to her room. Amy replied with a yawning, "Ok, be down in a sec." She sat down on the toilet and began to pee. Her face sleepily fell into her hands. Her morning breath bounced off her hands back into her face. And then a much more dreaded odor began to fill the bathroom. "Christ that stinks!" It was the rancid smell of her pee. She ran her hand across her vagina and took a quick whiff just to see what the hell it could be. She coughed and gagged at the stench. "Fucking heroin," she murmured under her breath. It had to be the heroin she thought, because she'd never had a problem like this before she started using the shit. She had no rash, no redness, or no white pus oozing out anywhere; just a bad smelling urine. She sighed with frustration and sat on the toilet contemplating masturbating. "You just woke up," she said to herself. "Oh hell with it," she said and began squeezing her somewhat dry vagina. It didn't take long before the dryness turned to a smooth, velvety wetness that made her fingers slip in and out of her. She tried her best to keep her moans quiet and subtle. She didn't want her grandparent's to hear her getting off. The scent of her sex and girl hygiene products acted as an aphrodisiac. She loved getting herself off in the bathroom, especially on the toilet. Plus the entire upstairs was practically hers. Her grandparents never went up there. It was her domain but made sure to keep the sex, drugs and cutting away from her grandparents' house; always. As she began to reach orgasm, she pushed herself up with her other hand on the porcelain toilet seat and ejaculated into the toilet water and all over the seat. She held her breath trying not to make a sound when she came. But holding her breath only intensified her orgasm. Her face felt warm and flushed and her erect nipples pushed through her bra. When she was done she stood up and vaginal secretions streaked down her legs all the way to her feet. Warm, wet droplets were scattered on the toilet seat. She was out of breath. "Holy fuck!" she said, amazed by her remarkable orgasm. A rumbling in her stomach indicated an oncoming bowel movement but she felt like it could wait till later. She grabbed a towel and wiped herself clean and the toilet seat as well. She decided to skip her shower. No need to take one now because later she would be outside in the heat getting sweaty,

pulling up weeds with Susan. She'll take one later before she heads over to Cherrybombs and bids her farewell to Jack and the outhouse, (the only thing she won't miss from the raunchy strip club). She vigorously washed her feminine stink off her hand and went back into her room to change. As she passed her dresser she saw her reflection in the large square mirror attached to the top. Small red cuts and scars went up and down the backs of her legs from where she had cut herself so many times at the abandoned farmhouse down the road; sometimes during sex (usually a threesome or with some guy she met after she was done doing her 'thing' at Cherrybombs) or when she was alone at two in the morning, high on heroin and hanging on for dear life during one her dark world trips. It made her sad seeing what she had done to herself. She hated wearing jeans and sweats all summer long just so Susan and Mark wouldn't see the horrendous tiny scars all over her legs. She vowed right then and there in front of the mirror with tears in her eyes that the cutting would stop. It had to. Besides, she thought she had nice legs and what nice boy with a nice haircut and a nice job would want a girl with cuts and scars all over her legs.

She put on a pair of grey and oh so comfortable sweatpants and a faded Skidrow t-shirt she's had since sixteen and headed downstairs. The smell of coffee brewing guided her along on this new day.

* * * * *

Her Grandfather Mark was at the table reading the Sunday paper, sipping a hot cup of coffee in a John Deere mug. He heard Amy's footsteps as she entered the kitchen.

"Hey there," he said looking just above his newspaper.

"Hey," Amy said quietly. She felt embarrassed when she saw her Grandfather. *God I hope he didn't hear me up there.* She hoped that Susan wouldn't notice her pierced ears either. Amy thought of last night. *It might be watching us,* Angel had said. *What could be watching us?*

"We still on for today pretty girl?" Susan asked. The sound of her voice snapped Amy back into the present.

"What? Oh yeah. Just don't work me to hard. It's been a while since I've done yard work." Amy said with a smile and then took a sip of coffee.

"I don't think you've ever pulled a weed ever in your life kid." Mark chuckled at his granddaughter. Susan pushed a plate full of bacon over to Amy. "Here, you probably should get something in your belly." Any other day the sight of a heaping plate full of hot bacon would've made Amy wretch. But today was a new day. It was a fresh start and she was looking forward to it.

"So what are you gals up to today?" Mark asked and drank the rest of his coffee.

"I wanna get those flowers planted around the house. I need some young bones to help me pull up those weeds though. You think the kid can handle it?" Susan smiled at Amy and wrapped her hand around her granddaughter's thin arm, playfully shaking it.

"I don't know babe, she's lookin' a little puny," Mark joked and then laughed. They would always tease her about how thin she was and never thought she looked underweight. She's always been a thin girl, but five more pounds and they wouldn't be laughing.

“Shut up you guys,” Amy laughed and covered her face like a little kid. She was twenty two but suddenly felt twelve.

“Oh hey, look here Amy.” Mark said enthusiastically, giving his newspaper a quick jerk. He read, “Warehouse help wanted, starting pay 7.50 plus benefits. There ya go kiddo.” He read the ad from the paper with a tone in his voice suggesting that Amy would for sure be doing flips of joy off the table. Amy looked at her grandfather like he was insane.

“Now Mark, don’t go and scare her off. We haven’t seen her like this for a long time,” Susan calmly warned her husband.

“Oh shit, I forgot my cigarettes upstairs,” Amy said.

“Here, have one of mine.” Susan began to toss her a Virginia Slim, but Amy opted for one of Mark’s Marlboro lights. It wasn’t out of place for Amy to smoke in front of her grandparents or cuss or drink coffee with them in the morning. This was the light stuff. They did though however clutch their pillows every night trying to block out the horrors of what their granddaughter was doing at two a.m.

They sat around the table drinking coffee as they smoked and laughed and made jokes and ate bacon. This was a much needed and welcomed change from the usual dreary mornings consisting of pushed aside questions in Susan’s mind of her granddaughter’s whereabouts the night before and that uncomfortable, awkward feeling Amy would get because she knew that both Mark and Susan knew everything she did but would never dare say a word about it. *Let it be Susan.* Now, Amy never felt more at home than she did this Sunday morning sitting around the table. It felt good to come home.

* * * * *

A trail of brown dust lingered behind Mark’s pickup as he drove down their long driveway and into town to run an errand. Susan and Amy began working outside around the house planting flowers. It didn’t seem like work to Amy even though it should have. She hasn’t done yard work since she was fourteen. It felt good to be out in the sun with sweat on her forehead, dripping down onto the grass. Indeed it was a much needed change of scenery for her. She had succumbed to the dismal, dungeon like dark atmosphere of Cherrybombs niteclub the past four years. A place where demons lurked out back by the dumpster and old men drank hot whiskey under blood drenched scythe ceiling fans.

Amy wiped her sweaty forehead and continued pulling up long, tangled weeds where there would soon be bright pink and white flowers in their place. Susan brought over a long black tray full of white flowers ready to be planted. She kneeled down next to her granddaughter. She didn’t say anything to Amy at first. In fact Susan didn’t know really what to say. Conversations were a rarity these days in the Smith house. Getting to be alone with Amy was a feat in itself. Susan never sees much of her anymore; maybe a little in the morning, but never in the evening. “*Christ, I’m almost sixty and like gardening. She’s twenty two and works at a strip club,*” Susan thought. She felt this rare moment alone with her granddaughter was slipping away from her. *Just say something, anything. Talk to your granddaughter dammit!*

“Everything ok grandma?” Amy asked as she dug into the ground with; her voice sounding calm as ever. Susan was stunned. *Did she just ask me if I’m ok?*

“Sure, you ok?”

“Yeah, I’m great,” Amy said without looking up still digging into the earth, preparing it for the flowers. They were both silent for a moment and then, “Grandma, there is something I want to tell you.”

Susan’s mind went awry. *Oh my dear lord, she’s pregnant. Oh no, please don’t let it be, please God, please, please...*

“I’m quitting Cherrybombs.”

Stunned, Susan stopped digging but kept her head down, staring into the mess of weeds. A lump formed in her throat. *Did she say she was quitting that awful place? Heather, did you answer my prayers?* She raised her head slowly to Amy and put her gloved hand on her granddaughter’s hand.

“That’s great honey,” Susan said with a smile of relief. She gazed back down to the ground but not without closing her eyes and letting out a sigh of relief like she just avoided a life ending car wreck.

“It’s ok grandma,” Amy told her reassuringly and leaned her head gently onto Susan’s. There was no need to say anything else. From here on out Susan knew that things would somehow be all right. And there was no need for that long, deep conversation about life between the two as they sat under the hot sun, pulling weeds. This was a grand step in the right direction and Susan knew that their relationship would in time heal itself and grow to something wonderful. Somehow Amy knew it to.

“You want some ice tea?” Susan asked.

“Sounds great,” Amy said and wiped her eyes.

* * * * *

Later that evening around five as dusk whispered its return to the dying day, Amy jumped in the shower. And even though it was still hot as hell outside, the warm water of her shower was relaxing and therapeutic in a way; like she was washing away her old self. Operation: Dark World shutdown. She turned off the steaming hot water, got out and began toweling herself off. As she brushed her wet and tangled damp hair in front of the mirror, she went over in her mind of how she was going to break the news to Jack. *It’s just not for me anymore, tired of the late nights, yadda yadda yadda, blah blah blah, Yeah right blonde, your life is a goddamn car wreck and you’re struggling to break free of the mound of metallic junk heaping itself over you; Cherrybombs being just one of the pieces smashing down on your frail existence.* She considered Jack a friend and didn’t want to hurt him, although that may be impossible.

She slipped into a skin tight, dark grey mini skirt and grabbed a plain white girlie tee from her closet. She tied up her doc martens and made her way downstairs, but not without stopping at her Mother’s vacant room. She stood in front of the door, pressing herself close with the palms of her hands up against it. Amy thought she faintly heard music coming from inside the room. It was a song from a long time ago and then she thought: *Mother are you proud of me? Did I do well?*

She went downstairs and into the kitchen where Susan was finishing up washing some dishes. Pork chops with mash potatoes and corn on the cob was the usual Sunday dinner. Susan looked up from the sink when she saw her

granddaughter walk into the kitchen and take a seat at the table. She dried her hands on a floral printed dishcloth and then leaned against the refrigerator, giving Amy a look of knowing. Amy slouched back in her chair and threw her arms up as if throwing in the towel. "Well, this is it," Amy said. Susan went over to the table and sat down. She struggled inside herself with wanting to say the right thing, or say something wise or meaningful like she thought grandparents were supposed to do. But all that came out was, "I know you're doing the right thing." It sounded cheap to Susan even though she truly meant it. The bare bones truth of it was Susan was scared out of her wits about the future. One that doesn't involve sleepless nights, constant worry and those nasty stares from bored housewives passing her at the grocery store. Of course she was happy about Amy's decision and hoped it would lead to her quitting those other horrid things she does, *you know Susan, the ones that haunt you at three a.m.; do you know what your granddaughter does for money honey?* But ever since Amy told her earlier when they were pulling weeds under the hot sun, Susan was feeling the cold wind of change and it terrified her. For the past four years she's been quietly worrying herself to death of Amy's out of control and frenzied lifestyle. And now that there was a light of hope shining at the end of the tunnel, Susan was horrified of that change. She was almost scared to be happy.

Mark came in through the back door. He smelled of hay and barn. "Oh, hey. Don't mind me. You girls keep talkin'." He kicked off his boots and walked out of the kitchen, excusing himself as if he accidentally opened the door on a private business meeting. Amy felt her face turn warm from embarrassment because she saw the sparkle in her grandfather's eye and knew Susan had told him already about what she was doing. She suddenly felt like she was twelve again sitting at the table with Susan, having her talk about her first period and what not. Susan gave Amy a dry, guilty kind of look. "Yes honey, he knows. I told him earlier. Hope you don't mind." Amy felt good about finally stepping up and being responsible about her life but still, she couldn't shake that feeling of humiliation when she saw how happy Mark looked when he came inside with that 'I'm so happy you're not going to be a slut anymore' kind of look. "Yeah, that's ok grandma," She lied.

* * * * *

Susan stood by the back door and watched Amy drive down their long gravel driveway. Her husband was in the living room watching a football game on the TV. He sat in his lazy boy with his feet propped up on a foot rest. A cool air was blowing through the vent on the floor and the sound of referee whistles and a roaring crowd made its way into the kitchen where Susan smiled and contemplated a long island ice tea. She made one and went into the living room and sat on the arm of Marks lazy boy. She took a drink from her cup. He put his arm around her and squeezed her waist. It excited her and made her feel twenty three again momentarily. There was a picture of Heather sitting on the mantel of the fireplace. Her long blonde hair and her smile seemed to fill the room with the color of hope. It radiated a kind of happiness as if she was smiling at her parents; watching them and feeling happy for them as they cuddled like kids on a first date. Susan laughed as she dropped down into her husband's lap. An alien feeling

of hope and happiness filled her senses when she looked up at the picture of her daughter.

Susan couldn't wait to tell Angel the good news tomorrow.

* * * * *

The war in the sky displayed a battle scene of morbid grey clouds and a sun lit evening as Amy drove down 750 W. She passed Devils Bluff without flinching. In the horizon, flashes of heat lightning spread throughout the breadth of the battleground sky, as if it was the true victor in the battle. Amy smoked a camel light, blowing its cancerous ghost like smoke through the cracked window. She kept the radio off. She didn't want any triggers for a possible dark world trip. Her confidence was getting stronger the closer she got to Cherrybombs. Large, warm rain drops began to fall and were no ally to the combatant skies of cloud and lightning. The sun peeked through the puffy grey clouds, showing its dominance in the unstable weather war high above Bludenhale.

It had already rained in Bludenhale by the time Amy pulled into the back of Cherrybombs. The streets were wet and glistening and the parking lot had that same wet, black sludgy look as it did on Friday. She parked next to the dumpster for the final time. She stepped out of her car expecting to see the drunken homeless man she always encountered before her shift. He was nowhere in sight. *That old bastard beat me to it and busted out of here before me.* Just as she was getting ready to go inside, she caught a glimpse of the battling weather in the sky. It stopped her dead in her tracks. She stood frozen with her hand tight around the door handle, viewing the mass of grey clouds and bright shining sun in the horizon. She had a distant look in her eyes and was in awe of why she had never noticed something as beautiful as this in her twenty two years of life. As Amy watched the mingling of grey and orange hues in the sky, she felt incredibly small and overwhelmed. She somehow had the feeling that the oncoming storm was her life; her dark world in disguise. And the sun was trying its hardest to break through and kill her dark world. *C'mon light, shine through,* she thought. She also wondered if her mother was looking down on her from above, in the sky of good and evil and its strange mix of orange and grey. Somehow she felt that she was. Amy could almost see her face in the clouds.

* * * * *

The inside of the club was its usual old and dreary self. The creaking, wooden main floor where so many feet have stood was as dull as any given night. Two old bar flies sat at the old wooden bar, one on each side. They would salute each other from across the bar with each new drink.

Once Amy was inside, she walked past the outhouse without a care or any good memory in her mind of its small and cramped space. The same could be said for the smelly girls' restroom across from the outhouse. She treaded down the narrow hallway and she could see the wooden ceiling fan come into view. No scythes, no blood; just a boring old ceiling fan. As she entered the main floor area, the scene in front of her portrayed what a drifter might come across in a ghost town in hell. There was a dancer onstage (fake blonde) in only her black g-string panties, half ass dancing to Danzig's Am I Evil. The stage was bloodied by red lights. She

danced like a drunken ballerina, stumbling around as if she was attached to strings being controlled by the devil himself, making her perform in front of old men drinking whiskey in this witching female playhouse, full of girl demons smelling of sex out here in a cornfield in hell. The song ended and the girl walked off the stage. Those bloody red lights were still on.

Looks that Kill by Motley Crue began to play as Amy walked towards the bar. She had already made eye contact with Jack who stood behind the bar with his white dish cloth over his shoulder. He waved to her as the girl on stage was dancing devilishly to Danzig, and then he raised them up in a 'what are you doing here' shocked kind of way. She drifted closer to the bar, gliding like a ghost with a slow, sensual stride. Their eyes met and she could tell that he knew something was up.

"Girly, I thought I told you to take tonight off." He said.

She hopped up onto a bar stool and fluffed her hair. "Yeah I know Jack; just wanted to hang out for a minute that's all." She tried to sound nonchalant, but knew she was unsuccessful by the look in Jack's eyes.

"C'mon kid, what's up? I know you better than that." He leaned on the bar with his palms lying flat on it.

"I'm leaving," she said abruptly.

"Now just hang on kid. I was just kidding with you. You don't have to leave. Let me get you a drink. It's on the house." He reached for a bottle of Jim Beam, Amy's favorite.

"No Jack, I mean I'm leaving this place." Her eyes lowered. She could barely look at him and then she said, "For good."

Jacks heart began to sink after those first few seconds of shock wore off upon hearing what Amy told him. She didn't know how he would handle hearing the news of her quitting. Especially after he had taken her in and gave her a job four years ago and acted as a father figure (in a sleazy kind of way). And for a moment her dark world flashed its black light in her mind when she pictured Jack pulling out a massive ax from behind the bar, and chopping her head off telling her, "*You're mine little girl, you ain't goin' nowhere!*" But of course the reality of the situation was anything but violent. Jack was hurt that his friend was leaving. He considered Amy his friend and never once did he ever think of being more than just a friend to her, despite what some of the other girls thought at Cherrybombs. Amy was just his favorite. Most of the other girls didn't know that Amy's Mother had once worked at Cherrybombs for a short while in the seventies. This was one of the reasons why Jack had that connection with Amy. He knew about the grotesque and shocking death of her Mother. He felt for Amy and knew she was in pain and held most of her anguish inside of her; except of course on Friday nights when she would roll her body around a fake blood splattered stage in a twisted tribute to her Mother, *Thanks Red*. In his heart, he always knew this day would come and that Amy would move on. He just wasn't ready to see her go.

Jimbo was standing next to the dj console by the stage. He was surprised to see Amy there on a Sunday. When he saw her sitting there at the bar with Jack, a feeling of dread crashed into him like a giant wave. He had a general idea of what they were talking about because their body language gave it away; Amy was crying and holding Jack's hand. It was like they were at a funeral. *Dammit, she's quitting*

Jimbo thought. But that feeling of dread stayed with him. It scared him. He never had a feeling like this before. He glanced around bar area as the Motley Crue played on the p.a. and the stage glowed red. Everything from seeing Amy sitting at the bar talking to Jack, the old men drinking whiskey, the girl dancing on stage, and even those creepy red lights, all seem to convey some dark dreaded feeling in Jimbo that told him something was wrong. He had an eerie feeling about the room, like some invisible terror was looming over it, putting things in place, preparing. And then thunder rumbled in the distance.

Amy said her goodbyes to Jack and gave him a hug. She promised she would stop in every once in a while to say hi. But deep down she knew it was a lie. Once she walked out the door, that was it and she knew it. She knew she could never come back to the place where she had experienced so many blackened nightmares of blood and horror. Her mind and soul needed to be free from her dark world. The mind terrors would only continue if she stayed, and after enduring her worst dark world trip she's had since the age of fourteen (that lovely trip from last Friday on the anniversary of the Bludenhale Massacre of '74, the one where she gushed blood from between her legs from being fucked over and over again by different men and then was chased by a raging flood of blood in a cavernous cornfield in hell), it was crucial that she stay away from Cherrybombs.

Jimbo saw her coming his way. His feeling of dread had left him and now only sadness was in his mind as he put his arms out to Amy. She gave him a hug and thanked him for being her friend and for cleaning up her Friday night bloodbaths for the past two years. As a token of her appreciation she gave him the two joints she had promised him on Friday. She felt bad for it slipping her mind due to her meltdown after her 'thing'. He took them unwillingly and gave her another hug goodbye.

She wiped her tear filled face and put on a fake smile. "I'll see ya around big guy. And make those things last."

"You got it Amy. Take care kid." Jimbo said.

She walked out of the bar area and headed for the ladies restroom with its glorious and vile female aroma waiting to bid her farewell.

* * * * *

In addition to the two joints that were in her purse, she also had a backup for herself just in case her confronting Jack became too emotional. That backup was a small vial of heroin and a syringe. Her meeting with Jack was emotional, but overall she felt that it went pretty smooth. *Like slick fake blood smeared on your sweet little ass blonde.* She opened the door to the restroom and out came the overpowering baby powder and pee fragrance for the last time, *Whoosh.* She gaged and then went into a stall. She took out the syringe and vile after she sat down on the toilet lid. Motley Crue began to fade out and was then ambushed by Pantera, Strength beyond strength. She had this moment in her mind all day, among other things. It was all part of her plan and it would complete the circle. "One last caress, ain't that right Glen", she laughed to herself as she prepared her arm for injection by wrapping a thick, ugly brown rubber band tight around her upper arm. She tapped on her popped out blue veins, trying to pick the best one. "This one will do." Her days of pain were coming to an end. She felt like she was on the

homestretch and after shooting up for the last time, Operation Dark World Shutdown would be near complete. She raised the needle to her arm for the final stick. It was still hot as ever in the disgusting restroom. The same cockroaches from Friday were still there, all scattered around on the pissy floor. *You're muscle and gall. Naive at best. I'm bone, brain and Cock. Deep down stronger than all.* A close clap of thunder made itself known outside. She thought of how things were looking up in her life and how good it felt to be doing something right. She thought of how great it was going to be renewing her relationship with her grandma. She brought the needle closer to her arm. She pictured herself on a forklift working at some warehouse, driving past all the boys with their tongues hanging out. She could see herself making a living and having a nice apartment and normal, drug free friends and having a boyfriend with a nice haircut and nice job with good insurance. She thought of her visit with Angel and how she could see herself being friends with her. She smiled at all of these thoughts and then aimed for her vein.

“Christ on a fucking cross!” she yelled. Just as she was preparing to stick herself and suck in her last hit of heroin, a trail of blood inched its way down her thigh from between her legs. “Seriously, this is going to happen now.” She started her period. She felt it coming on Friday night when she got home, and she felt it again last night as she was standing over Angelica Larson on top of her bed around midnight, driving a large butcher knife deep into her throat. Amy decided to kill Angel at the last minute as she walked out of the janitor’s closet and down the dark hallway of the Indiana State Mental Hospital with all the intensions of going home and playing scrabble with her grandparents and eating sugar fucking cream pie. *Maybe killing Angel is a good idea,* she thought as she turned around and stomped like a mad queen in her castle with her sharp toy in her hand, ready to play while her king is away, towards Angel’s room. And as Anita opened the door to Angel’s room early this morning with a tray of hot cakes and syrup, Amy was getting off on the toilet, making a mess with her sex everywhere while thinking of how she killed Angel. Anita screamed and the tray went crashing to the floor. A group of doctors who were doing their rounds came rushing in to Angel’s room, only to find her impaled to the wall with four large butcher knives, just as Heather had foreseen in her dream and had told Angel twenty years ago in the garage.

Period aside, Amy stuck the needle in. The warm rush of heroin blazed through her veins as she tilted her head back in a haze of bliss. Her mouth parted open, letting out a sigh of joy at the feeling of the high kicking in. Her eyes slid back into her head and she didn’t even realize what had happened, because it happened too fast; but by then it was too late. The intense ecstasy of her high gave way to unreal terror as her chest tightened and her breathing became very short. She started to tremble because she realized suddenly what was happening. *It’s too late for some, far too late.* Her trembling turned to a panic induced shaking because she knew she was overdosing. Her throat was tightening and her lungs felt as if they were becoming deflated. She sat up from the toilet and teeter tottered back and forth trying to keep her balance. She slowly pushed open the stall door and then put her hands on the sink to hold herself up. She gazed in the mirror at herself. A string of drool fell from the corner of her mouth. Her nightmare reflection screamed back at her. Good girl gone bad. No sweet treats from that sweet syringe

sweetheart. She stumbled out of the bathroom and staggered down the hall as if walking on a tight rope; her arms outstretched to keep her balance. The tightness in her chest was worsening. And to make things horrifically worse, her dark world had returned and was haunting her reality once again by a hallucination of a shape shifting hallway. In Amy's eyes the old and dark hallway was morphing into a swamp like blackened hell, with an oozing black tar substance dripping down the walls that had crooked pictures of old farmhouses, barns and bloody demonic faces. A ghost white mist was rising up from the floor. In front of her she saw a giant hand at the end of the hall reaching for her. It wasn't truly a human hand but a gigantic and wretched demon hand with deadly sharp nails and a burnt look to it. The center of its palm transformed into a spider's mouth, opening up wide revealing its fangs. It vomited out a long gush of blood at her but she stood immobile, trapped by tar covered hands reaching up around her ankles from the wooden floor in the hallway. She felt massive pressure in her head, as if it was going to burst. The exit door seemed to be getting farther away with every step and every dying breath she took. Then, like a god send, the nightmare of a black and bloody hallway dissipated in front of her eyes. Despite her struggling breaths, she was relieved beyond measure to have finally reached the exit door. She pushed herself through and then collapsed to the ground just outside the door. She lied helpless and twitching on the pavement of the back parking lot. She heard footsteps from behind her coming her way.

* * * * *

The battling steel grey clouds and sun were finally being put to rest as dusk was settling down over Bludenhale. The black pavement of the parking lot was wet and smelled of rain for it had showered for a minute or two when Amy was inside talking to Jack. The air around her was thick with humidity and the sound of those footsteps became closer. *Someone is here, dear God, someone is going to save me*; her drugged thoughts came through just barely in her hazy mind. A low rumble of thunder sounded in the distance and the footsteps were very close. They ended with a scraping sound of rubber on pavement at Amy's ears. Struggling to breathe, yet still very alive and now very aware of where she was, she looked up and saw a shadowy figure above her staring back down on her. She slowly gasped the words help me to the stranger above her. The skidding sound of shoes played in her ears again and then the stranger stepped away, walking around her, standing at the bottom of her feet. *Jimbo, its Jimbo, he's going to help me. He saw me collapse and he's already called the ambulance and they're on their way ri...*

"Hey blonde, long time no see." A man's voice sounding unfamiliar and very close to Amy's face, spoke in a lazy, smoky tone. "Looks like you got yourself in a situation here doll face," The strange voice said again, but with a stroke of their hand on Amy's blonde hair. The stranger's face was directly over Amy's and she could see only the outlined shadow of their face, but the horrid and rank breathe of the stranger killed the mystery and then Amy realized. "You see Amy, I've been thinking about what you did to me. Do you remember?" That calm yet low and smoky voice blew rancid alcohol breath into her face.

"Pau, Paul, Paul, plea, please help me." Amy could barely get her words to come out.

"I've had forty eight long hours to think about your little ballcrusher game sweetie pie. I'm sure you had a blast; made you feel strong or whatever."

His shadowy face disappeared from her view, but she could hear him talking in front of her. She also heard the sound of a jingling belt and then a zipper sliding down.

"Paul, please, whatever it is....you're going to do," She couldn't finish her sentence because she started coughing and spit up a large amount of trapped saliva in her throat.

"Too late Amy," Paul said as he mounted himself on her. His hand slid up her skirt and ripped her panties off violently. She was immobile as if glued to the ground. She knew what was going to happen but felt helpless to do anything about it. Her eyes quickly moved to her sides and then up as if trying to look behind her, scanning for someone or something to help her. Her panic heightened when she felt pressure on her shoulders from Paul's hands. She glanced around again but it was too late. He was already inside her. *It's too late for some. Far too late.*

A plume of rank breath blew into her face with every thrust he made. She tried to focus on the sweet smelling rain, but the odor of his unclean mouth was overbearing. The back of her head slid on the black pavement as he pushed himself inside her over and over again. Still unable to breath, she cupped her mouth and began crying. "Shhh doll, don't break my stride." After a few minutes Paul was breathing heavy and was losing stamina. This was typical when she had been dating him. He had been jacked on whiskey and heroin for the past two days and hasn't slept either. Keeping an erection would be almost impossible. He dismounted and sat at Amy's feet, frustrated and trying to catch his breath. He laid his face into his hands. Unbeknownst to Paul, he was unaware that Amy was overdosing as he was raping her. He was in such a drugged state that his only focus was getting his revenge for being humiliated and kicked in his balls repeatedly by a girl. There wasn't a chance for Amy. She'd been doomed since yesterday and didn't even know it. Paul had been stalking her and was following her all day Saturday, only taking a break to shoot up some heroin. He even sat in his car across the street from the Indiana State Mental Hospital wondering what in the hell she was doing there. He really didn't give a fuck. He just wanted revenge. The poor sick degenerate even sat outside her window early Saturday morning after she got home from Cherrybombs; watching her lie on the couch with her grandma, telling her about her day. And now here he is high as bloody fuck on heroin, fucking her in the parking lot of the strip club where she works, and doesn't even know he's fucking a dying girl who has overdosed.

As he sat Indian style on the ground, he started banging his fists into his forehead; angry that he couldn't keep it up and even worse, have an orgasm. Mad spittle projected from his mouth as he cursed Amy. She laid there helplessly on the ground, wondering if she was dead yet. She couldn't move but could hear everything around her. Paul suddenly jumped on her and held her head up as if she was a doll, grabbing a chunk of her blonde hair in his hand. He punched her in the mouth, making her head snap hard on the pavement. It bounced up quickly and then back down. "You goddamn cunt!" He yelled. A bolt of pain struck the back of her skull, still she wasn't unconscious. He pulled his dirt encrusted jeans

down and started masturbating. He ejaculated on her face. His semen mixed with the blood that was rolling out of the side of her mouth from where he punched her. Her eyes scanned the area around her again. He jumped off of her. With her last bit of strength she put her left arm behind her and began trying to crawl away. She slowly inched herself away from Paul, clawing her fingers into the pavement. There was a small bit of hope in her when she was a good foot and a half away. But she felt his greasy hands wrap around her ankles. He pulled her violently back to him. Her fingernails scraped across the pavement, eerily similar to the way her Mother scraped her fingers across the garage floor twenty years ago by the hideous creature from the corn. One of Amy's nails broke off. Paul had a strong grip around her ankles as he pulled her across the ground.

"Nah, nah, nah, I ain't done with you yet blonde"

Amy heard a sharp, metallic tone coming from above her. Like the sound of silverware clicking together. She felt something pinch her on her ankle. The pinching feeling crept up her leg, and all the way up to her thigh and it stopped just under her skirt. She heard Paul's voice when he told her that he thought she would like to feel the real thing and that using fake knives on stage was for pussies. Unfortunately for the drugged out dumb fuck, he had no idea Amy *did* in fact use a real butcher knife for her *last* performance. And unfortunately for Amy, she knew what was about to happen to her. Red, heart stopping panic washed through her veins. *There's no way out of this blonde*. She braced herself the best she could and thought of the time she got a shot when she was eight, but no safe place in her mind or body numbing heroin could prepare her for that first thrust of the massive butcher knife Paul was using to kill her with. He lunge the shiny metallic thing into her vagina. It pierced hard up into her cervix, puncturing it. When he pulled it out, it was a bloodied piece of chrome and then her throat opened up and she screamed. It was a long, high pitched female howl of a scream. He thrust the knife inside her again. Her body jolted from the jab and the knife came out of her bloodier than before. An intense throbbing of unthinkable pain ached inside her. He stuck it inside her again with no remorse. More screams. With both hands on the handle, he twisted it around, scraping the walls of her vagina. Hot tears fell down her face from the corners of her eyes as she thrashed around on the ground screaming. No one could hear her. Her screams were masked by Pantera blasting loudly inside the club. His hand and wrist were soaked with blood upon removing the knife from inside her. When he ceased doing his maniacal deed of revenge, he sat on his knees in front of her. He was out of breathe and breathing hard. A large puddle of blood formed on the ground in between her legs. He raised the knife to his face and gazed deeply into the bloodied chrome. Something that he saw in the reflection made him throw it down to the ground in terror, like he just realized what he had done. He threw up and Amy's hand lifelessly fell into his vomit at her side. Paul stood up and was shaking like he was freezing to death even though it was a hot, humid evening. He took off running like a little kid that did something bad. He was found dead two days later of a heroin overdose by the railroad tracks just outside of Develenue County.

Amy lay crooked on the pavement and already she mimicked an outlined chalk victim at a crime scene. And now it was full dark. Pantera had ended and 'No Sugar Tonight' by the Guess Who began to play inside the club. Amy was still

alive. She knew she wouldn't be for long though. She had lost too much blood, and survival was laughing in her face. The horrendous pain in between her legs was so treacherous and ungodly that she in fact felt no pain at all. There was a calmness surrounding her. It made her feel complete and at ease. She smiled and looked up at the night sky. Some clouds had parted and white sparkles dotted across the sky. She heard a door open from behind her. The next thing she heard was Jimbo screaming her name from above her. It broke her heart that she couldn't sit up to tell him that she was going to be ok. All she could do was give him this weird 'I know I'm dying' smile. Then she saw Jack bending down to her, wrapping his arms around her and crying.

Amy knew this day was coming. She had dreamt about it two days ago on the morning of the 20th anniversary of the Bludenhale Massacre of 1974; just like her Mother did twenty years ago when she dreamt of Angel being impaled to a wall, and heard that horrific screaming of some unknown female of whom she did not know. But Heather did know this female because she gave birth to her and raised her for two years.

"Angel, do you remember earlier today at my house when you and Amy were dancing around on the floor? Last night I had a nightmare. A god awful nightmare Angel, the worst I've ever had. I don't know where I was. It was in some weird room or something; really small. There was blood everywhere; all over the walls and the floor and all I could hear was screaming. Dear God, that screaming. That screaming! Someone was screaming. Another girl, but it wasn't you Angel. It was awful. I don't what could make someone scream like that. It was so fucking terrifying Angel!" Indeed, Amy did know this day was coming, as did her Mother too, unknowingly hearing the violent screams of her daughter in her nightmare from twenty years ago. The horrific foretelling of death had come to a full bloody circle. From Mother to Daughter, one nightmare to the next, the bloody tale has been told. And now into the grim blackened reality Amy shook like a fish out of water on the pavement; blood pouring out from between her legs. She could feel Jack holding her hand. It felt warm and she felt safe and more importantly she felt she had been released from her dark world. *Lonely feeling, deep inside.* The oncoming sound of an ambulance siren in the distance sung with a lightly blowing warm wind. The neon red Cherrybomb sign flashed on an off, reddening the parking lot. A star zipped across the sky leaving a sparkling white trail. Amy again thought that she saw her Mother's reflection in the clouds. And she did. Another star shot across the sky and she took her last breath.

Tall stalks of corn from the surrounding cornfields pointed at the sky looking like black knives awaiting approval from the gods to go forth and slaughter.

Acknowledgments

The many cornfields of south central Indiana were an inspiration in writing this novel as well as the scenic drive of State Road 7 between Columbus and North Vernon.

[**NOTE:** The errors in text have not been amended.]

