

THE DEMON PRIEST



Monsanto
2020

Preview

of the novel by

Jim Burrows

Art by **Gilbert Monsanto**

THE DEMON PRIEST

by Jim Burrows

Welcome to the world of *The Demon Priest*, my new novel. This 'zine is an attempt to convey in words and pictures what the story, the setting and the characters are like. With any luck, it will spark your interest.

The story of the Demon Priest takes place in the same world as those told in G-Man Comics, a world inhabited by superheroes, aliens, fallen angels and other creatures that are considered merely mythical in our world. Moreover, it is but one universe in a whole multiverse connected by the *world between worlds* known as the Halflands, worlds that are the settings of stories I've told and written.

The Halflands and environs are home to such tales as the high fantasy of *Aunt Jenny and the Delayed Quest* and *Sasha's Story*, the wonders of *Little Jenny's Journey to Fairy Land*; the pulp science fantasy adventure of *It All Started With... The Little Green Man*; the superheroic romance of *It All Started With..., Part II: The Triad*; the pulp noir of *Clay Stryker*, *Jazz Detective*; and superhero stories featuring *Team Invictus*; *the Household*; *Bette Noir*; *the Sisters Three*; and *Moonbat and Princess Snowflake vs. Jade Helm*.

And, of course, there is the current story, the coming of the Demon Priest, starting with his arrival in New England's second largest city, the port of New Acadia. Settled both by New Englanders and displaced Acadian and Mi'kmaq people expelled from Nova Scotia by the English, New Acadia in ways resembles the cities of Boston, New Orleans, San Francisco and New York, as well as places like Metropolis, Gotham, and Astro City. It is an old, ethnically diverse city, inhabited by superheroes, villains, and other meta- and para-humans.

Since New Acadia is home to the denizens of G-Man Comics, I thought that this teaser might work well in comic book form. To that end, I've started telling the story twice, first in pictures and then in words. To start, we have an eight page rendition of the opening scenes of the novel which appears in

G-Man 3in1, issue #2, drawn by comic book artist Gilbert Monsanto. Following that, there is an excerpt from the novel itself of the two chapters that comic pages were based on.

Finally, we introduce the *dramatis personæ*, as you might find them in a Who's Who volume such as the *Handbook of the G-Man Universe*. The entries for the Demon Priest, Dr. Apollo, Lee, Lileilah, Lionheart, Agent Simone Lefort, and the True Two—True Blue and Richard the True Knight—have been illustrated by Gilbert. Dean Juliette did the art for the Agents of FALCON team page. A real Who's Who for the novel would include still more characters, some of them more important than some of those who are included, but I'm trying to keep the spoilers to a minimum.

There's a lot more to the novel, the G-Man universe and the whole Halflands multiverse than can be captured in a little twenty-four-page 'zine, but this is, after all, only supposed to be a teaser—a first taste. As such, leaving questions “isn't a bug, it's a feature”, as we said in my days as a software engineer. This is particularly true since “How does the notion of a ‘demon priest’ even make sense?” was one of the things that gave rise to the whole story in the first place. I hope you'll have as much fun learning the answer as I did.

The book is available on Amazon.com in Kindle ebook, paperback and hardback editions. Scan the QR code below to go straight to its Amazon page.

— Jim Burrows

January, 2022

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Credits

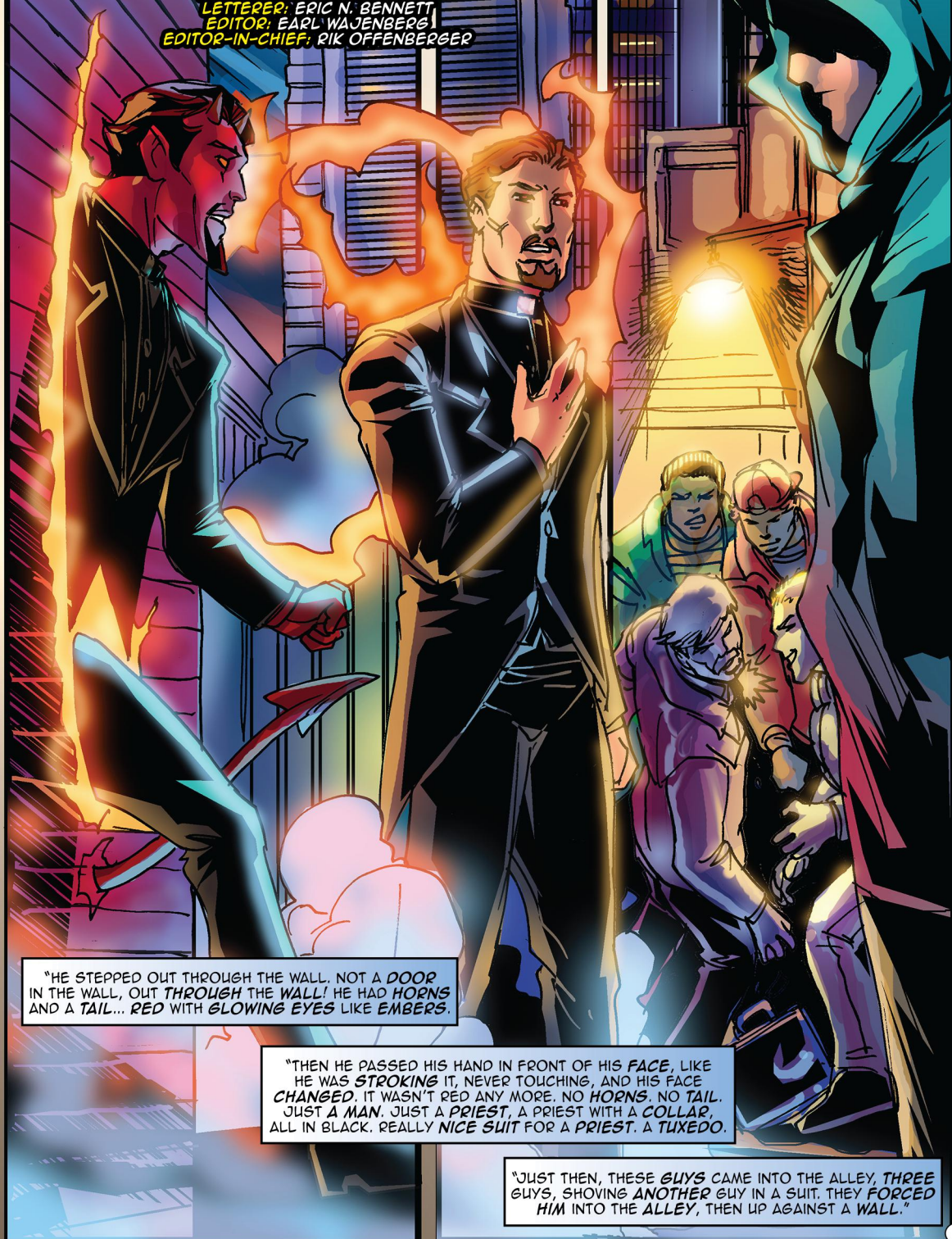
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Editors: Earl Wajenberg,
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THE DEMON PRIEST

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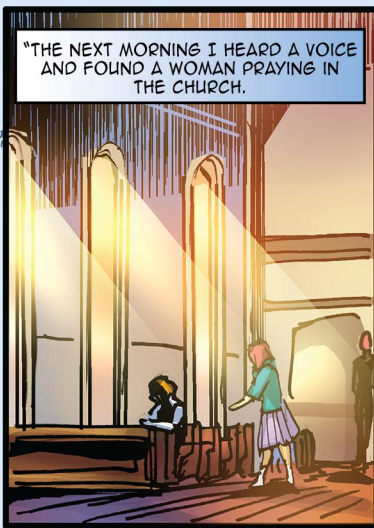
"HE STEPPED OUT THROUGH THE WALL. NOT A DOOR IN THE WALL, OUT *THROUGH* THE WALL! HE HAD HORNS AND A TAIL... RED WITH GLOWING EYES LIKE EMBERS.

"THEN HE PASSED HIS HAND IN FRONT OF HIS FACE, LIKE HE WAS *STROKING* IT, NEVER TOUCHING, AND HIS FACE *CHANGED*. IT WASN'T RED ANY MORE. NO HORNS. NO TAIL. JUST A MAN. JUST A PRIEST, A PRIEST WITH A COLLAR, ALL IN BLACK. REALLY NICE SUIT FOR A PRIEST. A TUXEDO.

"JUST THEN, THESE *GUYS* CAME INTO THE ALLEY, *THREE* GUYS, SHOVING *ANOTHER* GUY IN A SUIT. THEY FORCED HIM INTO THE ALLEY, THEN UP AGAINST A WALL."





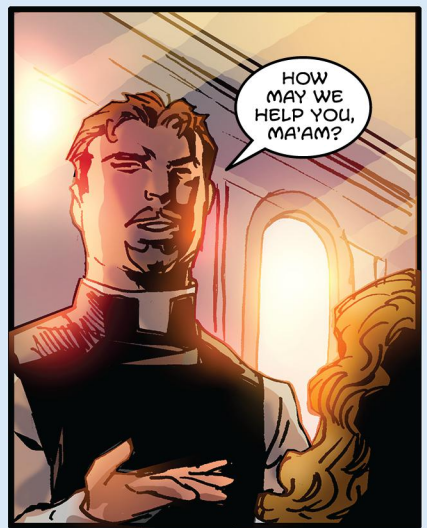


"THE NEXT MORNING I HEARD A VOICE AND FOUND A WOMAN PRAYING IN THE CHURCH.



"I'D STARTED TO TELL HER THAT IT WASN'T A CHURCH ANY MORE, WHEN...

IT'S ALL RIGHT...WE'RE HERE TO HELP.



HOW MAY WE HELP YOU, MA'AM?



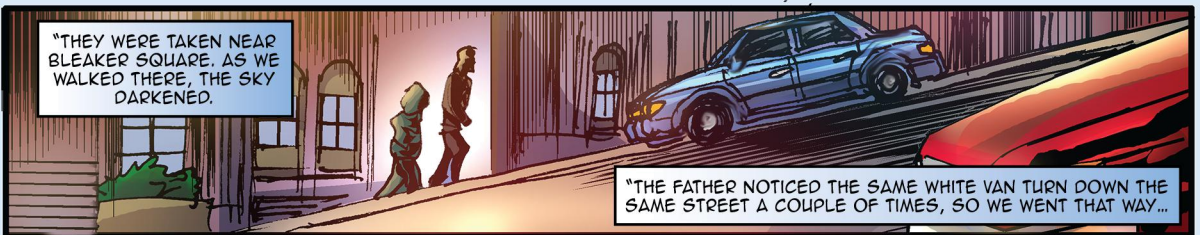
IT MY THEO! DEY'VE TOOK 'IM! OH, FATHER, DEY TOOK 'IM!

WHO TOOK HIM?



MEN IN WHITE COAT.

DEM AS BEEN TAKIN' UDDER IN DE STREET.

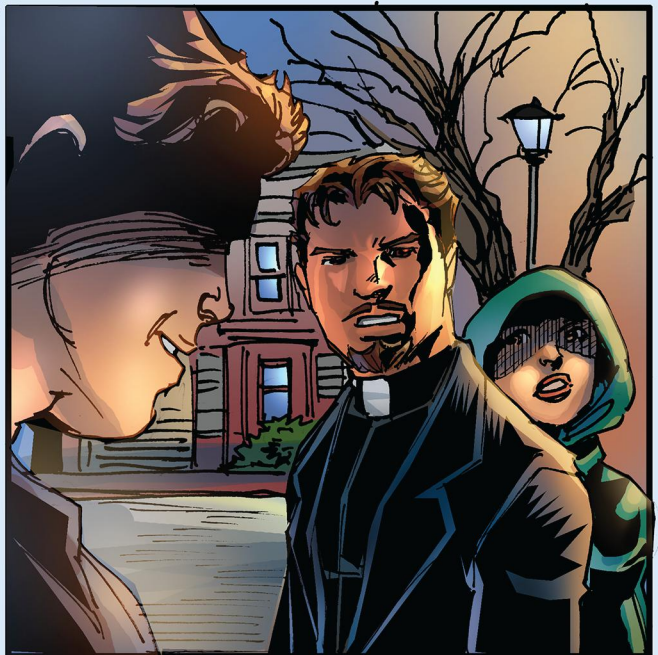


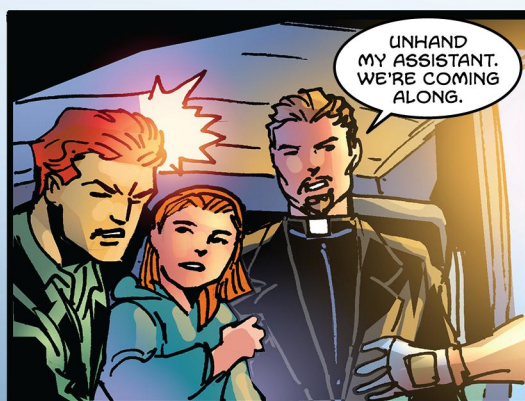
"THEY WERE TAKEN NEAR BLEAKER SQUARE. AS WE WALKED THERE, THE SKY DARKENED.

"THE FATHER NOTICED THE SAME WHITE VAN TURN DOWN THE SAME STREET A COUPLE OF TIMES, SO WE WENT THAT WAY...



HEY, FATHER! HOW 'BOUT YOU AND YOUR LITTLE FRIEND GO HOME NOW?



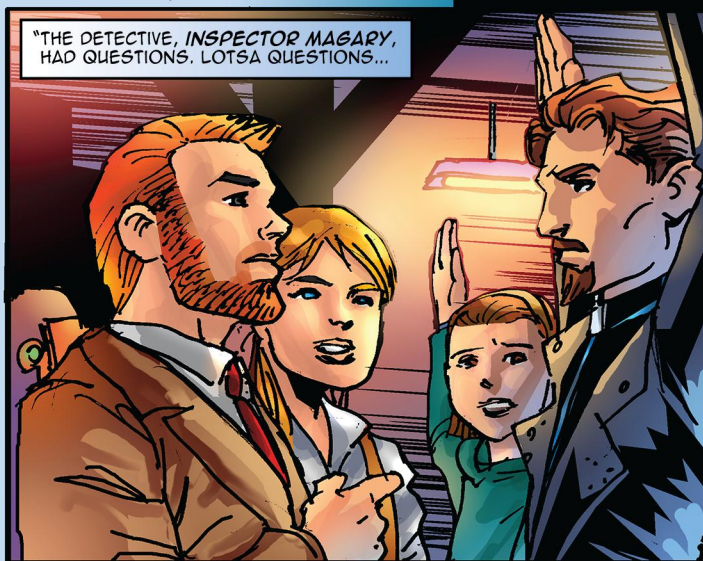




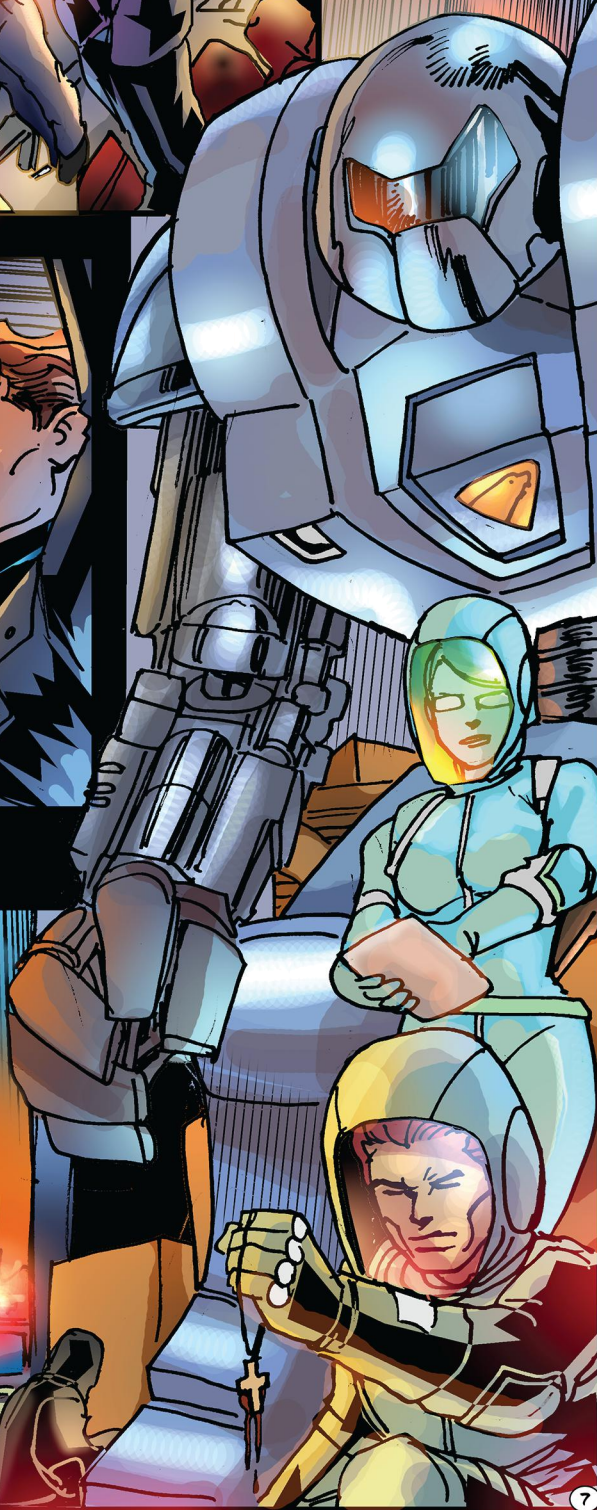
"WAS HE EVER RIGHT! LOTSA POLICE!"

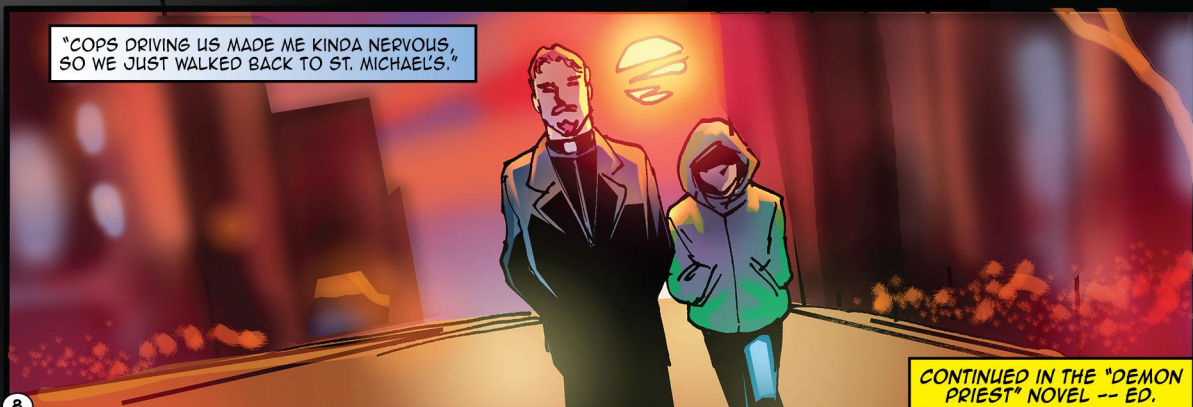
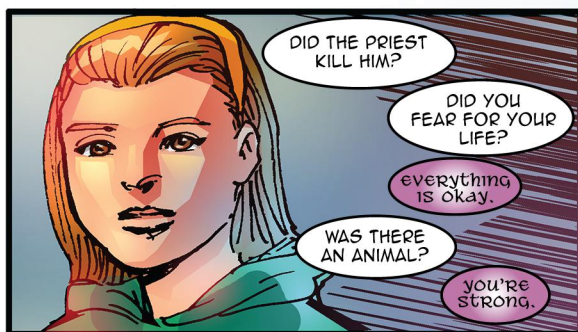


"THE DETECTIVE, *INSPECTOR MAGARY*,
HAD QUESTIONS. LOTSA QUESTIONS..."



"WHEN *FALCON* SHOWED UP, WITH MECHS
AND SCIENTISTS AND LOTSA QUESTIONS
OF THEIR OWN, *MAGARY* TOOK US TO THE
PRECINCT. I GUESS THEY DON'T GET ALONG
SO GOOD."





THE DEMON PRIEST

by Jim Burrows

Chapter 1: I Watch the Watcher

Look, I know I'm not supposed to say these things. If I do, then I'll need my meds again, and when I forget them, I'll have to go to the *Safe Place* again. I shouldn't tell you these things. If I do, you have to promise me that you won't tell anyone I said them. Promise?

I was one of the first to see him, probably *the* first. He stepped out through the wall. Not a door in the wall, *out through the wall*. I know, walls don't do that. I didn't see it. Couldn't. They just say that he stepped out through a wall. It was a brick wall, old, old bricks, a brick wall in an alley off of Washington Street, in a bad part of New Acadia, where nobody sees anything, especially not me.

When he stepped out, the bricks in a big circle around him glowed red. The lines between the bricks were fiery red, glowing, and he was red. They say he had horns and a tail. I don't say that. Never say that. Red with glowing eyes like embers. He looked around the alley, and smiled. Then he passed his hand in front of his face, like he was stroking it, not touching, and his face changed. It wasn't red any more, never red. No horns. No tail. Just a man. Just a priest, a priest with a collar and a silver cross, dressed all in black. Real nice suit for a priest. A tuxedo.

Just then, these guys came into the alley, three guys, shoving another guy in a suit. They pushed and shoved him into the alley, then up against a wall. They didn't see the priest in the alley, the black-suited priest in the dark alley. They pushed; they shoved; they threatened the other guy. I pressed my back against the wall. Real small and seeing nothing. The guy in the suit did the same.

The priest stepped out of the darkest shadow and into the alley, towards them. His leather shoes, his leather soles, slapped the damp cobblestones of the alley, the old, old alley, from the old, old city. Light from the street skulked into the alley, falling on him.

"I think you gentlemen should stop now." His voice was soft and deep and dark.

"What's it to you?"

"Bugger off, preacher man!"

He walked right up to them. The light crept out of his way.

The first one shoved at him, pushing where his shoulder had been a moment before, but he had moved and instead of shoving, the guy stumbled, pushing where nothing was, losing his balance. The priest took his wrist, turned it and pulled towards the

second guy—the second guy who pulled a knife and stabbed right into the first guy's arm in front of the priest's chest.

The third guy swung his fist, high and hard, into the palm of the priest's hand, right in front of his face. The priest squeezed and turned the hand and the third guy squealed and fell to his knees in front of him. The priest cupped the guy's chin in his free hand, tilting his head back, too, so their eyes met. The priest's eyes glowed red. The guy's face went white.

"You've done a bad thing, and bad things need to be punished. If they're not, you can become a bad person. Bad people are also punished; punished for a long, long time. It's better to confess now and be punished for a small thing. Do you understand?"

"Yes." The guy's voice was cracking.

The priest turned to the other two. ***"You should get that wound looked at. And you should confess to stabbing him. Do you understand?"***

"Have you called the police?" he asked the guy in the suit.

"Yes."

We could hear the sirens now, coming down Washington.

"Good."

With that the priest turned his back and began to walk off, down the alley. I followed. He was scary, but just then, the cops were scarier. I didn't need to go to the safe place, so I followed, my hands stuffed into the pockets of my hoodie, my head down.

"Thank you, Father." I heard from behind us.

"Confession is good for the soul!" he called back over his shoulder.

After he rounded the corner, he turned and asked me, *"Why were you in the alley? And are you following me?"* His voice was softer than back in the alley. Less commanding.

I'd no idea about that last question—*why?* He scared the piss outta me, pretty nearly literally, still....

"Well... well, sir... Father, I, ah, why was I there? I don't know, really. It just seemed like the thing to do at the time. I didn't plan on being there. I was just going to the movies. I got to Washington and, well I just turned this way, 'stead of the other. Not like I was told to or..." I bit my tongue. Not supposed to talk about the voices. No. No voices. Never voices. "No, Father, I don't know. Just walked this way."

"So, do you often hear them tell you what to do?"

"Not lately. No. I mean, what're you talking about?"

"The voices, do they often speak to you?"

"How'd you know about that? I didn't mention them! Uh, did I? No. No such thing. Why would I mention something that doesn't exist?"

"It's all right, my child. They told me. Be not afraid."

That made me feel a lot better. A lot.

"And are you still following me?"

"I guess. For a while. Where are we going?"

"Then come this way. I'd sooner not talk to the constables."

"Constables? You mean the police?"

"Yes, the police. I'd sooner not talk to the police."

He looked up at the air. Like he was reading something, or something. After a little bit he saw what he was looking for, smiled, nodded and turned right.

"This way..."

I followed him, through the theater district and Chinatown, past the historic townhouses and boutiques of Mission Hill, nearly all the way to the rundown area around Bleaker Square. We stopped when we got to the block where St. Michael's stood alone with its green lawns, surrounded by brownstones. The old stone church that was St. Michael's. He smiled at the small "for sale" sign.

"Yes, yes. This will do."

He reached out and stroked the phone number on the sign, then sat down on the church steps. It couldn't have been no more than half an hour later when this guy arrived by cab—a guy from the diocese. Wore a good suit—not as good as the priest's tux, but good. He looked a bit surprised to see us sitting on the steps. I tried to be very small.

"Hello, Father. Can I help you?"

The priest stood up, took a couple of steps forward and held out his hand.

"You..." He paused a bit then continued, "... might be able to, at that." His voice got a lot more normal. Didn't make the hair stand up on my arms no more. "I understand the church is for sale?"

"Yes, Father. It's been deconsecrated, and we are looking for a suitable purchaser. You understand that, even desanctified, St Michael's has enough ties to church history that we want to be careful."

"Of course. I don't think we'll have a problem..."

The guy looked like the voices were talking to him. Not that I know anything about voices. No, sir. He just looked—you know—distracted. "Yeah," he said. "I mean, no, Father, I doubt there will be a problem."

"Thank you. How soon do you think something could be arranged?"

"A day or two. How about tomorrow?"

"Good. Shall I meet you here? Say, four in the afternoon?"

"Yes, Father."

The guy left and the priest turned to me. *"I'll need a money changer,"* he said as he walked down the steps of the church. He studied the air, then picked a direction. *"This way."*

We walked several blocks through the old Mission Hill district to downtown where the tall glass buildings look out over Waterside to the river and the harbor. Just about the time I was asking myself, I mean I was thinking, "Why should I follow this guy?" we arrived. The place didn't look like much. Took up almost half the block. All shiny glass and metal painted white. It had double garage doors, a couple of windows and a door with "The Household" painted on it.

The priest walked up the three steps and rang the bell. The door buzzed, he opened it and we stepped in. First thing I saw was the guard. Looked like a retired military guy. Bit of a pot belly, greying at the temples, green beret, shades, headset and weapons belts. He was lounging, all nonchalant and all, against a pillar that looked like it was there just for him to lounge on.

This other guy walks up, dressed like a superhero on his day off. Regular slacks 'n shoes, but a skin-tight brown shirt with fancy shoulders and a big gold eagle insignia on the front. Real muscular guy—definitely either a mask or a body builder. I was hoping he was one of the good guys.

"Welcome. I'm the Concierge. How can I help you, Father?" He stuck out his hand.

The priest shook hands. They both got this look, and shook for a second or two too long, just looking each other in the eye.

"I just arrived in New Acadia—still setting up shop. I expect to need a few of your services, starting with changing some money and setting up a bank account."

That's when this woman shows up. Kinda pretty, if you like shiny metallic skin. She looked all chromed, but it must've been pretty soft chrome—soft as regular skin. Short silver-grey hair with a white metal streak, tan blazer over a pink blouse, and black slacks. She looked like a proper business woman... in metal. Yeah. Masks, definitely.

"Iris, the Father will need to see the Bookkeeper. Can you show him back?"

"Certainly, sir." Her voice was soft as liquid gold. "This way, sir."

The Bookkeeper didn't look like any bookkeeper I ever knew. Long brown hair tied back with a pink scarf, and a long-sleeved minidress that looked like it belonged in a skating rink. She was sitting in a big upholstered wing-back chair, with her long legs tucked up under her in the midst of a Victorian-looking library. The chair was next to a great big hardwood desk full of papers and books. One of the two laptops she had in reach was sitting on it. The

other was on a little end table to the other side of the chair.

"What can I do for you?"

"I need to change some money and open a bank account, preferably without attracting a lot of attention." He reached into his pocket, stepped forward and spilled a bunch of large gold coins into her hand.

She didn't seem startled by either his voice or the gold. She examined each coin, stacking them on the desk.

"Are you in a hurry? Some of these are old. A few might be rare enough to bring more than the value of their metal, if we shop them around."

"Time is important to me, but if you can get a better price for a few of them, that would be agreeable."

"How many do you have?"

"Several dozen."

He began stacking them on top of, and then next to the ones on the desk. Where in Hell was all that room in his pockets? Nope. Not going there. No horns. No tail. Just a plain old priest. I'm not going back.

She didn't seem bothered by the depth of his pockets, either.

"Well, that's enough that if we turned it into cash and you took it to the bank there'd be a lot of paperwork. Way over the cash limit. So, you'd like us to open the account in your name and transfer the equivalent value into it from *our* accounts?"

"Taking the appropriate commission. I have a large purchase to make tomorrow."

"Ah! I see. The fee will be a little higher, but we maintain some preexisting accounts, one of which could be signed over to you, to avoid the delays in getting the deposits to clear."

He smiled. It made you feel warm all over to see that smile... and want to see it again.

"You're new in town, right?"

He nodded.

"Will this all be in your own name, or do you need us to supply an identity? It's one of our services."

"Now that you mention it, I am a little short on proper documentation."

"Well, then, if you'll just give me the appropriate information, I can draw up all the papers right here, this afternoon. Will your sidekick need documents, as well?"

The priest looked at me and raised an eyebrow.

"Who, me? I'm no sidekick. No. No. Don't need a thing." But, you know, that kinda got me thinking. If I was somebody else, someone with no records, well, they might not be so eager to put me back in the safe place. Wouldn't be "back in" any more, if I was someone else. Hmm... Maybe later.

We got a tour while his ID was being printed. They can provide everything an up and coming mask—hero or villain—could need: secret identities, costumes and armor, gadgets and weapons, martial arts training, a doctor to patch you up, and a construction crew that specializes in lairs and headquarters. The whole place is several stories high, and *really* well equipped. Some of the team live on premises, so they're open twenty four by seven. The priest said he might need some help from the construction team once he made his purchase.

After about an hour, they presented him with a whole stack of papers and IDs—everything from birth certificate to the passbook for his new bank account, all in the name of Rev. Samuel Gregory. That's how I learned his name.

The next day, the fellow from the diocese came by and sold Father Gregory St Michael's. He thanked us for meeting him there. Father Gregory didn't mention that he slept in the back. We'd gotten dinner at Roy's Chinese Cuisine, then I went back to my place and the priest crashed at the church. There were living quarters in a building in the back, above the church offices. I'd come back in the morning—you know, to see how he was getting along.

Anyway, the guy apologized that they hadn't removed all the statuary and the like, but the priest said that he was happy to have it, and offered to pay a bit extra, to cover it. He was especially taken with the statue of St. Michael in the side chapel. I dunno what he sees in it—the Archangel, standing with one foot on the back of a fallen, horned demon, the point of his sword at the demon's neck. I don't like it. Not with those horns and all.

When the diocese guy left, the priest turned to me with a look—not one of *those* looks, just, you know, a quizzical one. *"So, you've been around a lot, my child..."*

"Yessir."

"Do you need a job?"

"Me, Father? A job?"

"Yes, for now, I need a sexton—someone to look after the church. Eventually, I'll need an assistant. You could start as the sexton. Find a good replacement, and perhaps you could be the assistant." He smiled, and it was one of those smiles, the ones that just make you want to see another one—need to. I nodded and said yes. It probably wouldn't be any worse than being a barista.

So, that's how I came to work for him, for Father Gregory, the... the priest, as the sexton of St. Michael's.

Chapter 2: The Plague Doctor

It took us most of a week to get St. Michael's all cleaned up and the father settled in, in the pastor's apartment on the second floor of the parish house. Just about the time everything was straightened away, I heard a voice—not voices, a voice—in the church, in the nave. When I went out to check, I found a woman kneeling at the altar rail, praying and weeping. I walked over to her.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, this isn't a..."

"It's all right, my child. It's our job to help people who are in need."

"Yessir."

"Now, how may we help you, ma'am?"

"It my Theo. Dey'av took 'im! Oh, Father, dey took 'im!" She was real, real upset.

"Who took him?"

"Men in white coat."

No. The room got all wobbly. Men in white. Took him away. I gripped the altar rail.

"Tell us about it. Which men? When? Do you know where they took him?"

"Dem as been takin' udda in de street."

The old woman was in a dreadful state, and her heavy Acadie accent didn't help. After a few minutes, Father Gregory had gotten the whole story from her. Apparently, people in the Bleaker Square neighborhood had been going missing for a few weeks. Rumor had it that men, often reported as dressed in white or in blue hospital scrubs, had been picking them up in unmarked vans. Others dismissed the stories as just mixed-up descriptions of ambulances picking up sick or injured residents. Her Theo was young, mostly healthy, sober and looking for work. She was certain that he wouldn't have taken a job out of town without letting her know.

The square was only a few blocks away. The priest agreed to look into the matter, and paid a cab to take her home. We spent an hour on the phone, checking with the nearby hospitals, without success, and then headed towards the Square on foot. When we got there, we found a lotta people with important stuff to tell us about the disappearances, every one of them with their own theory, their own details. It was the government, black vans, ambulances, men with white coats and butterfly nets, food trucks, killer clowns, the mob, foreigners, and little green men. And every one of them had heard it from a good source.

Asking after Theo Johnson didn't go much better. Eventually, though, we managed to put together a nearly coherent story of his last day before vanishing, and narrow down the last place he was seen to two dark streets on opposite sides of Bleaker Square. There was a small deli with a table

and a couple of ancient wrought iron chairs on the corner of one of them, so we stopped and had a dinner of corned beef and cream soda.

"If you didn't want to be seen picking someone up, which one would you choose, Lee?"

"The other one, Father. Over there. A couple of the street lights are out and there are fewer stores with lights on."

He spent a while just looking across the square, and then nodded. "I agree."

Several minutes later, he added, "I've seen a few vans driving down that street. Two of them looked very similar. They could have been the same one."

A few more minutes passed. "Shall we have a look over there?"

"Sure." Following men in white coats who took people. What could go wrong?

We made our way across the Square. It was dark and drear and kind of spooky in the fading light—an old park that's seen much better days, slowly earning its name. Definitely Bleaker. The street leading away on the other side had once been cobbled, and the blacktop was so worn that the stones showed through in a lotta places. Brownstone buildings lined both sides of the street. A few were in decent repair, but several looked like the back entrance to someplace with no front door.

About half way down the block a voice called out of the darkness of one of the stoops: "Hey, Father. How 'bout you and your little friend go home now?"

We paused, and turned to see a pair of dark figures on the steps, one standing, leaning against the wall, the other squatting on the steps.

"Perhaps we shall... once we find the young man we're seeking."

"Perhaps 'e sez?"

"Mebbe he needs an invitation."

"Or a introduction."

"Yeh," came another voice from basement steps to one side of the stoop. Dark figures came up the steps on both sides.

I was beginning to not need voices telling me we were in trouble. Not that I... well, never mind. You know.

"If you can assist us, we'd be most grateful. Do you know where we could find young Theo Johnson?"

"Whaddya say, boys?"

Someone chuckled. The hair on the back of my neck stood up like electricity was crawling up it. A dark van pulled up behind us. The priest reached out, laying a hand gently on my arm. He didn't need to. I was holding myself back just fine.

I heard a van door slide open behind us. Rough hands grabbed me from behind.

The priest turned effortlessly in the hands that gripped him, and pushed. I saw the guy who'd held him bounce off the far wall of the van, as I was pulled back into it.

"There is no need for violence," he said, and stepped lightly into the van so unexpectedly that a guy who tried to shove him in, missed his footing and fell to his knees, halfway into the van. The priest sat on an upturned milk crate.

"Release my assistant," he said as two more guys got in with us.

The grip on my arms was relaxed and I sat suddenly on the bare floor of the van.

One of the guys pulled out a couple of black cloth bags.

"No."

The guy looked from the bags to one of the guys behind me and back. Someone back there grunted and he put them away.

"We could take you home, if you'd agree to let all this drop..." said someone, probably the grunter.

"No, thank you, all the same."

"Have it your way."

We drove for a while, ending up somewhere in the old Waterside warehouse district, from the sound of things. The guys by the door opened it and got out, and the priest followed them. Hands pushed me out.

"No need to push," said the priest, turning around as he did. The guy behind him who was trying to do just that, found himself pushing empty air and stumbled to his knees. The priest offered him a hand up, which he slapped away before getting awkwardly to his feet.

We made our way into one of the warehouses. There was a large open space, cluttered with crates and stuff, and then a wall of hanging plastic sheets. The sheets parted, and a guy dressed like some sort of a doctor—white lab coat, stethoscope, some sort of six-pointed red curlicue on his chest—walked out, followed by three or four more guys.

"What's the meaning of this?" the doctor guy demanded.

"Dey're aksing a lotta questions."

"So you brought them here?" He closed his eyes briefly and sighed.

"I've come for a young man. Theo..."

"I'm sorry. You've come here for nothing." The doctor turned to the fellow who'd come out just behind him, a nasty looking fellow dressed all in black. *"Take them all away."*

Someone grabbed me from behind, again, and I saw three or four guys go after the priest. It got all kind of crazy at that point. The priest sidestepped this way, then that, and his attackers tripped all over each other trying to get at him. He brushed one aside, and that guy went tumbling back.

"Get. Them. Out!" yelled the doctor.

The priest pushed one of them aside, and stepped behind him just in time for that guy to get shot by one of his own men. The priest knelt down and a guy coming at him from behind tripped over him and fell to the ground. The father rose and spun around as the last guy standing near him got shot.

There were a lot of guys running in now, several with guns.

Suddenly, I felt cold metal pressed against my neck, just below the jaw.

The priest pulled off the crucifix from around his neck and threw it in my direction so fast I could barely see it. The guy behind me screamed and a gun clattered on the floor.

The attackers were closing in on him. One guy in the back shot the guy closest to him as the priest whirled around again, and then a half dozen were upon him.

"No!" he yelled and suddenly all of his attackers were flying backwards through the air, leaving him standing alone, horned, tailed and red, his arms thrown back and wide, his long black coat flapping like wings. Someone screamed and screamed. Voices laughed maniacally.

He charged, backhanding the nearest attacker, then whirled and kicked another. Someone started shooting again. The sound echoed all around. The screaming and the voices continued. He spun and kicked, jumped, slapped and backhanded. His nails sunk deep into one man's flesh before he tossed him into the path of semiautomatic gunfire. It all gets kind of blurry about then.

I stopped screaming and the voices gibbered quietly in the back of my head. Bodies lay scattered all around. Somewhere along the line, the doctor had vanished. The priest strode faster than I could run to the plastic wall and tossed shreds of it away in both directions, revealing that more than half the warehouse was filled with semi-transparent cubical plastic tents. He stopped and turned around to face me—flesh-colored and hornless.

"Remember. No horns! Never horns!" the voices gibbered softly in the background. Sirens blared in our direction.

The priest strode over to where I'd been standing earlier and retrieved his crucifix from the eye socket of the guy who'd been holding me.

"I suppose we'll have to speak to the police."

"Are they coming?"

He looked up, reading the air. *"Yes. We should hear them soon."*

He walked to a place near the middle of the room away from any of the bodies or guns, and turned to face the door, his arms held out wide to his sides. I joined him.

After a while—it seemed like ages—sirens and squealing tires announced the arrival of the police. A lot of police.

SWAT poured in through the door and fanned out. No one moved. One or two of the doctor's men groaned. The SWAT guys scurried here and there, calling out "Clear!" every now and then. Finally, once the room was secured, a plainclothes detective, a bullet-proof vest under his sports coat, entered the warehouse. He holstered his pistol as he walked towards us.

"Okay, you two, what's going on? Father?"

"First, I recommend that your men not breach the plastic tents. They may be sterile for a reason. The man who was running this place was wearing a biohazard symbol."

"Captain."

"Copy that."

"Good. My assistant and I were kidnapped earlier this evening and brought here. The doctor with the biohazard symbol threatened us, and then told his men to dispose of us. That didn't go as he expected."

The detective just eyed us for a while.

"Really? Do you know why you were 'kidnapped'?"

"We had been asking around about a young man—the son of a woman who came to my church for help—who went missing in the Bleaker Square area. The doctor wanted us to leave the matter be. I imagine the young man is in one of those quarantine units."

"You 'imagine', but you don't know?"

"No, sir. If I may, what's your name?"

"Magary. Detective Inspector Michael Magary."

"Inspector, may my assistant and I put our hands down?"

We'd been standing like that the whole time. I dunno about the priest, but I was getting real tired.

The inspector started to walk towards Father Gregory.

"Ah! If you're going to search us, the object in my right jacket pocket is not a gun. You'll probably want it as evidence, but I would appreciate it back."

The inspector patted him down and then lifted the blood-soaked crucifix out of the priest's pocket. He stared at the priest, saying nothing.

"The blood is that man's over there. He was threatening my assistant with the gun that is lying next to him."

"Really? So you stabbed him with your cross?"

"No. I threw it."

"And the rest of them? What happened to the rest of them?"

"Several of them shot each other. I struck a number. My assistant wasn't involved, except as a hostage."

Inspector Magary looked around at the dozen or so scattered bodies, then reached out and fingered the side of the priest's coat where two bullets had passed through without hitting him.

"Really? You struck a few... and the others were shot by their friends."

"They may not have been friends, but yes."

By now, there were a couple of EMT teams checking out the bodies, and tending to the injured. One of them approached the inspector and spoke to him softly. They walked over and looked down at the bloody bodies. After a while Magary returned.

"Were there any *animals* present, Father? A dog, perhaps?" he asked.

"Not that I saw, Inspector."

"One of them appears to have been mauled." Magary looked down at the priest's blood-soaked fingers. It got real quiet for a while.

About that time we started hearing the *Clank! Clank!* of FALCON mechs approaching—those big robot suits they use for taking black masks and meta-humans into custody—giant metal footsteps crunching into the blacktop.

Sure enough, about a minute later, a half-dozen FALCON special ops moved in and fanned out, followed by two mechs, followed by a couple of agents in the usual bad suits and ties—a big burly white guy who probably played football in high school a couple of decades ago, and a middle-aged, dark-skinned woman who looked like she actually stayed in shape.

Magary didn't look pleased. He made his way over to them. "Agents Novak and Jardin, to what do we owe the honor?"

"I dunno, Magary," said the older guy. "How about some priest who takes out a dozen armed thugs, an animal attack by some critter no one saw, and a call for CDC in suits to check out a bunch of quarantine tents. Sounds like something involving extraordinary and meta-human affairs—you know, *our* jurisdiction?"

"Nope. Just a kidnapping, a couple-a homicides and assaults, a confession, a witness and a call for medicos, not you lot. You didn't need to drop everything and rush over. Trust me, we'll call yah when you're needed."

"Well," said a new voice, "FALCON isn't all agents and mechs. I'm Dr. Samantha Abernathy, FALCON biomed research, and my team is here with full containment and mobile lab facilities on site. Why wait? The CDC's probably still discussing your captain's request."

Dr. Abernathy strode in like a woman in charge, wearing a skintight white suit, followed by four people in large bulky biohazard suits.

"Knock yourself out, doctor. I'm transporting my prisoner and witness back to the station. Sergeant..."

"Yeah, boss," and a couple of cops started escorting us to the police cars outside.

"And, Doc, try to keep your escort from trampling too much of the evidence."

Magary turned to Father Gregory. "I'm sorry..."

"*But you need me to be handcuffed for the ride, Inspector?*"

"Sorry. Thank you for cooperating."

"*I understand. You need to clear all this up. Could you ask someone to see if a Theo Johnson is in one of those tents, and let his mother know? I gave her my assurance.*"

"Certainly, Father. You, Officer, d'you get that?"

"Yessir."

The FALCON agent, Novak, looked pretty unhappy, but his partner laid her hand on the inside of his elbow, and he just stood his ground as we passed.

Not much to say about the ride to the police station or the long wait while Inspector Magary questioned the priest. A young police officer sat with me and kept the voices at bay. After an hour or two interrogating the priest, Magary and a lady lawyer from the DA's office came for me. She was all buttoned down and looked real professional, real uptight, and kinda dangerous in that "safe place" sorta way. They took me to one of those interrogation rooms with the two-way mirrors, and read me my rights—again—and then asked me to tell 'em what happened, over and over.

Did the father kill the guy who was threatening me? Was I in fear for my life? Could he have done something else? Was there an animal present? Who or what tore the one guy's throat? Did I see Father Gregory use a gun? Any other weapon? What'd the doctor say? What did the thugs say to him? To us? Did I see anyone else? Any meta-humans? Do I know what a meta-human is? Did the priest do anything extraordinary? Could another man have thrown that cross so fast? So hard? Accurately? How long have I known him? How did we meet? How long have I worked with him? What's my job? What'd I do before that? Each question repeated several times and asked several ways.

They went away and came back a while later with more questions. I guess they'd checked me out—this time the questions were all about my history, being in the safe place, taking my meds, and stuff like that. I told 'em that I haven't needed the safe place or the meds in a long time. They went over everything I told 'em before, asking about details and how sure was I and so on. While they were still asking questions, a nurse and some social worker joined them, and they started asking

questions about how did I *feel* about being kidnapped, about having a gun to my head, about being saved, about talking to the cops and FALCON and all that kinda stuff. I'm not saying that there are any voices, or that there ever were, but you know, if there were any, they'd have been telling me through all this that everything was OK, that I'm strong, that I shouldn't offer anything I wasn't asked about. That's what they'd said. You know, if there were any.

The nurse told me she could give me something if I was too anxious or anything like that, and I said "No, thank you", but not having to talk to, you know, so many people with uniforms and guns might be nice. They nodded at that. The inspector, Magary, he said that FALCON would like to talk to me, at that point, and would I mind? I said I'd rather not. He looked at the DA lady and they nodded at each other, and he said, "Not if you don't want to—not now. This is our jurisdiction, and you've been through a lot. But, they *are* the Feds. You'll need to talk with them, eventually."

I asked if the father and me could get back to St. Michael's soon. That'd be a whole lot better for me than some kinda meds or something. They all exchanged looks, and the nurse and the social worker nodded and smiled at the cop 'n DA—you know, like I was makin' sense, not like they should be humoring me.

"Yeah, he's been looking after me, and I've been lookin' after St. Michael's, and we've a lotta stuff to do, getting the place all in order, and stuff, and well, being busy and looking after each other, that really helps, you know, keeping it all together."

"Well, he *has* confessed to killing one person," said the DA lady.

"You mean the guy who was threatening to kill me, after the doctor said to 'get rid' of us? That guy?"

"Yes, that's the one."

"Are you going to charge him with killing *that* fellow? Can he take me home?"

"He might be able to," said the lady from the DA's. "My boss and I are still deciding what charges, if any, to press."

"There were like a dozen of them, with guns! I thought we were going to die! He just, he just *protected* me."

"Look, can you sit here for a little longer?"

"Yeah. 'Specially if he'll take me home, after."

"I can't *promise* that, but..." I think the DA lady saw the look on my face. She exchanged glances with the nurse and social worker. "Look, I'll see what I can do."

I sat there, trying not to think about the corners of the room, or what might be through that mirror, for a really long time. I was getting really nervous, when the inspector, the lady from the DA's and the father

came into the room. I guess she'd left sometime before that.

I wasn't thinking about it, but I just jumped up and hugged Father Gregory. Then I remembered where I was, who these people were and where they could send me, and I let go and backed up.

"I'm sorry. I'm probably not supposed to do that here. He just makes me feel safe, and...." I looked around, trying not to check out the corners.

"It's OK," said the social worker.

The DA lady said, "We've decided that we are not going to press charges, at least today. We'll have a final decision in 48 hours. We've arranged it so he can go home. He'll need to come back..."

"...to take this off...", the priest said and pulled up his pant leg to show a small black box strapped to his ankle, "...but at least I can take you home. Or you can stay in the parish house."

"Oh, please!" Everyone exchanged looks and nodded.

They said a cop could drive us home, and immediately added "...or call a cab." I don't think I was looking too happy at the first idea.

"Could I... could we just walk back to St. Michael's?" I asked.

"That's quite a few blocks," said the inspector.

"The walk might do us both some good. It has been a trying day."

"Sure, Father."

We stopped for Thai food on the way home—and ginger ice cream—but other than that we went straight to St. Michael's. I made up the hide-a-bed in the guest room upstairs in the parish house, and the father let me stay the night. I got hungry in the middle of the night, and the father came into the kitchen while I was poking through the refrigerator.

"I'm afraid there isn't much here."

"No, Father."

He smiled, rolled up the sleeves on the robe or nightshirt thing he was wearing and started going through the cabinets, pulling out flour, olive oil, salt, a few small tins of dried spices, a bear-shaped bottle of honey, and an old cast iron skillet.

"You were very brave today," he said as he set down an earthenware bowl and a big wooden spoon on the counter.

"I didn't feel very brave. Can I help?"

"No. Just pull up a stool and have a seat." He started crushing some sort of seeds and crumbling some leaves from the small tins. He brushed them all into the bowl with some salt and a bunch of flour.

"I didn't think they were going to let us go."

"Who? The doctor and his thugs, or the constables?" He poured in water and oil, and started mixing.

"Either."

He set the skillet on the stove and lit the gas. *"Well, I don't think either of them planned to, not at first."* He beat the mixture in the bowl a few last times, then scooped some dough out in his hands and began rolling it into a ball. *"They saw the light. Eventually."*

He threw the ball down hard on the stone countertop, near the edge. It flattened out. He set the wooden spoon on the dough, its bowl hanging over the edge of the counter and began to roll it out. When it was flat, he washed his hands off in the sink.

"Yeah, I guess they did. You... uh... convinced them."

"Each in their own way. In their own time."

He shook a few drops of water from his hands into the skillet. They hissed and danced. He smiled and poured a bit of oil into the pan and dropped the glistening dough down on top of it. It hissed and crackled. He kept the skillet moving in circles with the crackling dough sliding around inside it.

"Could you get down a couple of plates, Lee?" he asked, and then, with a quick flick of his wrist, tossed the dough into the air, flipped it over and caught it in the pan.

I got down a couple of old heavy earthenware plates from the cabinet. They'd been there when he'd bought the church, but all they'd needed was to be washed clean and put back.

I set them on the stone counter next to the stove.

He swirled the bread in the pan, then slid it out onto one of the plates and sprinkled a little salt on top of it. It was shiny with oil. In the next few minutes, he cooked up three more pieces, oiling the pan each time.

"Let them cool down," he said quietly. He took down a couple of glasses from the shelves, poured milk into them, added a bit of olive oil and honey, and stirred them with a spoon from the drawers.

He carried the two glasses to the kitchen table. I followed with the plates. The father and I ate our meal of bread, and milk 'n honey in silence. Even the voices were silent.

I slept well the rest of the night.

Continued in the Demon Priest novel, available in Kindle ebook, paperback, and hardback editions on Amazon.com.



The Demon Priest by Jim Burrows on Amazon.com

THE DEMON PRIEST

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Real Name: Shamsiel

Alias: Father Samuel Gregory

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Priest (retired)

Place of Origin: Celestial Courts

Citizenship: ?

Marital Status: Single

Known Relatives: The Grigori (Fallen Angels)

Known Allies: The Outcasts, Red Halo

Group Affiliations: St. Michael's Church

Base of Operations: New Acadia, MA

Education: St. Anselm's Seminary

First Appearance: The Demon Priest Preview

Height: 6' (183 cm)

Eyes: Red

Weight: 180 lbs (82 kg)

Hair: Auburn

HISTORY

Rev. Samuel Gregory claims to be a fallen angel, one of the "Sons of God" mentioned in the Book of Genesis, as well as the Samuel Gregory who was ordained during the First World War and then vanished mysteriously a couple of years after the war's end.

In 2014, he appeared, or reappeared, in the city of New Acadia, purchased the desanctified Church of St. Michael & All Saints, and immediately became a controversial figure. He was soon engaged in conflicts with both criminals and superheroes such as Lionheart, True Blue and Richard, the True Knight.

While he belongs to no known Earthly groups, he has worked with the Outcasts, a group variously categorized as a street gang or a 'neighborhood protective association'.

He registered as a para-human neighborhood protector under the so-called "superhero registration act", but claimed both sovereign immunity and conscientious objection with regard to being drafted into government service. His claims have not yet been ruled upon. He is joined in his superhero work by another "fallen angel", the psychopomp known as "Red Halo".

POWERS AND PARAPHERNALIA

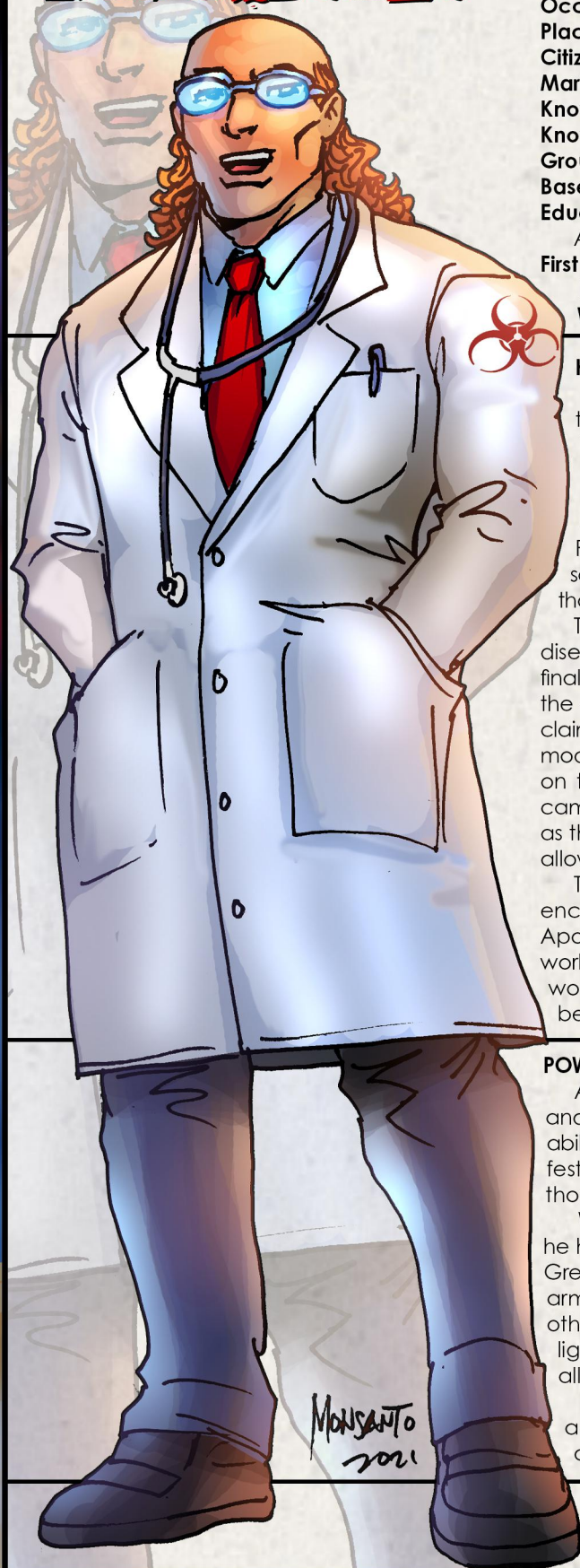
Father Gregory appears to be a fallen angel, with the ability to assume many physical and non-physical forms. Since humans can't even look straight at what is believed to be his true form, the extent of his powers is hard to guess.

In his most human forms, he has shown enhanced speed, strength and endurance. He seems to anticipate his foes' actions and to be able to compel humans to an unknown extent. In his more 'Celestial' forms, it appears that he is far more powerful, and the limits of his abilities in those forms have not been tested or measured.

Created by: Jim Burrows

Art by: Gilbert Monsanto

DR. APOLLO



PERSONAL INFORMATION

Real Name: Mikhail "Mishka" Apollonovich

Identity: Publicly Known

Occupation: Physician and medical researcher

Place of Birth: Leningrad, USSR

Citizenship: Naturalized US Citizen

Marital Status: Single

Known Relatives: None

Known Allies: The Black Guard, The Devil's Head

Group Affiliations: (Himself and minions)

Base of Operations: New Acadia, MA

Education: MD: Harvard; MD: N&K University of

Athens; PhD: Saint Petersburg State University

First Appearance: G-Man 3IN1 #2

Height: 5' 10" (178 cm)

Eyes: Hazel

Weight: 185 lbs (84 kg)

Hair: Red

HISTORY

Mikhail Apollonovich was a teenager living in the Soviet Union at the time of the Demon Wars. The USSR had very few super-powered meta-humans, so their primary defenders were the power-armored Red Knight Battalion. The Knights of the Leningrad Company made their stand at Fort Alexander I. While they stood off the demons, somehow an epidemic was released, and tens of thousands died, including young Mishka's family.

This inspired him to study medicine, infectious diseases and epidemiology in Russia, Greece and finally the USA. In Athens, his surname brought him to the attention of the Delphic Cult of Apollo, a group claiming to have combined ancient wisdom with modern science. While attending a Cult celebration on the side of Mount Parnassus, Dr. Apollonovich came under the influence of the Celestial known as the Apollonyon. Eventually he surrendered and allowed the Celestial to merge with him.

Together they have delved deeply into the science and medicine of plague and pestilence. The Apollonyon has convinced his host that since the world cannot support untold billions, humanity would be better off if the weak and unfit were to be wiped aside by just the right sort of disease.

POWERS AND PARAPHERNALIA

As Apollonovich, Dr. Apollo is a brilliant scientist and doctor, but has no meta- or other para-human abilities. As the Celestial Apollonyon he is the manifestation of a power non-physical being, akin to those known as angels, gods and demons.

When he manifests independent of the doctor, he has had the appearance of a glowing golden Greek godling, clad in a simple chiton or golden armor. At times he has wielded a sword, and at others thrown some sort of energy, not flames, nor lightning, nor beams of light, but in ways similar to all three. He can fly and walk on air.

In either form, he is charismatic, self assured and commanding. People do what he wants, often despite their own judgment or interests.

Created by: Jim Burrows
Art by: Gilbert Monsanto

AGENTS OF
F.A.L.C.O.N.
Federal Authority for Law-enforcement,
Command Operations Network

FALCON, the federal law enforcement agency charged with handling 'extraordinary' matters involving meta-human and alien issues, consists of several directorates known informally by their color designations.

Blue Team

Investigations

Blue Team's agents and analysts perform FALCON's main intelligence and investigation functions.

White Team

Science and Technology

The Science directorate is responsible for both forensic investigations and R&D.

Red Team

Special Operations

Red Team provides FALCON's SWAT and paramilitary special forces dealing with all forms of para-human threat.

Gold Team

Extraordinary Operations

Gold Team is home to FALCON's own para-human & advanced tech forces.

Green Team (White Team, Section 51)

Alien Operations

Green Team was initially created to study the 'Little Green Man' and his ship. LGM and his handlers are now active agents.

HISTORY

The Federal Authority for Law-enforcement, Command Operations Network, a.k.a. 'FALCON' was one of two organizations created by the Johnson administration. The other was UNICORN, the United Nations Intelligence & Covert Operations Reserve Network. Whereas UNICORN was chartered under UN authority to deal with international para-human threats, including meta-humans, aliens and advanced technology, FALCON was given federal law enforcement jurisdiction over 'extraordinary' affairs.

In creating FALCON, Johnson stripped the CIA of several elements dealing with para-threats including MK-Ultra, MX-Meta, and the Special Operations and Research Group. Unlike the CIA, FALCON was specifically tasked with domestic operations. FALCON's main headquarters are in Bethesda, Maryland, adjacent to the Congressional Country Club that once housed the OSS. Over time, the New Acadia branch office grew in stature, in part due to the efforts of its director, Simone Lefort, the famed 'Woman of Bronze'.



When the OSS was dismantled at the close of World War II, General "Wild Bill" Donovan created the clandestine Operations and Research Continuity organization to preserve 'extraordinary' resources such as the LGM project. Once the CIA had been created, ORC was quietly consolidated into it under Donovan's successor John Flemming as the powerful Special Operations and Research Group. SORG proved just as hard to control as the renegade ORC, and so Johnson took the opportunity of the UN deliberations on extraordinary matters to break off FALCON under the control of its new director, Dr. John Davis.

Davis, unlike Donovan and Flemming before him, ran the new organization with an emphasis on openness. He recruited the 'Woman of Bronze', the Green Beret, the original Tuskegee Knight and several other well known heroes, to build FALCON into the respected organization that it is today. Due to its CIA roots, and overlap in jurisdictions, a long-standing rivalry has developed with the FBI.

Created by: Jim Burrows
Art by: Dean Juliette

Lee

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Real Name: Lee

Identity: Publicly known (as "Lee Loe")

Occupation: Barista, Sexton, Assistant

Place of Origin: New Acadia

Marital Status: Single

Known Relatives: None

Known Allies: Father Samuel Gregory

Group Affiliations: St. Michael's Church

Base of Operations: New Acadia

Education: Unknown

First Appearance: The Demon Priest novel

Height: 5' 4" (163 cm)

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 110 lbs (50 kg)

Hair: Brown

HISTORY

When Samuel Gregory, the Demon Priest, made his twenty-first century return to Earth in New Acadia, it was witnessed by Lee, a quiet, even timid, young woman on her way to the movies.

Lee's timidity had its roots in her psychiatric history. A decade earlier, she was found wandering in a daze along a road on the outskirts of Colchester, across the river from New Acadia, unable to recall her name or where she had come from. The best she could come up with when asked her name was "Lee". She was admitted to the Merridowns Psychiatric Hospital (the "safe place"), where it was soon discovered that she was prone to hearing voices, and had vague delusions or very fragmentary memories.

She was treated with anti-psychotics with limited success, and was transferred first to in-patient rehabilitation, then out-patient and finally, after years of care, was able to move into a room of her own in a boarding house that acts as a halfway home for women's recovery. Over the next few years, she was in and out of Merridowns as she tried to establish some sort of routine to her life. Eventually, she found a job as a barista.

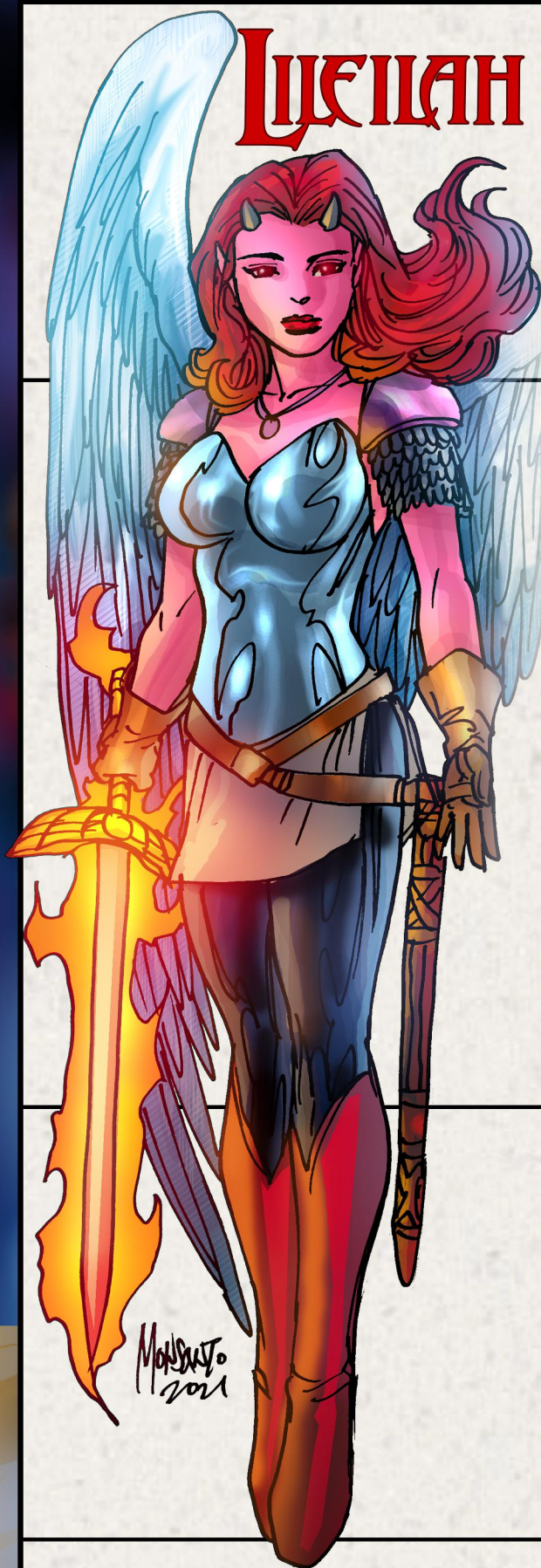
While she has developed no significant personal or social ties, she has been able to hold down a job. After a couple of years showing no signs of hearing voices, she was weaned off of her meds.

One of her few pastimes is going to the movies. One night, she found herself walking down the Hob's Lane alley near the theater district. There, she saw a stereotypical devil walk out of a wall and assume the appearance of a priest. Coincidentally, a mugging broke out nearby, and Lee witnessed the demon priest break it up by getting the assailants to blunder into each other. As sirens approached, she decided to join the priest in leaving the alley. Soon, he acquired a desanctified church and offered her a job as his sexton or assistant.

Lee is the narrator of a good deal of *The Demon Priest*.

MONSANTO
2021

LILEILAH



PERSONAL INFORMATION

Real Name: Lileilah

Alias: Lailah

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Angel of Death & Conception

Place of Origin: Celestial Courts

Marital Status: Single

Known Relatives: Her legion of other selves

Known Allies: Father Abraham

Base of Operations: The Bound Realm

Education: The Celestial Garden

First Appearance: The Demon Priest novel

Height: 6' (183 cm)

Eyes: Red

Weight: 180 lbs (82 kg)

Hair: Auburn

HISTORY

Before her fall, Lileilah served in the realm known as the Celestial Garden, where she nurtured, taught and tested unborn souls in preparation for incarnation and birth, and when they returned from Mortal Lands, helped guide them on their way.

When the Grigori fell, becoming flesh, she took on their role as the Guardian of the Garden. Her duties were already such that she manifested as a legion of beings. Now, some of her manifestations wielded the Flaming Sword.

The Grigori, living and procreating among the humans of the Mortal Lands, created chaos, bringing knowledge that humans had not worked out for themselves as well as begetting the Nephilim—the giants and demigods of myth. Lileilah, seeing this chaos, traveled herself to the Mortal Lands, and in her words, “pruned and weeded” the Earth, joining in human wars, wielding the Flaming Sword.

After the Great Reckoning, when the Grigori were removed from the Mortal Lands and bound in a Nether Realm, her penance was to guard them, as a legion, wielding their sword and standing watch over them. Eventually, due to events brought about by Tethykles the Walker, Samuel the Demon Priest and a human priest known as Whim, an aspect of Lileilah returned to Earth.

Or so the story goes...

POWERS AND PARAPHERNALIA

As a fallen angel, Lileilah is able to assume many forms, both physical and metaphysical. When manifesting in physical form, she usually appears as a tall, unnaturally red-skinned woman with pointy ears, horns, and white feathered wings, dressed in gleaming black and silver armor, wielding a flaming sword.

The full extent of her powers is unknown. As a psychopomp, she can manifest a second astral body which can interact with the similar forms of others, especially the dying, though she has been known to pull the astral form out of the living during conflicts.

LIONHEART

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Real Name: Stephen A. Brand
Identity: Secret, but generally assumed.
Occupation: Real Estate and Security
Place of Birth: New Acadia, MA
Citizenship: US Citizen with no criminal record
Marital Status: Single
Known Relatives: Justin H. Brand (father)
Known Allies: None
Group Affiliations: None
Base of Operations: New Acadia, MA
Education: Oxbridge University
First Appearance: The Demon Priest Preview
Height: 6' 2" (188 cm) **Eyes:** Blue
Weight: 220 lbs (100 kg) **Hair:** Blond

HISTORY

Brand inherited the gene that enables the super-soldier serum from both his parents. His father, a wealthy arms manufacturer, had somehow obtained the Myrmidon mutagenic super-soldier serum and had undergone the full regimen before Stephen was born, with minimal success. Stephen, however, exhibited the abilities practically from birth. Seeing this, his father subjected the boy to the Myrmidon and other related treatments, as well as having him trained by world-class athletes and martial artists.

The Brands' home was highly secure, and when the young Brand realized that people would pay to live in a secure property and under his protection, he built a series of such homes culminating in the fifty-story *Lyonnaise*, a multi-function skyscraper that includes residential, business, hotel, and retail spaces. Already wealthy at birth, Brand used the income from the *Lyonnaise* and his security services turn himself into a billionaire, the World's Wealthiest Superhero.

POWERS AND PARAPERNALIA

Lionheart is one of the most powerful Myrmidon-class meta-humans, and has the most advanced augmentation helmet known. As a result, his strength, endurance, agility and 'invulnerability' are unsurpassed by any Myrmidon-class meta. Additionally, his uniform includes body armor, and he carries a collection of high-tech weapons & gadgets—the very finest that money can buy.

Monsanto
2021

Created by: Jim Burrows
Art by: Gilbert Monsanto

SIMONE LEFORT

AGENT OF FALCON.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Real Name: Simone Lefort

Identity: Publicly Known

Occupation: FALCON Station Chief, New Acadia

Place of Birth: New Acadia, MA

Citizenship: US Citizen

Marital Status: Widowed

Group Affiliations: FALCON

Base of Operations: New Acadia, MA

Education: PhDs (archeology, criminal psychology),
De Coyne University, New Acadia, MA

First Appearance: G-Men United #2

Height: 5' 10" (178 cm)

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 160 lbs (72 kg)

Hair: Auburn

HISTORY

By the time she joined FALCON, "The Woman of Bronze" was already a legend. Born during the Great War to a prominent family from New Acadia, she was the latest in a long line of adventurers and explorers. The Leforts are an "Acadie" family—French-speaking mixed-race folk who trace their roots back to the French/Mi'kmaq Acadians that the British had ejected from Acadia to create the Nova Scotia colony in the 18th century. Simone was one of the early "mystic" meta-humans who showed up inexplicably in the 1930s.

When the Swami arrived in New Acadia to search for the stolen Great Moghul's Eye, Lefort, an archeology student at De Coyne University, agreed to assist him. As they unravelled the mystery of Lost Norumbega, her meta-human strength, speed and endurance appeared. Her Haitian-born grandmother, the Swami, and the Sachem of Norumbega all had different explanations of her abilities, but, skeptical scientist that she was, Lefort never accepted any of them as definitive.

During the Second World War, Lefort worked with the OSS, and like many, followed Wild Bill Donovan into the clandestine ORC, SORG and eventually, in the Johnson era, FALCON. By the time FALCON was founded, Lefort was a half century old, but still appeared to be in her mid-20s. She rose steadily in the Extraordinary Operations "Gold Team" in charge of apprehending renegade metas and supervillains, and keeping the homeland safe from world conquerors. In that role, she developed strong ties with UNICORN personnel as well as freelancers like Dame Fortune and her Force Fortuna. Inter-agency collaboration based on personal ties became her signature style, and she was always one of FALCON's greatest recruiters of meta-humans.

POWERS AND ABILITIES

She is twice as strong, fast and tough as an Olympic-class human athlete, and has sufficient endurance and healing factors to "power through" most non-fatal injuries. She exhibits a degree of prescience, especially in combat. She seems to know how and when an opponent will attack, allowing her to begin to dodge, parry or counterstrike before the attack begins. She is also a preternaturally good shot. Lefort is now more than a century old, yet looks to be in her thirties.

Monsanto
2021

Created by: Jim Burrows
Art by: Gilbert Monsanto

True Blue

and Richard, the

True Knight

True Blue

Real Name: Grace St. Croix

Place of Birth: New Acadia, MA

Known Relatives: Astor St. Croix (cousin)

Height: 5' 6" (168 cm) **Eyes:** Blue

Weight: 132lbs (60 kg) **Hair:** Blond

Powers: TK—flying and levitation.

Telepathy—Truth-telling, truth-compulsion, reading the meaning in unknown languages, and artifacts.

Richard, the True Knight

Real Name: Richard Hughes

Place of Birth: Philadelphia, PA

Height: 6' (183 cm) **Eyes:** Blue

Weight: 220 lbs (100 kg) **Hair:** Brown

Powers: Myrmidon-class super-soldier—Super-strength, super-speed, and limited invulnerability. Myrmidon control helmet.

Both as "Two True"

Identity: Secret

Occupation: Full-time superheroes

Citizenship: US Citizens with no criminal record

Marital Status: Single

Known Allies: FALCON, XCOM

Base of Operations: New Acadia, MA

First Appearance: The Demon Priest novel



HISTORY

Grace St. Croix is a member of one of New Acadia's oldest and wealthiest families. Grace became disenchanted with the High Society circles her family traveled in and, using her trust fund, bought a small brownstone in the Mission Hill district. The building shared a sheltered garden courtyard with the others on her block. Meditating in the courtyard, seeking Truth and meaning, somehow activated her latent metahuman powers. She learned to fly and levitate objects, and to know when people were telling the truth, and even to compel them to do so.

She met Richard Hughes on the street where she lived, and could immediately see that he was on a quest of some sort. When she surprised him by asking about it, he told her that he sought "Truth, the Grail and the font of St. Bonaventure." She couldn't help him with Truth or the Grail, but she did show him the fountain in her garden, carved by Gilbert Bonaventure. Asked how she knew who'd carved the font, she showed him. She took his hand and ran their fingers over the barely visible letters carved on its base. As she read

the Latin inscription, he could see and understand it as well.

Both Grace and Richard are metahumans—she a self-trained mystic and he a twenty-year veteran of the Myrmidon super-soldier program. When he had retired, he'd been allowed to register as a civilian superhero and keep the Myrmidon amplification and control helmet. Now he was on a quest based upon a scroll in an unknown language, passed down father to son since the days of the Templars.

She, however, could read the scroll, and told him it that what it spoke of was not "the" Grail, but another chalice, which he was to use to drink from St. Bonaventure's font, probably the one in her garden.

Seeing his dedication to his quest and his fundamental heroic nature inspired Grace to use her gifts—her metahuman powers—as a superhero; and he, seeing her dedication to truth and justice, joined her as her sidekick. They became True Blue and Richard, the True Knight. Someday, they are sure, they will find his grail. For now, they serve in another way.

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