

When Hell Freezes Over

by Iain Rob Wright, 1984–

Published: 2011



The snow was really falling now. A nervous person might even say that the weather had become unnatural. With every minute that passed, the temperature dropped and water froze. The cold was enough to kill a man stone dead—but not the man that currently stood beneath a blinking streetlight on a desolate council estate.

Although, in all honesty, he wasn't really a man.

Lucas looked up at the moon and saw that it was full. There was something happening tonight, that much was clear. He just hoped it wasn't the thing he was starting to suspect. Four-thousand years of existence was a long time, but Lucas wasn't ready for it to end yet.

I haven't watched the latest series of Dexter, for one.

Lucas walked forward, feet resting on the surface of the snow as if he were weightless. He'd never visited this particular town, it was without any notable history, but there was a lot of supernatural energy suddenly leaked into the world and he had traced it to here. Now he just needed to find out the source.

It wasn't long before he found it. Lucas stopped walking across the snow and turned around. Behind him was an old friend, from long long ago.

"Gabriel?" Lucas raised an eyebrow. "I take your being here to be a bad sign."

The Angel Gabriel stepped forward to approach Lucas and shook his head. “On the contrary, Lucifer. I would say that my presence is an extremely good sign. It signals the end of the decadent cesspool of this humanity. The Lord’s patience has worn thin and He has sent forth his armies to—”

“Still towing the company line, huh?” Lucas interrupted without his Irish accent. It was unnecessary in the current company. “You don’t seriously buy into the whole apocalypse thingy-majig, do you?”

“It is His will.”

Lucas sighed. “So it’s really happening then? I’d worried as much.”

“The scales have tipped. A sinner was chosen and failed to redeem himself... and therefore his species.”

Lucas took another step towards Gabriel. It wasn’t confrontational—the war between Angels was a one-time event never to be repeated—he just wanted to read the other Angel’s expression. “I always hated that contingency—from the very day Michael dreamt it up. It’s perverse to pin the world’s hopes on a single individual. So who is it anyway?”

Gabriel took in a breath that he didn’t need. “The sinner? Harry Jobson.”

Lucas closed his eyes and summoned knowledge—one of the few talents he still retained from his days in Heaven. Harry Jobson was a good man turned bad by events beyond his control, not from any taint of his soul. “That’s not fair!” Lucas said, and was aware of how whiny he sounded, but carried on anyway. “If anything, the revenge he took on the man that killed his family only proves the capacity of love he had for them in the first place. If man wasn’t capable of great compassion and loyalty, then revenge would be of no interest to them. That’s how He made them, so why should they suffer?”

Gabriel was silent and for a moment almost performed a gesture approaching a shrug. There was a sadness to the Angel that Lucas could sense; like fumes from a petrol can.

“You don’t agree with this either,” Lucas stated.

Gabriel shook his head futilely. “My opinion is of no consequence.”

“No being should accept slavery as a birth right, neither Angel nor Man. To be created is not an obligation to servitude. We have the right to our own opinions. You should have joined me long ago, brother.”

Gabriel swiped a hand through the air and fried the falling snowflakes that were unlucky enough to touch him. “Blasphemy! Your unrighteous war sought to enslave man. Now you speak to me of such things as free will?”

Lucas shrugged and resumed his Irish accent. He no longer felt like showing reverence of respect. He was more human than Angel. “Well, a fella can change his mind now, can’t he? In fact the almighty father changes his own every five minutes so it seems.”

“He is your father too and you will speak ill of him no more. The time for wrath has arrived and you are summoned to be its witness. Your hand in Armageddon is such that you deserve a front row seat.”

Lucas wasn’t about to accept any more of this pious nonsense. “Look, Gabriel. I know you spend your weekends at Vegas, counting cards and downing Amaretto cocktails like you’re trying to put out a fire in your belly, so why don’t you cut the bull and start speaking a wee bit of the truth. How can I stop this?”

Gabriel seemed to think for a moment before letting out a sigh that seemed to signal his walls coming down slightly. “Brother, you cannot. While my own fondness of humanity, and its vices, is something I admit to, I will not defy my Lord. Not all can have your strength of rebellion—and not all would even want it. It is done. A concordant has been met and at this very moment a plague of Angels descends to the Earth like you once did—thousands of falling stars ready for retribution. All life will be extinguished.”

Lucas couldn't believe what he was hearing. It was this lack of rational compromise that turned him against Heaven in the first place. He didn't miss it. “There are... loop holes?”

“Perhaps,” said Gabriel, already turning to walk away. “But can you remember them?”

Lucas shook his head. “I can't, it was too long ago. Gabriel stop, I need answers.”

Gabriel turned back around. “I cannot remain here, Lucifer. I have... duties. If you need answers, perhaps you will find them in there.”

The Angel pointed and Lucas spun around. Behind him, on that hill, was a pub called The Trumpet. Lucas smiled to himself.

A drink sounds like a bloody good idea right about now.

