

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

DANIE KRÜGEL



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## Foreword

“If somebody has not met satan in person, satan is most probably not a reality in his or her life. The same can be said about Jesus Christ – if you have not met Him personally, you most probably cannot perceive Him as a reality in your life as well.”

These words were spoken by a well-known international Christian psychiatrist, Scott Peck, shortly after he had a personal encounter with satan for over a two-year period and how he finally managed to free a man from the evil power of satan in his life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The same can be said by those who have crossed paths with the author of this book. An encounter with Satan makes him a reality but at the same time, God will use such an incident and subsequent counseling sessions by creating several opportunities to meet and experience the living Jesus Christ.

To be on this long but satisfying journey spanning 20 years of dialogue, deliverance, “on the job training”, praying together, emotional healing and to experience a new life in Christ for so many people in the companionship of Danie was an absolute honor.

In most of these cases, Danie was the voice of the Holy Spirit through Christ. I was the eager learner and Shepherd:

- At times, the things I experienced first hand were so disturbing I almost felt it was turning my theology upside down. This happened the first time when I accompanied Danie during a session with a young woman and her voice suddenly changed into that of an unknown male person.
- Most of the time I was so excited, just like a primary school boy scoring his first try during a rugby match as I witnessed how our Saviour Jesus Christ used his annointed servant to be His voice to deliver Gods children from the clutches of satan, with methods described in the book of Acts.

What a privilege this has been! What a gift from God!

Thank you Danie!

Dr Gerrie Labuscagne

## **Dedication**

This book is lovingly dedicated to the Hero of all  
Hero's Jesus Christ the Son of God.

My dear wife Hannelie and children for all their  
support and sacrifices they made.

Maryna van Wyk for the editing and translation.  
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Danila Liebenberg for the transcription.

My dear friends George Mazarakis, Mark Trip and  
Peter Lupacchini.

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# **Light in Darkness**

Inspired by true events

## CHAPTER 1

It is a full moon and dead quiet while a man in the driver's seat of his car stares into the dark nothingness of the night. The shadows are casting an ominous sense of evil on the white paint of the vehicle, parked halfway under a bush. At first what seemed to be a normal shift for Lieutenant Ryno Bosman from the Police's Reaction Unit in Bloemfontein, soon turns out to be the beginning of a four-year-long investigation into the unseen forces of darkness.

Ryno, a man of well over two metres, waits for something to happen and slowly moves in the seat of the white Corolla to find a better position for his legs. Tonight, he will spend most of the shift on Naval Hill, a hill in the middle of the city and also a well-known hangout for criminals. Earlier during the day, the police received a tip-off from an

informant that stolen firearms might be buried somewhere in the deserted area of Naval Hill during the night.

Ryno can barely allow himself to breathe and listens attentively to the music of the night. All he can hear are the squirreling noises of night insects in the veld and the sound of the wind playing with the leaves of the nearby Karee trees. Ryno sighs and looks at his watch with a yearning for his own bed as the clock turns to 11pm. The scraping noises of the branches on the roof of the car make him conspicuously uneasy.

Suddenly Ryno becomes aware of dry twigs crunching on the ground close to his vehicle and he instinctively slides a few centimetres deeper into his seat. As his heart skips a beat, he immediately switches to action mode and analyzes the situation with his trained mind. He seeks for

a reasonable explanation for the sound of the dry twigs so close to his observation post. His immediate reaction is to contact the control room and ask for support but as Ryno tries to get a grip on his radio, his fingers slowly move away. The noise of the two-way radio system of the police will give away his position.

Ryno waits as the minutes tick away slowly. Nothing, not a sound as his right lower leg suddenly cramps where his foot got stuck behind the accelerator. The green phosphor of his watch shows it is 11.30pm. Maybe it was just his imagination as the night turns quiet again.

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Suddenly, as he becomes aware of a slight knock against the side panel, he slowly but swiftly cocks the 9mm pistol in his hands.



Then something happens that has never happened to Ryno before in similar life-threatening situations. He feels his hair rise on his back, as he experiences a sense of evil surrounding him. For the first time in his career as a police officer, Ryno feels he is caught off-guard, unprepared for this. “What is going on with me? What is this feeling I am suddenly experiencing? I have been in this situation numerous times, catching criminals,” Ryno thinks to himself. He suddenly opens the front door, jumps out of the car and falls flat between the long grass with his 9mm pistol pointed to the back of the vehicle. With his finger still on the trigger, Ryno shivers at the sight – just a few metres away in the dark bushes.

Approximately 15 metres away from the car, Ryno spots eight figures, all dressed in black. In a split second, Ryno prepares to jump up and chase the group, but the

figures suddenly disappear in all directions into the night. When Ryno manages to compose himself, he can only recall the evil which unfolded in front of him a few seconds ago. These people dressed up in black with dark face masks in the middle of the night on Naval Hill do not match the profiles of the criminals he has been used to confront. It is also apparent they are not here on Naval Hill to rob or steal, as this famous landmark in the middle of a city has been well known over the years as the favourite spot for young lovers.

This is something totally different, Ryno decides. He has never experienced a situation similar to this in his career thus far.

As Ryno slides into the passenger seat of his official unmarked vehicle, he rests his head on the steering wheel, too cautious to let go of the pistol in his right hand. He tries

to make some sense of what just happened and decides it will be unwise to go after the dark-masked figures who by now have reached their arranged hiding spot. Ryno lets the magazine slip into his left hand and puts the firearm and the ammunition in a safe place before he contacts the control room. He is almost certain a team of police members will not be able to track down these mysterious figures, especially in the bushy surroundings. It was the way they moved in to circle around his vehicle and the fact that he was not even aware of them for several minutes. They were swallowed up by the darkness as they fled, and Ryno realized tonight's events were a different ball game.

Ryno speaks promptly over the police radio that he saw eight people in the area where stolen weapons were supposed to be buried and that he will follow up at first light. He

might be lucky to get a small piece of evidence or look for shoe marks that might help his investigation.

He slowly drives to his home, where his wife and two children are asleep as his mind wanders to the strange figures he saw earlier. Suddenly he feels the presence of something indescribably evil in his midst.

## CHAPTER 2

When Ryno's alarm goes off at 5am the next morning, after a few hours of much appreciated rest, he plans to go to his office immediately and start to write the report on the previous night's events. This cannot be true, he thinks to himself. Maybe it was just a bad dream, but the evidence of his working clothes strewn next to his side of the bed is proof enough of his night shift. As are the trousers and jacket dirtied by the grit in the veld. He remembers he undressed quietly not to wake his wife, who was by then in a deep peaceful sleep.

It was definitely not a dream as Ryno hurriedly prepares for the day and kisses his wife on the way out. His mind is still busy, trying to analyze the events of the night before. As he walks into the reception area of his office, Ryno's secretary interrupts his

thoughts. There is somebody in the office that would like to see him as a matter of urgency. Not now, Ryno says to himself. He has a lot of reports to write and he can only hope the visit will not take up too much of his time.

As Ryno enters his office, he notices a slenderly built man staring out the window. The man must be in his forties, Ryno guesses as he approaches his desk. The man introduces himself as Captain Wynand Du Plessis from Ficksburg. They chitchat about police work in general as Ryno wonders what the real purpose of the visit is. It is obvious Captain Du Plessis is here for a reason.

As if he could read Ryno's mind, Du Plessis looks him straight into the eyes and says: "Ryno, I do not know you but I am here to discuss what happened to you last night."

For a moment Ryno is left speechless and wonders how on earth somebody can already know what happened the previous night on Naval Hill. “Ryno, what happened to you last night was not an isolated incident. It happens everywhere in South Africa and, as a matter of fact, all over the world. Even in rural towns in the Free State. Last night, a certain group of people met somewhere in Bloemfontein. We also know that led to a change of plans because of the presence of a white Corolla on Naval Hill. Something happened and they became anxious. They decided to rather split up. All the information I received, points to your presence there.”

Du Plessis’ eyes turn a darker brown as he speaks. “What I am going to tell you now must stay between the two of us, at all cost. This is not a fabrication and our discussion

must be kept a secret, even if it sounds like just a terrible nightmare”.

Ryno sees the warning in his colleague’s eyes as Du Plessis continues. “There is a dangerous occult movement operating in the country at this very moment, an attack so fierce, it will surpass all previous efforts to destroy Christianity. The movement has already expanded beyond our borders. No other lie to take over the world has been kept as quiet and secretive as the one we are now confronted with. The members of this occult are forced by several ways and means to keep their modus operandi a secret. There have been reports of people who disappeared without a trace and allegations of members who have committed the most heinous and evil deeds to humans and animals.”



“I had a discussion with General Johan Du Toit in Pretoria shortly before my visit. I suggested you are the right person to help us with our investigations in this regard. This will put you in a very difficult situation regarding your normal duties. We want you to assist us but also continue with your other work. As a matter of secrecy, other members of the police, even Officers in Command of the various units and police stations, must not have a clue what you are busy with.”

The police officer's one hand wrings over his right wrist. “Members of this occult group already infiltrated several sectors in government, schools, universities, and even the police as well as the private sector. They are all over”. Ryno has not moved in his chair for several minutes. He is dumbfounded, to say the least.

“I do not know if you are up to this mammoth task, Ryno.” Ryno notices not only the question marks in his colleague’s eyes, but to a larger extent the powerlessness and exhaustion in his demeanor.

Still without words, Ryno moves the pen holder on his desk. How can one incident on a small hill in the middle of the smallest city in the country have such an influence on the rest of South Africa, and even the world? Ryno takes a deep breath and speaks, somewhat unsure how to respond but guided by an Upper Hand: “I will try my best.” He pauses a moment. “Tell me, what must I be on the lookout for?”

“Before I answer you, let me give you more background into the involvement of the police. There are only three of us in South Africa involved with occult investigations.

General Du Toit, you and me. We report directly to the General, nobody else.”

The information that follows leaves Ryno without words for the second time today. He realizes the skills he had been taught as a police officer and his experience until now cannot equip him for the road ahead. That includes his physical strength as well as mental discipline and logic reasoning drilled in during numerous courses and training.

Captain Du Plessis paused for a second, suggesting the information he just conceded is also a matter of emotional drainage to himself. He takes out his cell phone from his front pocket and dials a number with his thumb. “I am phoning General Du Toit to inform him you decided to come on board. You are absolutely sure, aren’t you?” he asks Ryno decisively.

At that moment, Ryno experiences an indescribable power from within his being and confirms his answer. “Without a doubt, I am in.” Du Plessis reaches over the desk to hand Ryno his cell phone. “He wants to speak to you personally,” Du Plessis whispers while covering the handset with his one hand.

Ryno can immediately recognize the authority in the voice of the man on the other side of the line. He gives Ryno his direct phone number. “In future, you will only receive instructions from me. For the time being, you can write in your report what you saw and experienced last night while you were observing the hill.”

“Wish you all the success,” Du Plessis says as they shake hands while walking to the door. Ryno cannot help but notice a few wrinkles under the man from Fickburg’s

eyes as well as a few gray hairs on his temples. The seriousness about the task at hand lingers as Du Plessis closes the door.

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As Ryno walks back to his desk, he cannot help wondering what lies ahead. So many things have happened during the past 24 hours. He cannot share this with his friends and colleagues. He closes his eyes and thinks about the reality of this surreal situation. Ahead lies a very dangerous and lonely path, for how long no one knows.

## CHAPTER 3

Several weeks have passed since Ryno had his first encounter with members of an occult movement on Naval Hill.

It is close to midnight and the streets of the Bloemfontein CBD are deserted except for a few homeless dwelling the streets. Sergeant Friedrich Erwee and Constable Christiaan Niemand, two policemen from the uniform branch, are doing a patrol with their 4X4 vehicle. They drive slowly through the area, especially in the streets where the light bulbs had gone out. The only activity visible is the moths rotating tediously around the light. “Christiaan, I am thirsty. What about a stop to buy some cold drinks?” he asks his colleague. “We can then stop quickly at Mirna and Zelna’s flat,” Friedrich adds. “From then on our long shift will almost be over.”

The two men drive up to Hoffman Square in the center of the CBD where they stop almost every shift around this time of the night. Open 24 hours, reads the flashing sign in the window next to the entrance. They climb out of the vehicle to the sound of loud Portuguese music, disturbing the quietness of the night.

Friedrich sees her first from the corner of his eye, a frail youngster in her late teens, sitting on the pavement. She is leaning forward with her hair covering her eyes. Not far from her, a few street dwellers point at the girl and try not to laugh. Friedrich stops in his tracks – maybe the girl is in some kind of distress. “Christiaan wait! Let’s just go there first to see if everything is in order.” They turn away from the door and walk up to the girl. As Friedrich reaches the girl, he bends over and puts his hand on her

shoulder. Suddenly, in a very high-pitched voice, her violent screams cut through the silence of the night. She jumps up with her whole body shivering. Friedrich instinctively retreats. He did not anticipate this horrifying reaction. Christiaan looks perplexed.

“Sergeant, what must we do now?” Friedrich is still staring in disbelief at the reaction of the girl, who now glares at him with hatred in her eyes.

“Constable, she will calm down.” However, something tells him not to be so sure. Her body is shaking uncontrollably, which might be the effect of drugs. He has seen so many of them late at night in the streets, trembling and as pale as death while they are freaking out. “Everything is fine, we only want to help.” Her head moves to and fro, back and forth while the greasy pieces of hair hang over her eyes. Friedrich moves a step



closer, with the girl instantly moving away, uttering strange and incoherent noises.

As she moves into the flashing lights of the café, the two men notice she is barefoot and her clothes are partly torn. “How is it possible for anyone to sell everything they own for a few rand just to buy drugs?”

Friedrich thinks to himself as he approaches the girl for the second time. She again manages to move out of the police officer’s way while one or two of the spectators make a whistling noise. The onlookers are now shivering in anticipation as Friedrich tries to grab the girl’s arm. Just as Christiaan steps forward to assist his colleague, the girl utters a weird squeal and darts toward the two men.

She grabs Friedrich in front of his chest, lifts him in the air and throws him against the nearest lamp pole. A blinding pain goes

through his back as he tries to recollect his thoughts on what is unfolding in the street. He cannot believe that this tiny-framed slender girl could overpower him with such ease. It almost seems as if the girl possesses some kind of supernatural powers.

The girl suddenly turns around and tries to run away. He cannot believe his eyes; a smallish female person lifted him from his feet and tossed him against a lamp pole.

At that moment, Christiaan storms past Friedrich as he slowly tries to get up from the pavement. “That girl is tough,” he hears as some of the onlookers started to laugh. He sees Christiaan trying to grab the girl from behind, but the girl turns around, grabs his arm and while twisting him around throws him against the corner wall of the café. Everybody glares in shock as blood

runs down his cheek while he remains propped up against the wall.

“Are you OK?” Friedrich shouts while the girl comes to a standstill further up in the street. He wipes the blood from Christiaan’s face to determine how deep the wound is.

Pieces of his torn shirt where the girl grabbed him are more evidence of the one-sided fight that only lasted split seconds. “I hope so,” says Christiaan while he tries to get to his feet. The girl now sits in a squatting position while Friedrich keeps a close watch on her from the corner of his eyes. There are visible lacerations on Friedrich’s body where the pole hit his back. As the girl starts to shiver excessively against the glass panel of the shop where she came to a halt, Christiaan turns to Friedrich and says, “Sergeant, something

strange is happening here. This cannot only be drugs!”

## CHAPTER 4

Friedrich and Christiaan simultaneously hear the arrival of another 4X4 police vehicle. “Sergeant, can we help?”

“Yes, please,” Friedrich says immediately, with eagerness in his voice despite the fact that a young woman made a joke of their training skills a few minutes earlier.

“The girl there in front of the window overpowered us. Can you help us to get her in the van so that we can take her to the hospital?”

“That little one?” the officer says with a mocking tone in his voice.

“Yes, she is inhumanly strong.” Friedrich cannot help but detect the condescending look in the officer’s eyes. “Sergeant Erwee, you and the Constable here did not perhaps have a fight over that woman? Look at you

two. It is impossible that a female with such a small frame can finish you off like this.”

“Leave it now,” Friedrich hears himself say with urgency in his voice.

“You can rather help us. All four of us must grab her – just follow my instructions clearly.” The four policemen approach the girl. The girl is still leaning forward as she pillars herself against the shop window. Her head bends backwards as the men grab her at the same time.

The girl pulls her head backwards, with the strings of hair covering her eyes flinging back, showing an indescribable evilness in her eyes as she glares at the four men with absolute hatred. She has a grim look on her face, which at that moment sends shivers down Friedrich’s spine.

She pulls away with an immense power and attacks the men's faces with her long black polished nails. The girl tries to get the upper hand against the four men and kicks Friedrich in the stomach. However, he manages not to let go of his grip, while the girl is testing the combined power and skill of the four men. At last, the men manage to each grab a leg or an arm. The girl screams like something out of a horror movie as the four men force her into the back of the police van.

The four men stare motionless for a moment at the back door of the 4X4 bakkie. They are totally exhausted from the tussle. "Sorry, Sergeant," says the officer who minutes earlier taunted his two colleagues. "I could not comprehend the power that female possesses."

The 4X4 vehicle suddenly budes as the girl takes the spare wheel in the back of the van and lifts it above her head like an empty cardboard box. Before the men can react, the girl throws the spare wheel out of the open back door of the vehicle. Before Friedrich can get out of the way, the heavy 4X4 tyre hits him with full force and he falls to the ground. For a moment the world around him turns black, but something pulls him back to reality. Christiaan storms to the open back door and quickly shuts and bolts the door in one movement.

Inside the van, the girl roars like a wild animal and evil high-pitched screams escape her blood-red lips as she pushes her long nails through the safety bar. With difficulty, Friedrich manages to push the tyre from his upper body. He has a blinding headache. His body is bruised. He cannot believe this tiny girl was sitting down in a



police van and then managed to throw a heavy 4X4 tyre with effortlessly out of the vehicle. He is a man who had been doing weight training regularly in the gymnasium, and the girl managed to topple him over like wind blowing over grassland.

Christiaan helps to pull his colleague upright. “Are you OK Sergeant?”  
“I am trying my best to be OK,” he answers with a tone of disenchantment in his voice. He tries to clean his uniform from the grit and dirt of landing twice on his back and climbs into the driver seat of the 4X4 vehicle. His hands are still covered in dirt from the struggle.

Friedrich immediately contacts the control room of the police, a somewhat hidden building on Signal Hill in the Dan Pienaar residential area. His report is brief: “We are

taking a woman to the hospital. It is a possible drug-related case.”

Friedrich and Christiaan drive in the direction of the nearest hospital without saying a word. The wound on Christiaan’s eyebrow still bleeds a little bit. “Sergeant, what happened tonight is sort of impossible. Nobody will believe us.”

Friedrich just shakes his head as they near a big Red Cross, signaling the entrance to the hospital.

## CHAPTER 5

Friedrich climbs out of the bakkie and enters the outpatient section of the hospital. “Yes, how can I help?” asks a woman on duty, while peeking over the rim of her smallish pair of glasses. She hesitates a moment.

“Are you hurt?”

“No, not really.” The sergeant composes himself for a second. He will have to mention the injuries he and Christiaan sustained tonight.

“Well, actually yes, my colleague and I received a few blows tonight while on duty. It is actually the person in the back of the police van who needs attention. She is however difficult to handle. We think, well...”

“Bring her in so that we can take a look at her,” the nurse replies.

“No,” Friedrich says desperately. “She is too strong.”

The nurse drops her pen and looks at the man opposite her with torn clothes and bruises all over his face and hands.

“Sergeant, you didn’t have something to drink tonight, did you? And then you took to the streets to make trouble? Go and get the lady!”

“Please, call the doctor. We need him very urgently. I first need to give him some background about the incident. We do not know if she took drugs or something,” Friedrich tries again.

The nurse picks up the phone and dials a number. “Wait there, I will ask the doctor to come to the front,” she says in a more understanding tone, while closing the receiver with her one hand.

As the doctor enters the reception area within minutes, Friedrich is surprised by his prompt reaction. Outside, the two men try to

explain to the doctor what happened, and spot the growing disbelief in the doctor's eyes. "You guys did not drink tonight, did you?" the doctor asks while he looks through one of the side windows, secured with wired bars. The girl lies curled up in one of the corners of the van in an almost pathetic manner.

The doctor lifts his right brow and rubs his clean-shaven chin while he turns slowly to the two policemen. "Was it the girl that did this to you? Gee, I have to say there is no way..."

Friedrich is too late to react as the girl forces her arm through the safety rail of the open window. She grabs the doctor around his neck and pulls him towards her in an effort to suffocate him. "Help me!" are the only words the doctor manages to whisper while he tries to escape her grasp, but to no

avail. As the girl lifts the doctor from his feet, Friedrich takes out his police baton and hits the clenched arm of the girl around the doctor's neck as hard as possible. He knows by now only extreme measures have some results.

Her eyes are now pitch black and frightening beyond explanation. She eases her grip for a second while Christiaan manages to pull the doctor away. The doctor falls to the ground gasping for air. The two policemen watch in awe as the girl crawls around the small space in the van like a person who has lost her mind. She roars in a deep tone – sounds the two policemen have never heard before.

Suddenly, hospital staff swarm the area in front of outpatients. One nurse pulls an oxygen mask over the doctor's face. "Get a

tranquilizer to inject this girl – a very high dose,” Christiaan says with urgency in his voice.

Without discussing a strategy to inject the girl, Friedrich walks to the one side of the bakkie, while Christiaan and the other staff members remain on the other side – armed with tranquilizers and syringes.

Friedrich is well aware that he must move closer to the van to distract the girl. He is fully aware that he is walking into a death trap. However, it is the only way, he says to himself. As he steps up to the van, the girl utters a horrific scream and grabs him by the chest. She rips open the policeman’s shirt while a doctor storms towards them and pushes the needle of the syringe into her arm. The girl’s eyes turn into a blank stare and it seems as if her being is fading out.

Friedrich sees the doctor inject the girl in one movement of his thumb. As the girl lets go of his chest, Friedrich quickly dives to safety.

The van now moves violently from one side to the other. Friedrich stands up and looks at the van, bewildered. “Go inside,” says a member of the medical staff who just came out of nowhere, “so that somebody can disinfect your bruises. The injection will take between 15 and 20 minutes to have the maximum effect.” Friedrich does not say a word as the man in the white jacket points to Christiaan. “The blood on your face, that wound on your eyebrow, it will need some stitches.”

A feeling of indescribable tiredness overcomes Friedrich as he walks to the outpatients entrance, with Christiaan following. They walk as if in a haze. The



safety of the reception room and all the lights cannot rid Friedrich of a terrible feeling, an awkwardness growing from deep within....

## CHAPTER 6

Friedrich is still in a bewildered state as he walks out of the hospital. “I have to contact the officer on standby,” he says while Christiaan follows him outside to get the girl out of the van. “The men will laugh at us. Nobody will believe us – we will be the laughing stock of the police force in Bloemfontein.” Christiaan, now beside him, remains quiet. “On the other hand, I am not convinced we should phone the officer. To phone him about this, he will probably think we are playing the fool.”

“We can take her out of the van,” a security staff member says, standing next to the police vehicle. “Doctor Botes instructed me to call him first before we start.” Friedrich takes a peek into the van and notices the girl lying on the floor of the bakkie, pale and dazed.

“Get more officials to assist us. You do not play with this one even if she appears to be calm,” Friedrich says as the muscled man leaves. “She is very dangerous,” he adds.

“Doctor, do you have another tranquilizer with you?” Christiaan asks while four security members push a hospital bed to the back of the van. They seem ready. Friedrich starts to unlock the back door of the van. “Listen people, if this girl wakes up, we must make space for the doctor to give her another injection while we hold our grip. She is impossible to handle.”

“Come on, Sergeant,” one of the men laughs through his beard. “Let me show you how I handle children like this. We’ve been used to this for many years. We take them out of the vehicle, put them on a trolley and let them lie in one of the emergency

cubicles to come around. And when you see the dad, most of the time very rich, he will offer you a tip to keep quiet about his daughter.”

Friedrich opens the back door. The girl is still lying very still as the security guard, with all his wisdom, climbs into the van. He pulls her out of the van, takes her into his arms and places her on the hospital trolley. As he pushes the trolley, the security guard says, “If I were you two, I would have bowed my head in shame tonight.”

With his words still hanging in the air, a sudden noise resembling a bloodthirsty monster on the kill makes Friedrich grasp for the girl on the trolley. She has already grabbed the arm of the outspoken security guard with her nails. He yells out in pain and tries to slap her with his other hand as Friedrich manages to grab her one arm.

Now in obvious pain, the one security guard withdraws from the struggle while his three colleagues take over. The girl kicks one of the guards so hard, he collapses to the ground. The inhumane power of the girl overturns the trolley.

She picks up the trolley and throws it at one of the remaining two guards. She composes herself to stand up straight and displays the evilness in her fiery eyes and the foam coming from her mouth to her onlookers. Friedrich manages to grab her around the neck, something that resembles the stiffness and hardness of a log. Christiaan grabs the girl's arms behind her back and yells: "Doctor, injection!"

For the umpteenth time tonight, Friedrich realizes the girl is too strong for all of them.

Another security guard appears on the scene and together with the doctor, grabs

one of her legs. She kicks wildly in the air. Friedrich watches as the doctor and the security guard use all their power to twist the girl's arm. He injects her swiftly in the vein on the inside of her elbow. At the same moment Christiaan places the handcuffs around the girl's wrists and locks the device. Friedrich cannot believe his eyes at what his young colleague just achieved in a matter of seconds.

Her perpetual screams rumble through the night while Friedrich pulls a rope out of a bag with emergency equipment. The two policemen start to fasten her arms against her body with the rope. By now, Friedrich feels like a robot, operating instinctively and in a haze. The security men are in their positions once more and put the girl on the trolley. "Take her to ward 8," the doctor says.

For a moment, Friedrich covers his eyes with both hands and takes a deep breath. He takes his cell phone from the side pocket of his pants. "I will have to phone the officer on standby, even if this sounds like a joke, because there might be an issue with the injury on duty report."

Friedrich turns to the doctor, exhausted. "Doctor, is this drugs?" The doctor pauses for a second. "I really do not know what to say, sergeant. The tranquilizer we injected the first time has the ability to put a beast to sleep," the doctor answers as he rubs his eyes with his thumb and third finger. "The second injection is a very effective anesthetic. I injected 4ml, double the dose I would have administered under normal circumstances. Sergeant, she was not supposed to be awake just now. What happened is actually impossible."

Friedrich phones the standby officer as the doctor repeats his words softly: “What we have seen here tonight cannot be true.”



## CHAPTER 7

Lieutenant Ryno Bosman suddenly awakes from the jingle of his cell phone. The electronic clock next to his side of the double bed shows it is almost 3am. “Ryno here,” he answers automatically in a drowsy voice.

“Sergeant Friedrich Erwee here,” the young officer replies. Ryno immediately hears the anxiousness in Friedrich’s voice.

“Yes Sergeant, how can I help?” asks Ryno, suddenly wide-awake.

“Lieutenant, while on patrol tonight, we came across a girl, acting very weird. It was a mission to get her to the hospital, where we still are. She really busted us up. The doctor gave her two injections to calm down, but it is not even having the desired effect. I do not know if it is the result of some or the other drug, I cannot tell...”

Ryno perceived the voice of a very puzzled man.

“Sergeant, are you hurt?”

“Well, yes. She tore our uniforms and we are bruised – the constable had to receive stitches for a face wound. The vehicle is damaged but I do not want to disturb you unnecessarily.” Ryno hears the dismay in the sergeant’s voice.

“Sergeant, you are not joking, are you?”

Ryno says, already out of the bed.

Something sounds terribly wrong, but just to make sure, Ryno asks: “Are you on duty tonight?” However, Ryno is already busy getting his uniform.

“Lieutenant, ..... please, this is very serious. Can you please come to the hospital? This is a matter of urgency.” Ryno hears the drastic plea of the sergeant

repeatedly as he drives to the hospital. He sighs. This is going to be a long, long night.

As Ryno enters through the gates of the hospital, the lights of his police vehicle reflect on the red and white cross, a very striking emblem leading up to the large complex. In front of his vehicle stand two policemen with ripped uniforms, one with stitches on his eyebrow. Security guards standing in the parking area in front of the entrance have scratch marks on their faces and arms, dumbstruck about what happened.

The two policemen greet Ryno with a formal salute and he notices the pain on the sergeant's face. "Lieutenant Ryno Bosman, pleased to meet you," he introduces himself to the man in the white jacket standing next to the policemen. The doctor's stethoscope hangs unusually askew around his neck.

His pair of glasses is dented. His white jacket is full of blood and soil marks. The group just look up at the lieutenant, nobody saying a word. It is as if they expect a reasonable explanation from him.

“Lieutenant,” the sergeant says, “this girl I phoned you about, she gave us a lot of trouble. Can we show her to you? She is in ward 8.” Ryno just shakes his head as he walks away to the entrance of the hospital. “Sergeant, what you are saying to me is that one girl did this to all of you?”

“Yes,” replies the strongly-built policeman.

“Maybe you guys should spend more time in the gym, because what you are telling me is impossible,” Ryno smiles jokingly while he makes an effort to calm the mood of the troubled policeman.

As they exit the elevator, the doctor speaks for the first time. “Ward 8 is the last room in the passage.”

Ryno is greeted with the sound of terrible screams filling the corridor, absorbing any other noise in the immediate area.

Ryno enters the ward and sees a frail, pathetic figure on the ground, strapped to the railing of the hospital bed. He moves closer to the girl and goes down on his knees.

“Lieutenant, what you see here is something out of the ordinary,” the doctor says.

“I gave her two injections, one to calm her and the other one to make her sleep. These high dosages put a normal adult to sleep for 48 hours.”

Ryno moves closer to the girl and she immediately moves backwards. The sound of a dog growling fills the room.

“It’s her,” says the doctor totally unnecessarily. “This child should be asleep.”

With her face covered, Ryno puts his hand on the girl's shoulder. She reacts instantly and fiercely with the intent to hurt and slaps his hand so hard, a burning pain moves up his arm. Ryno moves even closer and the girl starts to rumble uncontrollably. She tries to move away even further with her one arm stretched in the grip of the handcuffs, attached to the bed with its steel railings. A further stretching movement and she could hurt her arm.

Ryno pulls himself up from the floor and turns to the doctor. "Doctor, can you perhaps contact a psychologist on stand-by?" He doesn't need to motivate his request to the doctor, as the man in the white jacket is fully aware of the seriousness of the situation.

While the doctor starts to make arrangements, Ryno turns away and leaves

the room to compose himself. He stops in his tracks because down the passageway, a man with a very familiar face is standing next to the counter at reception.

## CHAPTER 8

The man looks up as Ryno approaches him. “Hi Ryno, what are you doing here this time of the night?” the reverend from his church says with the same warmth in his eyes, no matter what the time of day. “Shouldn’t it be bedtime for policemen like you?”

Ryno smiles. “Reverend Piet, some of my men brought in a girl earlier tonight, and she is acting very weird. Nobody can say if it is a reaction from drugs – she was given tranquilizers, but to no effect.” Ryno pauses for a second.

“What worries me the most is that she makes growling noises, just like a dog. We are waiting for the psychiatrist on stand-by. I have no idea how long that will take.”

“Ryno, let me take a look at her. I just finished with a patient who needed me



urgently.” The reverend takes his Bible from the counter as well as a pen the sister hands him. They walk down the corridor to the girl’s room. As they enter, the growling noises turn into the deep roar of a raging animal. The girl starts to pull and tug at the handcuffs around one of her wrists. Ryno looks up to the reverend. “She is much worse now.”

The reverend’s friendly face turns grim. “Ryno, I suspect this girl does not have a psychological problem.” His face turns more serious. “I think something else is going on here.” Ryno just shakes his head.

“Something else? What do you mean?”

Ryno is a bit more clueless than earlier tonight. “Ryno, let’s pray,” says the reverend without an explanation. “You can watch her when I pray if you like,” he says, making the situation even more puzzling. He starts to pray and as he mentions the name “Jesus”,

the girl goes haywire. She pulls the iron bed around the room as if it was an ultra-light camping chair.

The reverend starts to pray even more intensely to Jesus, the Son of God. The girl pulls the bed with her and storms into the wall. She moves to the window and scratches against the glass with her nails. She then pulls the curtains from the railing.

Suddenly, the room is filled with staff members and medical personnel. Ryno is stupefied as the situation unfolds. The girl's eyes burn like fire through locks of hair hanging over her face as she begins to scream out of control. But it is not her voice coming from that frail posture; it is that of a man. The voice of the man yells: "Don't say that name!" with foam once again running from the girl's mouth.

“Stop saying that name! Stop immediately, stop the praying!” the voice screams out loud. “Or I will kill her.”

The reverend once again calls for the Father and confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Ryno feels his lips begin to move in prayer. “In the Name of Jesus Christ, I order you to leave this girl...” Ryno hears the reverend’s voice filling every corner of the room. The girl suddenly collapses to the floor and falls asleep. Ryno looks through the room – everything is quiet. First the terrible noises, and now an abrupt sense of peace.

The reverend, his face soaking wet, looks at Ryno. “There is more to life than what the eye can see.” He looks drained. “But there is only one Father, there is only one Jesus Christ and it is within Him that all our powers are nestled. Mine and yours.”

The staff come to life in the room as Friedrich and Christiaan loosen the handcuffs. A young male nurse puts the girl on the bed. The girl is in a deep sleep. The doctor opens her one eyelid to make sure she is asleep. "She sleeps," he says in disbelief. The girl's face turns peaceful. She is in a very deep sleep and her breathing is consistent.

Ryno doesn't know how to respond. What is going on? Suddenly he has been exposed to two very strange incidents in a very short time. First, there was the episode on Naval Hill, and now the girl in the hospital.

## CHAPTER 9

On the other side of Bloemfontein, approximately 7km from the hospital, a group of sinister figures - all dressed in black - gather in front of the opening of a storm water pipe. It is shortly before daybreak and the wind blows softly over the openness of the Free State plains. A church tower soars above the horizon.

The figures sneak into the open storm drainage system, linking all the residential areas with the CBD. However, at this opening, stretching for kilometres, an adult person can walk upright with ease.

It is pitch dark while the group walk into the big opening of the pipe. They make weird grumbling and groaning noises. Their voices become louder and louder as they walk deeper into the pipe.

Twenty minutes have passed when one of the figures suddenly halts. He lights a candle, placed in a sidewall of the pipe. The figure wears a mask to cover his face. The man takes out something similar to a cigar holder. It is approximately 3cm wide and 10cm in length. The black figures form a circle around the man. Another figure puts his shoulder bag on the ground, opens it and takes out pieces of silverware.

He takes out a large cloth with a pentagram on the one side and spreads it open on the ground. He puts a silver goblet on the cloth and places some more candles next to the goblet. The man who took out the cigar holder, places it inside the goblet.

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One of the figures pours a red substance into the goblet. The groaning noises get more intense as the group make swinging movements with their bodies.

The group links with a man who was already sitting on the ground when they arrived. He is dressed totally in black, wearing a face mask in the shape of a goat's head.

The atmosphere in the storm water pipe is ominous and wicked. Evil spreads over the city, waiting in anticipation for the first light of day.

## CHAPTER 10

When Ryno climbs back into bed next to his wife, a rooster in his neighbourhood announces the new day. The images in the hospital keep playing in his head. He tries to get a little bit of sleep while cold beads of perspiration form on his forehead. He realizes he will not be able to sleep, and he feels a heaviness clamping down on his heart.

The girl who managed to pull the curtains from the railing keeps playing in his mind. He decides to sit up in the bed and takes his Bible, lying on his bedside cabinet. He quietly climbs out of the bed, because his wife is still asleep, and walks down the passage to the living room. Ryno switches on the light and sinks to his knees in front of the family couch. He opens the Bible at the Book of Psalms. Psalm 23 stands out on the



page: “The Lord is my Shepherd”. Is God perhaps busy with a plan in which he has been chosen to play a small part here on earth? What is God’s plan for him? Ryno reflects on the past few weeks as he grips the Book of Life with more intent.

Ryno starts to pray. The more he prays, the more calmness beyond explanation starts to fill his being. The name of Jesus Christ represents peace no one can ever comprehend. He leans forward. He is still exhausted from the night’s events.

Ryno suddenly hears the voice of his wife, Elna, coming from the passage. “Ryno, Ryno, your alarm went off a few minutes ago!” He gets up from the couch where he fell asleep for a few minutes. “You still wearing your uniform. Did you go out during the night?”

“Let’s make coffee, and I will tell you everything.” Ryno talks calmly. He realizes he was able to sleep a little bit with the Bible in his hands following his prayers.

The smell of coffee fills the house as Ryno starts to tell his wife about the events from the previous night. He can see the disbelief in her eyes, but he also knows that she believes in him. He is not a person to spread rumours or make up stories.

“Ryno,” she interrupts him. “I can read the seriousness in your eyes. But I also see victory. My darling, no matter what lies ahead, God is our Father and Jesus is the Son of God. He will carry us and show you the way. I will pray for you.” Ryno feels a lump in his throat. His wife is a gift from the Father.

The phone rings and his secretary informs him of an urgent meeting for the officers in command and heads of units. He will have to play it safe and watch his mouth. The investigation and research he will be engaged in for the next few months, needs to be clandestine. He cannot talk to his colleagues about the recent bizarre events. He was strictly prohibited. He needs to keep up a front during the meeting because he is about start with his detective work regarding the events on Naval Hill and in the hospital.

While Ryno drives to his office, the figures dressed in black emerge from the storm water pipe. The place where they had their ritual has been cleaned up, the cloth neatly rolled up and put away in the shoulder bag. No evidence can be found about any activity

whatsoever on the spot where the group gathered.

However, black smoke with a sooty smell still hangs at the spot of the ritual, mixed with the staleness of the air in the pipes. Just a few pieces of burnt candle lie in the cracks on the ground. The pipes are dark and empty, filled with a sense of evil.

The group breaks up now, each going their own way.

The beams of sun slowly move over the veld. The city is ready to wake up as a new day breaks. For the time being, the darkness is gone.

## CHAPTER 11

Ryno's cup of coffee, just the way he likes it, awaits him in the boardroom where the meeting is about to start. He peeks at the agenda laying on the table in front of him as he makes himself comfortable in a large leather swivel chair. He takes note of number six: Firearm Repository on Naval Hill. He compiled a report on what happened that night, but he is not allowed to discuss the content here, no matter the circumstances.

"We have been experiencing a wave of criminal activities in and around Bloemfontein," says the chairperson as he reads the summary of the statistics from the Planning and Research Unit of the SAPS in the province. He lifts the report in his hand. "Take a look at the statistics regarding

murder cases and child abduction. Rape incidences are getting out of hand.”

The police officers continue to discuss point five as a matter of urgency. “We need to have a plan for the latest scourge of murder incidents in the city, as well as in Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu.” The chairperson pauses for a moment. “The bodies of the murder victims have been found in the veld, most with body parts missing.” The tone in the voice of this seasoned police officer suggests the recent heinous murders on innocent citizens cannot leave anybody cold.

The chairman moves on to the next point of discussion. “Lieutenant Ryno, you are next. Your report on Naval Hill earlier this week is of great interest to management.” Ryno stands up from his chair.

“There was some activity in the area,” Ryno says automatically.

“However, when I left the car, a group of people in the vicinity suddenly disappeared into the bushes. I cannot tell if this incident can be related to any criminal activities.” Everybody remains silent, waiting for Ryno to continue.

“Is that all, Lieutenant?” the chairperson asks. “This is all I have, Captain. We can move on to the next point.” Ryno can sense the disbelief in the room, because his colleagues are used to him explaining a matter of this magnitude to the fullest. He also reserves a joke or two during the meetings, but not today. He will have to find a balance, Ryno thinks to himself. His colleagues might suspect something is terribly wrong.

The Captain says: “Point seven...” while Ryno is drifting off to another space, recalling the inhumane speed and efficiency in which the figures dressed in black, dispersed on Naval Hill. He thinks about the anger in the girl’s eyes in the hospital room, something that will stay with him for a long time.

To keep all of this quiet and to perform two duties at the same time will not only be a mammoth task, but also exhausting on body and mind.



## CHAPTER 12

Ryno sighs with relief as he closes his office door. He begins to open his mail, heaped up in the wired compartment, marked “IN”, on his desk. He switches on the computer and types a password to get access to his report on the Naval Hill incident. He starts to type “January 12,” on the open document’s blank page when the phone rings.

“Wynand du Plessis from Ficksburg,” Ryno hears the police officer on the other side of the line. Du Plessis continues immediately with a serious tone in his voice. “There is a police officer, stationed at one of the smaller stations close to Bloemfontein, who needs assistance. His officer in command phoned me. Apparently, the policeman became a part of a grouping or a gang. These people belong to a sect, and the member now wants out, but it is not that simple. Make

yourself available to go to Reverend Piet Vermaak's house at 11am. The guy will be there – he needs counseling very urgently.”

Ryno sets the alarm on his cell phone for 10.45am as a reminder that he has to leave the office. He starts to type vehemently on what happened the previous night at the hospital, the girl's behavior and how he became involved.

As Ryno faxes the report from the computer, his alarm goes off. He quickly drinks a glass of water. Keep your mind focused on Jesus, he reminds himself continuously. “Dear Almighty Father, cleanse me from within,” Ryno prays silently in his heart while driving to the Reverend's house where Wynand and the police officer will be waiting.

As Ryno gets out of his car, a police officer in uniform stands next to a police vehicle. He slowly puts out a cigarette with his boots, twisting his right foot on the soft ground on the pavement. However, Ryno immediately recognizes the bewilderment and hopelessness in the man's eyes.

At this moment, Reverend Piet walks out of the house with Wynand appearing as if from nowhere. The four men walk into the house. "Emile, what is on your heart?" the Reverend asks as they sit down in the study. The police officer swallows hard. "I cannot believe what I let myself into," the man says with desperation in his voice. "A girlfriend invited me to a party a few years back in the town where I am stationed."

Ryno sees the Reverend slowly move his hand over the Bible he is holding. "We met

a group of people at the party, all dressed in black.” Ryno peeks at Wynand who has not moved since they started the conversation. Suddenly, the policeman begins to stutter very badly.

“I remember a girl who sat with us.” His voice breaks down.

“It is OK, carry on Emile, you are safe with us,” the Reverend says calmly.

Tears develop in the man’s eyes and start running down his cheeks.

“She was raped, repeatedly. She then started to scream like a wild creature. She roared and she slithered like a snake.” He pauses.

“Jesus Christ is here with us in the room.” Ryno hears the power in the Reverend’s voice. The man tries to cover his head with his two hands in a gesture of shame.

“I also had to rape her. I could not help myself – a strange power took control of me.” He starts to shiver.

“I do not know if I will ever be able to look up to Jesus and ask for His forgiveness.” The bright light of the midday sun suddenly breaks through the coloured windows of the room as Reverend Piet gets up and walks to the man. He puts his hand on the man’s shoulder. “Let us pray, Emile, because only the Son, Jesus Christ, can set you free.” He starts to pray.

Ryno watches as the man’s legs and arms begin to shake uncontrollably. His eyes are full of fear. “Jesus, Lord Almighty, help me!” the man shouts as his voice reverberates to every corner in the house.

“Dear Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of God, we all ask You to wash Emile in

Your blood. To cleanse his body and purify his soul with your Holy Spirit. Wash this man, crystal clear.” Ryno feels a lump in his throat.

The Reverend continues with his prayer while Ryno watches how the face of the man suddenly turns peaceful and his body relaxes. “Amen!” “Amen!” Ryno repeats the Reverend’s closing words.

“I feel as if a ton has been lifted from my shoulders!” The man shouts as the light through the coloured window falls on his face. “I feel as light as a feather!”

Ryno bends slightly forward. “Dear Father, in the Name of Jesus Christ, I praise Your Holy Name,” he softly mumbles while stripes of light colour the room. “I praise You Lord for helping this man, for taking the chains from this man and setting him free! It is only through You, Your Son Jesus Christ

that we can be cleansed. All power and  
might reigns in You!”

## CHAPTER 13

There is a buzz in the offices and halls of a big company elsewhere in the city, with staff members phoning acquaintances and talking to one another. “Our powers are getting weaker. We need to do something immediately to regain control,” a man in his fifties repeats his message to other members of the sinister grouping.

“We need to do more than just wearing the goat’s head,” the man says and for a moment exposes his identity to the other person on the line. “We have to make a plan to get ourselves in a much more controlling position – we need to increase our influence. Something is happening in the city and this has been having a detrimental effect on our powers.”



The man on the other side of the line turns furious. “We need to eradicate these barriers. We have to strengthen our powers in all the pipelines and on Naval Hill. We need to take total control!” the man says with an undertone of evil in his voice. “No matter the cost! No matter the sacrifices!”

“We need to stop those people from sticking their noses into our business. We need to prevent them from praying. This must be an integral part of our strategy,” the man in his fifties says while raising his voice. “We need to stop people from praying. We need to fight this with all our might. We need to sow darkness all over this city, even in the poorest settlements in the smallest shack.”

The man on the other side has been quiet for a few minutes. A sense of anticipation fills the darkness of their souls. There is a

tangible evilness in the man's breathing as  
he puts the receiver down frostily.

## CHAPTER 14

Ryno is pulled from a deep sleep when someone grabs his shoulder. “Ryno!” He can hear from the tone in his wife’s voice something is terribly wrong. He reaches for the switch of the bedside lamp and looks into Elna’s terrified eyes. “What is wrong?” he asks, half-asleep.

“Something is wrong. I cannot pinpoint it but I feel a sort of tightness in my chest like something is strangling me”. Elna looks up at her husband, hoping for some explanation for this sudden creepiness she feels.

“Ryno I am scared. I have sensed an evilness creeping up on us – it is circling our house.” Ryno takes a deep breath. It could be only the words of his wife, but he is also becoming aware of this “wave of evilness”

floating into and around the house. And it is getting more intense.

Ryno notices the expression of panic on Elna's face. There is some form of evil surrounding them, a feeling so powerful he cannot describe it in words. The feeling is tangible. As Ryno gets goose bumps the room is suddenly left without air. A deathliness fills the bedroom as Ryno feels the emptiness and darkness moving in onto them.

Ryno gets out of the bed. "Come, kneel beside me, Elna," he says softly but with a firm tone. He kneels and takes his wife's hand in his. They close their eyes. "Dear Almighty God, we call on you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!" he starts his prayer.

The evilness is getting fiercer, and both Ryno and Elna can feel its presence as her hand grabs his tighter. “Dear God, we pray in the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, remove this evilness from our house,” Ryno prays more intensely.

“God, our Father, we are lost without You, we lie at the mercy of Your grace. We are totally dependent on You. We beg for Your presence tonight in this house,” Ryno prays to the Living God.

“God, deliver us from evil and rescue us from the depths of hell. Only because You promised us in the Bible that You will never forsake us. You promised to be with us, always.”

Slowly but surely the haze of evil fades away with the couple still kneeling in front of the bed. Ryno feels the presence of God block out all evilness. The dark atmosphere, accompanied by total deathliness, has

disappeared. It feels as if a burden has been lifted from the house, bit by bit.

Ryno does not let go of Elna's hand. "Jesus Christ, Son of God, I thank You for Your presence. A presence we can feel here and now. We are witnesses of your power and glory. God, Your words in Psalm 23 came alive in our house tonight. You are our Lord and Shepherd."

"Let's read the Bible," Ryno says as he opens his eyes slowly. "Look for the text in the Book of Ephesians 6 from verse 10," Elna replies. Ryno picks up the Bible and starts to read several paragraphs in which the Apostle Paul urges the parish to put on the full armour of God so that His children will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For a second time tonight, Ryno takes Elna's hand and before they close their

eyes for a second time in prayer, Ryno notices the calmness in her eyes. “Dear God our Father, brace me and my family for the enormous task ahead. Protect us against all evil. We know that we are safe in Your Hands. Amen.”

Ryno opens his eyes. All traces of evil have left the house. Peace and calmness have returned to the house. “It is half past one, Elna. Let’s try and get some sleep,” Ryno says as he switches off the bedside lamp. However, both of them find it impossible to return to sleep.

“I think it is time for me to tell you what has been happening in my life the past few days,” Ryno whispers with a sigh as he turns to Elna. She snuggles up close to her husband, the man of her dreams she married eight years ago and promised in the presence of God to keep their vows intact,

no matter how severe the storms of life. Tonight was a supreme test for their unity as a family, for the two small children, a boy and a girl, in the adjacent room. Elna knows instinctively that their bond has grown even stronger; their love for Jesus, the Son of God, has deepened.

Ryno starts to tell her in detail about the incident on Naval Hill where he experienced the evilness for the first time, as well as the young girl in the hospital. He decides it would be best not to talk about the additional workload and orders he has been receiving from the General in Pretoria. He needs to keep this a secret from his wife as well.

“This is war, Elna, a spiritual war,” Ryno says as the reality of the situation sinks in for the first time. He is involved in a spiritual war. His enemy is fierce and feeds on the



lives of ignorant and naïve people. He has to prepare himself with Jesus Christ as his Commander, because all the courses and training he has completed thus far in the police force will not be able to brace him against his opponent.

Ryno switches on the bedside lamp for the umpteenth time that night. He reads aloud from Ephesians 6 verse 10 to 19 again:

“Take the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation.”

“God has set us free, he supplied us with the breastplate of righteousness,” Ryno says with a sense of victory in his eyes.

“This is our body armour, our bulletproof jacket,” Ryno says with joy in his heart.

“Our salvation is through His only Son, Jesus Christ,” Elna adds what he was about to say.

Ryno relaxes against his pillow. “His Word is my Sword and my 9mm service pistol

from this moment on for the rest of my life. Day or night.” He closes his eyes for a second. This is the turning point in his life and he can barely speak out loud enough for Elna to hear.

“Elna, I have the Bible in my hand but I do not know God. As a matter of fact, I know very little.”

He can see in his wife’s eyes she knows exactly what he is trying to say. “I am going to get to know God better. I want to know everything there is to know about the spiritual weaponry of God. I want to learn as much as humanly possible.” Ryno looks at the alarm clock displaying the time in bright red: 2.30am, and switches off the bed lamp. “I hope you will be able to sleep now,” Ryno says to Elna and turns on his side. As he drifts off to sleep his last thoughts are of them keeping themselves busy with a lot of things. How could they have possibly

anticipated the new direction their life has taken, a direction that hangs like a haze over their existence?

## CHAPTER 15

Ryno tries to ignore the alarm next to his side of the bed; it is 6am and he needs to shower and get dressed for work. He has a busy day ahead because not only does he need to concentrate on his normal policing duties, but he must send a complete report to the General in Pretoria on further developments in his investigation on satanic practices in the city.

Ryno arrives at his office shortly after 7am. The knock on his door suggests another urgent problem from a colleague, despite the fact that he will need a few extra hours today to get the job finished, he thinks to himself, slightly irritable. He looks up and when he sees the familiar face of Friedrich, he puts down the pen in his right hand instantly. He can imagine how many

questions this young police officer wants to ask.

The peace and calmness on Ryno's face is not reflected on his younger colleague. As a matter of fact, Friedrich still looks bewildered and jittery. He walks up and down in the office and comes to a halt in front of Ryno's desk.

"I cannot go on like this, Lieutenant."

Friedrich takes his head in his hands.

"I have had enough of this charade."

Something tells Ryno that this is not the same person he worked with before the incident at the hospital. "What can I do for you, Sergeant?" Ryno asks, trying not to look worried.

Friedrich moves to the desk and slams his two fists on the table while he looks up at Ryno.

"Lieutenant, for some time I have been playing the religious game. Going to church

just because I have to. Just because it was the right thing to do on a Sunday, or to skip church every now and then because of a rugby or cricket match on TV.” The tone in his voice suggests an eagerness to change his life for the good.

“After what happened at the hospital this week, I cannot be a spectator on the sideline anymore. I cannot carry on the way I have been. I want to seek God’s presence in my life. I want to live Jesus Christ every day, not only for an hour on a Sunday. I want to mend my ways.”

“I want to know where I am going the moment I take my last breath on earth.”

Friedrich pauses. He breaks down as tears well up in his eyes, running down his cheeks. Ryno is somewhat caught off guard; he did not expect to witness this revelation from the young policeman.

The man in front of his desk is here in his office so early, not because of a hasty decision. It is clear Friedrich acted deliberately, with intent.

A sense of peace and calmness settles in the office when Ryno recalls the terrible incident in his house during the early morning hours. “We won the battle after we prayed and repeated the words in Ephesians 6,” Ryno says with intent. He opens the bottom drawer of his desk and takes out his Bible. “Sergeant Friedrich, let’s walk in the footsteps of God’s promise, that He will never forsake us. He will never leave our side if we seek His presence,” Ryno says with his hands firmly on the Bible. Friedrich lightens up a little. “I am not going anywhere until I sort things out with God,” Friedrich says with eagerness in his voice.

Ryno closes his eyes. “Dear Heavenly Father, we come to You this morning as Your children. We want to give our lives to You. We are pleading with You God, in the name of Your Only Son, Jesus Christ, to take control of our lives, so that we will be able to live through your Holy Spirit. Amen!”

Ryno and Friedrich talk about the life of Jesus Christ on earth following the prayer. “He is truly the Son of God,” Friedrich says while Ryno talks about the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ.

“Jesus Christ accomplished the humanly impossible thing and has risen from death. He was received up into heaven where He sits at the right hand of His Father,” says Ryno as he feels the presence of God in the office.



“God loves us so much that He was prepared to send His only Son to set us free from our sinful life,” Ryno adds.

“Without Jesus, we are nothing, Friedrich. Nothing will make any sense in this world without His love.

“Let’s pray again, Friedrich, but this time you have to repeat the words”.

Friedrich goes down on his knees next to Ryno. He trembles slightly. “Dear Father, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ,” Ryno feels the power of God taking charge of the prayer.

“I know You are the Son of God.” Friedrich repeats the words. The strongly-built man breaks down and starts crying.

“Dear Father, You know how much I need You. I cannot live without You. I cannot take a single step in my life without Your guidance.”

Friedrich repeats the words and starts to pray on his own. “Jesus, I want to give my life to You. I want to give You everything, every part of me. Every thought that I formulate in my head, I want You to be there. Please Father, forgive me, I have sinned. I want to start anew with You in control.”

Tears are streaming down his face. “God, I beg for Your forgiveness.”

Ryno listens to the honesty and frailty in Friedrich’s voice. “I give my life to You this very moment. Amen!”

For a few seconds, it is possible to hear a pin drop. Friedrich smiles through his tears and with a sparkle in his hazel eyes.

“I have made my peace with God – everything will be all right from now on. I know I have Jesus on my side. I praise His Name, now and forever,” Friedrich says

before he shifts his beret into the right position.

“Thanks Lieutenant. I praise His wonderful Name!”

It is even quieter in Ryno’s office after the Sergeant leaves. Ryno is lost for words because the power of God is beyond description.

## CHAPTER 16

Ryno is still on his knees in the office. He barely moves as he bows his head and closes his eyes. “I praise You, Almighty Father and Son of God for being right here this moment and for what I have experienced just now. I know I am part of something so big, something humankind cannot comprehend. You are in charge of us, now and forever. Amen!”

Ryno opens his eyes, gets up from the floor and shifts into his chair behind the desk. The power of God is here, in this office, in His children’s hearts. He feels as if he can run to the streets, jump over the highest walls and praise his Saviour.

A sudden knock on the door pulls Ryno back to where he sits behind his desk. He was about to start with his special report for

the General as 12 police officers enter his office. “Lieutenant Bosman,” the policeman in front says while he performs the ceremonial salute for higher officers.

“Sergeant Erwee just left your office in tears. We have never seen him like this; he is not the emotional kind. And to top it all, he was smiling like somebody who just hit the jackpot.”

The man looks at Ryno for an answer.

“Did something happen to him last night?”

The man becomes more serious.

“What is going on, Lieutenant?” the man asks while the rest of the group find it difficult to stand still. Ryno can sense the restlessness amongst the men.

“Excuse me, Lieutenant,” says a man who suddenly enters the office and forces his

way to Ryno's desk. Captain Moolman starts to speak: "Lieutenant Strydom was supposed to open the parade this morning, but he was called out. Could you please take over his duties?"

The questions of the 12 men will remain unanswered for now while Ryno follows Captain Moolman out of the office. "We will talk later," Ryno says as he leaves the 12 men behind.

"Just know this, God is in charge. It has been written over everything that was, everything that is and everything that will be."

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Ryno breathes the early morning fresh air as he comes to a halt on the parade ground. He looks at about 80 police officers lined up in front of him, their uniforms neatly ironed

for the occasion. What message would be appropriate this morning? He opens the Bible at Ephesians 6, the same chapter he struggled with during the midnight hours. That was also the same message that gave new meaning to Friedrich less than an hour before in his office.

“We are here together and we feel strong because we are a group of trained policemen.” Ryno speaks while he looks at the parade after he finishes reading from the Scripture. He cannot express the compassion he has for all these men in blue. He has been in the police since he finished matric. This is his life, his daily bread.

“However, we actually have no power...” Ryno pauses for a second. “Each and every one of us needs to get our power through the hands of God.” Ryno’s eyes follow the expressions on every face, turned in his

direction. He notices a hunger for more in some of the members' eyes.

“Our only power is nestled in God’s might.”

Ryno also notices the expression on the faces of a few other policemen, staring in front of them with lifeless eyes. A total emptiness for the message he just conveyed.



## CHAPTER 17

Ryno walks back to his office. He can hear his phone ringing from a distance behind the closed door and stretches his legs to reach the desk. “Lieutenant, this is Mrs. Smith,” Ryno listens as the woman speaks, somewhat distressed. “The switchboard put my call through to you. I would just like to mention something to you. I am not sure if you can use this information and if it is worth the call.”

“Please continue, Mrs. Smith,” Ryno says as moves around the desk to his chair and grabs a pen and a blank piece of paper. “Lieutenant, I live on a smallholding near a small stream just outside the city.” Ryno hears the sound of a dog barking in the background.

“What worries me is that children and young people are dwelling in this area during night time. They walk up and down close to the ditch. They walk with candles in their hands very late at night. I cannot tell if it is the same people who went to fetch the candles somewhere else, or other people.” Ryno can hardly get a grip on his pen as it freezes on the blank white paper. Ryno’s mind starts to work overtime, but he already has an idea what this might lead to.

Ryno searches for Friedrich’s cell phone number while he finishes the call with the elderly woman. “Sergeant Erwee, are you busy?” Ryno asks without waiting for a reply. “I want you to go with me to a specific area outside the city. There is something I want to investigate.”

“What are we looking for, Lieutenant?”

Friedrich asks a few minutes later as he and

Ryno drives through the city. “I cannot tell, Sergeant.” Ryno wonders if he should disclose more information than necessary at this stage. However, the prayer session with Friedrich earlier this morning convinces him to continue.

“I just have a feeling you are the best person to work with me on this, no matter what we are about to uncover.”

The two men stop in silence close to the opening of the ditch. Ryno immediately notices the words carved on the inner concrete wall of the structure: “Welcome to hell.”

“That’s why I brought you with me, Sergeant Erwee. I am convinced we are going to find something that might be linked to the incident in the hospital.”

Ryno and Friedrich enter the opening of the ditch with their heavy-duty flashlights, the light bobbing against the long passage of

total darkness as they move deeper into the damp nothingness. The tunnel narrows as they walk deeper, and suddenly descends. Ryno bends forward to make space for his head. "Friedrich, let's switch off our torches for a few seconds. I would like to see if we can see anything at all."

The sudden darkness leaves Ryno without a sense of direction. He places his one hand before his eyes. This is total darkness, Ryno thinks to himself, if it is by any means possible to define pitch-black darkness. Ryno turns and looks in the direction of the entrance of the ditch. He turns ice-cold.

Ryno takes Friedrich by the arm. "Look there!" Ryno can barely breathe. They notice a dark figure, leaning against the wall of the pipeline. "Follow me," Ryno says without thinking twice. The two men turn around and sneak up to the dark figure. The figure is now motionless. "Have your pistol

ready. I am going to switch on the torch,”  
Ryno whispers.

Ryno grabs the torch in his left hand while he opens the pistol holder with his right hand. With his 9mm service pistol in his hand, Ryno switches on the torch.

The dark figure still has not moved an inch. The torch in Ryno’s hand lights up a life-sized image of a witch painted on the wall. “One can only see the image from this side of the passage,” Friedrich whispers. “Not from the side where we entered.”

“The person who painted the witch-like image knew what he was doing. He took into consideration the angle of the light coming from the entrance. By doing it this way, he made sure nobody would be able to spot the image as they enter,” Ryno adds to his colleague’s observation.

“The eyes of the figure are without any emotion,” Friedrich says as they once again turn around to walk deeper into the narrowing tunnel. They walk in silence while Ryno recalls the incidents on Naval Hill and the girl in the hospital. He will never be able to forget the wicked noises coming from that small body.

The two policemen smell dense smoke seeping through the pipeline. “Switch off the light for a second,” Ryno orders his colleague. They walk slowly, slightly bent forward, as they feel their way deeper into the tunnel. The darkness turns stuffier as the smoke in the tunnel starts to increase.

“Just smell the fumes, Friedrich. This is not your standard type of candle, available in the shops. There is something different to that smell,” Ryno whispers as he gets down on his knees. Both men notice a dimmed

yellowish light at the far end of the tunnel.  
The two men start to crawl in that direction.  
The low humming of voices mix with the  
terrible smell of the fumes.

At the same time, Ryno becomes aware of  
an unknown presence. He realizes it too  
late to avoid the oncoming threat.

## CHAPTER 18

A figure, all dressed up in black, grabs Ryno in front of his chest. Instinctively Ryno tries to throw a punch at the arm of the man that is trying to suffocate him. The man lessens his grip on Ryno's throat for a second and gives Ryno an opportunity to retaliate. Friedrich jumps to the figure and grabs him.

The man yells like a bloodthirsty monster and manages to escape the strong hands of Sergeant Erwee. The figure swears in English as he turns around and flees in the direction of the yellow light. As the figure runs to his fellow worshippers of darkness, uttering words of evil, the yellow light is extinguished. It is pitch-black in front of Ryno and Friedrich.

Ryno hears the dampened noise of fast-moving feet in the dark tunnel, trying to



escape. The two policemen give chase in the tunnel, with Ryno switching on his flashlight. The scene in front of them resembles large bats in a cave, with the black cloaks making a flapping noise down the tunnel. The figures move swiftly out of Ryno's light and he realizes they will never be able to catch up with them.

Ryno slacks down and tries to catch his breath. The flapping black cloaks disappear into the tunnels. "Friedrich, they are moving too fast," Ryno gasps slightly. The dense smoke in the ditch is getting worse than minutes before in other parts of the tunnel. Ryno comes to a halt and puts his hands on his knees. He switches off the torch. It is pitch dark once more; no one is saying a word. They listen for any possible sound. There is a deadly silence inside the ditch. The fleeing footsteps, echoing in the tunnels, have disappeared.

“Friedrich, I think we should take our time and walk to where the yellow light came from. We might just see something that can give us an indication of what happened here,” Ryno says as he switches on the torch. Within metres, they reach an area where the main pipeline diverts into tens of branch pipes.

“Friedrich, maybe we should turn back and see if we can find anything on our way back. It won’t help if we get lost here in the sub pipelines,” Ryno sighs.

“Next time, we must bring a rope,” Ryno hears Friedrich’s suggestion as they turn around to inspect the rest of the immediate area with their torches.

The beams of their flashlights have a burning effect on Ryno’s tired eyes. However, he keeps on with his

observations, not missing a centimetre of detail on the surrounding walls. The dark figures fled in a hurry and must have left something behind – anything they can use to add to the incomplete puzzle.

A wet piece of cloth on the floor of the tunnel, soaked in a red substance, catches Ryno's eyes. He picks it up. The distinctive smell of blood circulates in the immediate unventilated area. "Friedrich, this cloth is full of ....."

Ryno does not finish his sentence as they both spot something in the beam of his torch. A long silver knife is lying on the floor of the tunnel. "Lieutenant," Friedrich whispers, somewhat perplexed: "The knife is similar to a dagger and it has two goat heads on the sides."

Ryno estimates the knife is about 35cm in length.

The tip of the blade is covered with fresh blood, as Ryno picks up the knife and smells the substance. He puts the cloth and the knife in two plastic forensic bags. As their trained eyes scan the area for more evidence, both policemen simultaneously spot a large five-point star drawn on the floor.

“Take a look here, Friedrich – a candle was placed on each point of the star.

They fled the scene in a hurry and did not have the time to get rid of the candle wax,” Ryno says, a bit tired. He feels drained following all the action of the past few days and would appreciate a break from all this for a day or two. He has never been exposed to such barbarous acts.

“Look, Lieutenant,” Friedrich says as he points the torch in the direction of the tunnel walls.

“There is yellow candle wax running down all over these walls.”

Ryno comes to a halt as something against the ceiling catches his eye. He suddenly feels uneasy.

He points against the ceiling with the torch, where a piece of burnt wood is mounted. Ryno turns ice cold. It feels as if somebody stabs him with a dagger, right into his heart. The burnt piece of wood is part of a large wooden cross that was set alight.

Ryno takes his pocket knife out and scrapes some of the wax from the wall. The colour of the wax differs from candles bought in a supermarket, Ryno thinks to himself. He seals the wax in another plastic forensic bag and puts it in the side pocket of his uniform. “There is a smell of death in the air, coming from the candle wax,” Friedrich says to his troubled colleague.

“Let’s go, Sergeant,” Ryno says in a tired tone. “Let’s get out of here. I have had enough for one day.” The two men walk back to the opening of the tunnel in silence.

Suddenly, Ryno feels Friedrich’s hand on his arm. He moves closer to Ryno, who stops in his tracks. “Lieutenant,” Friedrich whispers panicky in Ryno’s ear, “something is following us.”

## CHAPTER 19

Ryno and Friedrich turn around at the same moment and shine their torches deep into the tunnel. There is nothing. “Must be my imagination,” Friedrich says matter-of-factly as they start to walk again.

“Friedrich, it is not your imagination,” Ryno says as he turns around very quickly and shines his torch into the darkness for a second time.

“Well, there is nothing here,” Friedrich says, not very sure of himself, while they stand back to back and light the tunnel from both sides.

Instinctively, Ryno starts to pray. “In the name of Jesus Christ, I call on You Father to be with us in this dark tunnel. I beg You to protect us, to be our shield of protection in this darkness.”

The particles of dust, visible in the beams of the torches, sink slowly to the ground.

Ryno lowers his voice. “Dear God, please protect us against all evil. Set us free from the sinister attacks of Satan and his forces. Amen.”

It is dead quiet in the tunnel. “We can switch off our torches, Friedrich. The evil is gone,” Ryno sighs with gratitude in his voice. He feels relieved, not only about leaving the tunnel but also about the Almighty Power of Jesus Christ.

“Yes.” Friedrich shares his colleague’s immediate thought. “We were definitely followed, but it is gone now.”

Ryno switches off his torch as they near the entrance of the tunnel, the light of day a very welcome sight.

“This something,” Ryno explains, “...is the enemy, an evil force we have to fight but we



cannot see it in the flesh. We cannot shoot it or put it behind bars.”

As they walk into the light at the entrance, the events in the tunnel seem almost surreal to Ryno.

“This is something totally different we have to deal with,” Ryno says as he steps outside.

“These people are not your common criminal. These people are busy with sinister things, occult symbols such as blood, skinned cats, five-point stars and candles. However, one of the highlights of their ceremonies is to burn the cross. They find a strange satisfaction in doing this,” Ryno says as they climb into the police vehicle.

As they drive back to the city, Ryno dwells in his own thoughts. He is aware of the fact that he found a junior partner, strong

enough in body and mind, to be at his side during the investigation. He will phone General Du Toit tonight and make a few suggestions. He needs to get approval on the highest level to approach the task at hand his way.

They drive past the suburbs that lead to the Bloemfontein CBD. "Lieutenant, can we stop to buy a cold drink, maybe somewhere in Maitland Street?" Friedrich asks, somewhat shaky.

Ryno stops in front of a café. They step out of the vehicle; their minds still fixed on the events in the tunnel, playing it over and over again. As they walk to the café, they do not notice a strange-looking young girl, dressed in a black T-shirt, slipping past them into the offices of the welfare services. The entrance that is right next to the café.

## CHAPTER 20

Bertha looks up from the heaps of paperwork on her desk when she notices the girl in front of her. “I do not have an appointment now, but I have one in two days. I do not know where to go,” the girl says desperately.

“Doesn’t matter, Meryl. Sit down. Would you like some tea?”

“Yes, but I have had enough tea and everything else,” Meryl says, suddenly aggressive.

“Everything stinks!” Meryl spits as she takes the cup from Bertha.

This girl is usually in control of herself, Bertha thinks to herself. However, today she has seen a different side of Meryl’s character that makes her feel somewhat uneasy.

Bertha lifts the receiver of her telephone. "Will it be OK with you if Karlien joins us for a cup of tea?" she asks Meryl. This child is very emotional, Bertha thinks. She might not be able to handle this situation today, although she has handled a lot of cases in her 10-year career as a social worker.

Meryl closes her eyes. "It doesn't matter. My whole life stinks, whether I'm in front of you or with two of you, I do not give a damn. The only thing I know is that I'm being eaten up from inside. Every day, piece by piece." She gets up and walks to a corner of the room where she pulls her legs up against her body and folds her arms over her knees.

"I am everybody's whore," she spits out the words in bitterness as she looks at Karlien, busy drinking her cup of tea. Bertha stares at the girl without saying a word. She waits as pain and anger builds up in the dark

brown eyes of the girl. “Everyone, from my cousin of 18 years up to my uncle. He lived just down the hallway in the same block of flats where we used to reside. He came to me every day. They took turns even in front of my dad, who was drunk most of the time.” Meryl puts her chin on her knees. Bertha notices how the tears running down the girl’s cheeks smudge the cheap make-up on her face, coloring black trails of endless misery.

The girl looks up with a strange expression in her dark eyes. “And you know, the worst thing is.... he never tried to stop them.” She says this with raw emotion in her voice. She starts to sob uncontrollably. “I do not want to live anymore. I am rotten from inside.”

Bertha sits as if paralyzed. Meryl rests her head on her knees while her shoulders still shake with sorrow.

Karlien puts her cup down, barely making a sound. “I do understand what you are trying to tell us here today; that’s why I won’t ever bother to try and mislead you with academic theories. The fact is, theories cannot erase your pain,” says Karlien as Bertha notices the girl beginning to calm down.

Karlien looks up at Bertha while she addresses the girl with compassion and absolute authority in her eyes. “Meryl, only Jesus Christ can set you free from the guilt that has been eating you up from inside.”

Suddenly, the girl pulls her head backwards and an indescribable rattling noise escapes her mouth. “It looks like an epilepsy attack,” says Bertha alarmingly.

“Should I get Linda to contact the nurse on duty?” Karlien asks.

The girl falls to the ground and starts to shake uncontrollably. As Karlien walks toward the girl, the girl puts her hand in front

of her eyes and turns her head away while froth escapes from her mouth.

“What is this?” Karlien asks quietly, while she moves a little closer to the girl. Meryl screams hysterically. Karlien turns away from the girl and picks up the Bible from Bertha’s desk.

“The Words of Jesus Christ can bring peace here in this room today,” says Karlien, unaware of what exactly has been happening in Bertha’s office.

Meryl turns violent and starts to scream wildly as she jumps up. Her eyes are vicious and terrified with streaks of hair covering her eyes as she positions herself to rush to the opposite side of the room.

## CHAPTER 21

The sound of women screaming from the top of their voices and a faint banging sound pulls Ryno back to reality as the two policemen near the entrance to the café. “Friedrich, go get yourself a coolie. I just want to go next door and see if everything is all right.”

Ryno storms inside the offices of the Department of Social Welfare. “I am a police officer. Is everything OK?” Ryno asks the young girl at the reception desk browsing frantically through the telephone directory. “You are just in time, I was busy looking for a number for the police,” says the young blonde woman, relieved. “Something very strange is going on in one of the social workers’ offices. A young girl showed up without an appointment....”



Ryno doesn't waste another second and storms into the office where the multitude of noises and screaming are coming from. A girl in a black T-shirt is leaning forward and storms with her head down low, from the one side of the room into the opposite wall.

At the same time, Ryno notices a middle-aged woman, seated behind her desk. Her hands are folded while she softly prays in a desperate voice, keeping an eye on the movements of the girl. A younger woman stands closer to the girl who is still running from one wall to the other. The woman reads out loud from the Bible.

The girl bumps into the wall with her head and falls to the floor while froth bubbles from her mouth. Ryno takes a few steps with his long legs and tries to grab the girl, who was now making roaring sounds.

“I am from the police,” Ryno explains to Karlien as the girl tries to free herself from his grip. He becomes aware of the girl’s tremendous muscle power as she tries to wiggle herself free from him.

“Let’s pray for the girl,” Ryno says as the girl starts to make weird noises in a lower tone. “Almighty God, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. I pray for Your presence here in this room, to surround us with you Holy Spirit for the sake of this girl.” The girl manages to pull one of her wrists from Ryno’s grip and at the same time, he notices the long cut marks on her arm.

As the girl slaps Ryno across the face, he manages to get a hold of her wrist and twist her around. With one movement, he puts the handcuffs on her wrists. He knows she is too strong for him and he will not be able to handle her on his own for much longer.

“Dear Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask in Your Holy Name to set this girl free,” Ryno prays more intensely. The girl’s shoulders jerk as Karlien starts to read Psalm 91 on Ryno’s instruction.

“God is our refuge and protection...” Karlien reads as the girl’s shoulders begin to relax. “He will protect you from the dangers in the night...”

Ryno helps the girl to get up from the floor as Bertha brings a glass of water and holds it against the girl’s lips. The girl’s face is pale. “I am rotten from the inside,” she says, crying. “Because I was everybody’s whore. I am still everybody’s whore. Even to those who made me feel safe in the beginning. Those who made me strong....”

She stutters while she breathes heavily. “I am a member of an occult movement, active here in the city.” She pauses and

looks up to Ryno with tears in her eyes.

“Some of the members are policemen, just like you. And do you really think they look after young girls like me?” She looks at Ryno with contempt in her eyes.

“Aikona,” she answers her own question.

Quietness surrounds the office. “It was the members who did this to me,” she says as she points at the marks on her arms. She pauses for a second.

“I had to drink a goblet with blood,” she says restlessly.

“Were you ever in a position where you had to drink blood?” Before Ryno can answer, she asks her next question with provocation in her voice.

“Did anyone ever expect from you to sacrifice your favourite pet?”

Ryno is lost for words. “My name is Ryno,” he says softly.

“Are the handcuffs hurting you?”

The girl looks at him, perplexed. He senses she was ready with a counterattack, but she did not foresee his reply. Ryno notices the uncertainty in her eyes and takes the opportunity to ask her why she kept quiet about her involvement with the movement.

“Why haven’t you spoken about this earlier?”

The girl looks away. “I was afraid. These people will not tolerate something like this. I know too much already. They will kill me,” she says.

“Well, there is a witness protection programme and the court will be able to assist you with this,” says Ryno, trying to sound convincing.

“You do not have to fear anything,” Ryno says and waits for her response.

The girl looks him straight in the eyes. She replies in a decisive voice while making an effort to smile, somewhat half-heartedly. “Ryno, you do not understand. I am not afraid of people,” She pauses a moment. “I am afraid of the evil one....”

## CHAPTER 22

“I fear the darkness of evil. That is why I cannot talk about this. But I want to be free again. I just do not know if it is still possible,” she says, while tears run down her cheeks. Ryno takes out the keys of the handcuffs from the side pocket of his pants.

“Come, let’s take off the handcuffs first. I know they are hurting you,” he says with a slight smile.

“Then you must please introduce yourself to me. I do not know your name,” Ryno adds while he takes off the handcuffs.

“And then we must all pray together, you and me with the two ladies. We need to pray and ask for Jesus to set you free with His blood.” Meryl grasps the front of her T-shirt. “It cuts through me like a knife when you mention His name.”

“Do you want me to help you?” Ryno asks softly.

“Please. My name is Meryl,” the girl answers quietly. She presses her knuckles against her upper body. “I feel as if something is suffocating me!” she groans. “I am so scared!” she says while Ryno points to the two social workers.

“Let’s form a circle around Meryl,” says Ryno as he takes their hands into his. He closes his eyes.

“Meryl, repeat the words while I am praying. The power of God is here with us,” he says without opening his eyes. “I cannot breathe,” she says anxiously.

“Come on, Meryl. Try to repeat these words after me. Slowly, one at a time.”

Ryno pauses for a moment as he tries to defeat his own human fears.

“Dear Father in heaven, I come into Your presence today, just the way I am.”



The moments of silence before Meryl starts to whisper his words, feels like forever to Ryno. “Father...” A longer silence prevails in the office. “Heavenly Father....” Ryno says louder. Meryl starts to sob softly. “Heavenly....” her body starts to tremble, “.... Father,” she stutters.

“I come to you just the way I am,” Ryno repeats his words.

Meryl repeats: “I come to You just the way I am.”

Ryno swallows as he becomes aware of his overtiredness.

“I call on You In the name of Jesus Christ.” Suddenly Meryl freezes. As her eyes avert, she makes a loud roaring noise.

Instinctively, Ryno raises his voice in a commanding tone: “In the Name of Jesus Christ, who are you?” Meryl’s body starts to quiver as she falls to the ground on her

stomach. She starts to crawl across the floor like a snake, with Karlien and Bertha moving out of her way in a state of total bewilderment.

“In the Name of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, who are you?” Ryno says strongly. “Who are you?” he repeats the question.

The voice of a male person fills the room. “hate and revenge!” the voice replies while Meryl is still crawling on the floor. Her actions become fiercer, with spasmodic movements spreading over her whole body.

Ryno grabs Meryl by her shoulder. Without watching her face, Ryno turns his face upwards. “Dear God, in the name of Jesus, please ban this evil spirit of hate and revenge from this girl’s body. Wash her with the Blood of Jesus Christ!”

The voice of the man screams: “Stop it! Stop it!” while Meryl’s body curls up in utmost pain.

“Almighty God, in the name of Jesus Christ, I ask in Your Holy Name to get rid of the evil forces which took control of this girl!” Ryno says firmly. While sweat streams down his face, Ryno tries to calm down the girl, whose body is now in a state of total convulsion. Suddenly Meryl collapses to the floor as her muscles start to relax. As she tries to come upright, she looks around her as if she has no idea what has been happening to her.

Ryno stands still for a moment. He watches as tears run down the girl’s cheeks.

“Do you know how to pray?”

“Let me try,” she says gravely. Ryno knows the evil spirit who possessed the girl is gone. He knows the Almighty God drove the

evil spirit from the girl. The battle was extremely intense. But he knows every knee will bow before the only living God Almighty.

“Jesus,” Meryl says in a crystal clear voice. “Please forgive me. Forgive me for the terrible things I have done. Please make me free from everything that pulled me into the darkness. Things that kept me from you.” She pauses for a moment.

“I want to give my life to You. Only Your grace and Your love can save me. Amen.”

Ryno looks up slowly. Bertha is behind her desk, her head bowed in prayer. Tears are running down Karlien’s face. The two women look very pale, but an indescribable peace has filled the office.

Friedrich enters the office. “Here, Lieutenant.” He hands Ryno a bottle of soft drink. He smiles as Ryno takes the bottle.

He takes out three fruit juices from a plastic bag. "I think the ladies would appreciate something like this right know," he says, trying to lift everybody's mood. This young man has grown a lot in the past few days, Ryno thinks to himself.

Well, this was also the case regarding his own life, Ryno realizes. Within a few hours, his life has changed forever.

## CHAPTER 23

“Will you talk to me about everything that happened to you, Meryl?” Ryno asks as he takes a seat.

“I will, but not now,” she answers half-heartedly.

“Well, yes...” Karlien puts the empty plastic bottle on the desk. “ .... Let me get the disinfectant from the first aid bag so that we can clean the wounds on your arms, Meryl.” She pauses and looks at Ryno.

“I am Karlien and this is Bertha.” She smiles self-consciously.

“Under normal circumstances, I usually introduce myself much earlier to strangers.” She looks at Bertha.

“Today is very different from other days,” she says dryly with a sense of irony in her voice.

“Yes. I think because of this somewhat unusual day we all need to take a break. You know by now I am Ryno, and my friendly colleague is Friedrich.” Ryno drops his empty bottle in the dustbin. “While you have a look at Meryl’s injuries, I think we should go back to the office.”

Ryno takes a clean sheet of paper from Bertha’s desk, takes a pen out of his shirt pocket and tears the paper into three pieces. He writes down his cell phone number on each of the pieces. “Phone me. Anyone of you is more than welcome to call me. I mean it, day or night.” He hands the pieces of paper to the social workers.

As Ryno walks out, he places his hand on Meryl’s shoulder. “God’s peace will be with you from now on,” he says in a powerful voice.

“I also know the road ahead will not be easy. But you will never have to walk alone. There are a lot of Christians who care about people like you.” He pauses for a second. “I will be in contact with you soon. I will get your particulars later from the social workers, but please do not hesitate to phone me if you need me sooner.” As he walks out, Ryno looks at Karlien. “I will come back later just to check if everyone is OK,” he says, exhausted.

What Ryno and Friedrich didn't see is a pentagram cut out on Meryl's stomach when Karlien, Bertha and the sister examined her. There is also dry blood on several wounds all over her genitals.



## CHAPTER 24

“General,” Ryno hesitates for a few seconds as he sits down behind his desk. “... It’s Ryno here.”

“I’m listening,” he hears the calm voice speak on the other side of the line.

The friendly voice of the General gives Ryno encouragement to discuss the latest events at the hospital, in the tunnel and with the girl in the offices of the Social Welfare.

“Send the wax and the cloth with blood to forensics to make an analysis,” is the only assignment from the General.

“And then go home and take a good rest,” he hears the veteran policeman giving some fatherly advice.

Ryno feels at peace with himself.

Somebody, despite the fact that he is far away, understands the emotional drain he

has been going through. God will never desert him and let him do this on his own, here on earth where the forces of evil have been sharpening their weapons.

As Ryno drives to his house, he rethinks the events of the past few days. More than ever before, Ryno takes comfort in knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God is everything.

“I will seek my strength in You, Father,” he hears himself spontaneously praising God as he turns into the driveway of the house. “Help me to put on the armour of God, every day, and to keep me alert against the ruthless attacks of Satan.”

“Please guide me through this, on the road ahead and with the work that still needs to be done.” Ryno switches off the engine. “Be with me and my family, please Father,

whatever comes our way. In the name of  
Jesus Christ, Amen.”

## CHAPTER 25

“What happened here is not an easy thing to explain,” Ryno says after he greets Bertha and Karlien, both still in a state of awe following the events of the day before. Karlien pulls the Bible to where she sits next to the tea table in the middle of one of the offices. Bertha brushes a page in her diary with her index finger and looks at the appointments for the day.

“I have never experienced something like this in my whole life,” Bertha is talking so softly that she is almost inaudible. Her finger is still moving anxiously over the page.

“But the power of God was present in the office yesterday. We could feel it and we could see it. It was so real, we were almost able to touch it.” She stops talking.

“Well, I will only be able to identify some strange events now that happened in the past, here in our offices. I am beginning to see a clearer picture of things.” Ryno listens as Karlien starts to recall some of the cases, also in a muted voice.

“.... The children with the five point stars and the 666 emblems around their necks, the ones who do not want to listen to anything we tell them...” Karlien stares into the distance. Ryno acknowledges that Karlien is trying to fit several pieces of a very large puzzle in her thoughts.

“And then there are the books with all the weird signs and symbols...” Karlien blinks her eyes and shakes her head.

“Yesterday, when we washed Meryl’s wounds, we also looked inside her bag to get clean clothes, but we noticed a very suspicious book.” Bertha opens a drawer of

her desk. She takes out a bulky book with a black cover.

“She asked me to keep the book for the time being.” Bertha hands the book to Ryno.

“Lieutenant, would you like to have a look?” she asks as Ryno takes the book from her hands. One side of the book has been burnt, Ryno notices. He opens the book on the first page on which three large capital letters stand out: FFF.

“F is the sixth letter of the alphabet and represents the symbol 666, the perfect number for satan believers. It is the symbol representing evil,” Ryno says, somewhat lost in his own thoughts. He pages through the book. On one of the pages, he notices a dark brown fingerprint, obviously printed with blood, and next to it several letters in an unknown language.

Ryno takes his time while paging through the book. He also notices a CD with white powder on the front and blood next to it. “In a book like this, you are likely to read the names of several heavy metal rock groups.” Ryno points out the images to Karlien and Bertha, while he drags his finger over the names of well-known rock groups.

Ryno’s index finger glides over several of the pages in the book. He shows the two woman images of an upside-down cross as well as pentagrams and hate speech.

“Hate, revenge, death.” These three words are written in prominent large black letters at the bottom of one of the pages. Ryno does not say a word when he opens page 13 and reads.

“Listen here,” he says with sadness in his voice as he reads a message in the book to Bertha and Karlien.

“I do not want to live anymore. I am so tired. I do not know how to carry on,” Ryno pauses for a moment.

“Only Meryl knows whether or not she will need this message.” The office is suddenly quiet.

“Where is she?” Ryno asks, concerned.

“Most probably with the clinic sister. We asked her to be there at 8.30 this morning,” Karlien answers vividly.

“I have to see her. I need to talk to her in private. Can you direct me to the consultation room?” The two women immediately sense the urgency in Ryno’s voice.

“You walk through that door, turn left immediately and...” Karlien says without asking any further questions. However, a signal in Ryno’s eyes prevents her from completing her sentence.



“Wait. Go with me,” Ryno says firmly. “I cannot work alone with the girl. She has been involved with a lot of false things; I cannot completely trust her yet. She might decide to open a false charge against me.” Karlien is now a little bit hesitant. Ryno looks straight at her and says in a softer voice: “You do not have to do anything. Just be there; I need a witness.”

She smiles slightly.

“Is it fine?” Ryno asks.

“Yes,” she replies, more certain of her decision.

“In my heart, I will pray for you, Lieutenant,” Ryno still hears her words echo against the wall of the passage as they walk in silence to the sister’s consultation room.

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Meryl sits in a comfortable chair. The sister placed gauze over the wounds on her arms. Ryno can smell the disinfectant as he walks towards her.

“Come,” is all Ryno says.

“Let’s go to the vacant office for a few minutes.”

Meryl stands up without saying a word and follows Ryno to the office.

“Karlien, would you please close the door?”

Ryno asks and as he looks up, he notices the hesitation in her demeanour. He smiles.

“Then the three of us can talk in private.”

Ryno looks at the petite frame of the girl in front of him. “Meryl, how are you today?”

Karlien hears the compassion in Ryno’s voice as Meryl sits down in a chair.

“I am very scared, actually afraid beyond words. I read from the Bible last night, the first time in many years. I tried to pray but let me tell you, it was difficult. However, I felt

very peaceful and it became more intense as I carried on reading.” She looks up at Ryno.

“But I am still very scared....”

“I can understand that,” Ryno says while moving slightly forward.

“Do not feel pressured to talk to me. If you want to say something, then it’s fine.

Otherwise, everything is still OK.” Ryno looks up at Karlien. She looks a little bit more relaxed. He turns his head to Meryl and she closes her eyes halfway.

“I was in the storm water pipes outside the city numerous times.” As Meryl speaks, Ryno recalls the shocking picture in his mind of the burnt cross in the pipe.

“They cut a pentagram on my stomach,” Ryno hears the girl continuing with her story. Meryl turns stoney-faced.

“I gave my soul to satan. For power and revenge.” Ryno can see the pain in Meryl’s face, but also the anger.

“Because I was everybody’s whore!” She spits the words angrily as a single tear runs down her tiny face.

“I am rotten, every day a little bit more until there will be nothing left.” Her eyes are helpless as she looks at Ryno.

“That is why I am here,” Ryno says, muted. He watches from the corner of his eye as Karlien somewhat retreats. He is fully aware of the pain in Meryl’s voice.

“They made the weirdest noises down in the pipes, low toned mumbling the whole time,” she tells as she regains her composure.

“You can feel the evilness down there. I felt something entering my body while they were busy cutting me.” Ryno sees the vulnerability in her eyes.

“I had to slaughter my favourite cat to show my commitment to the coven. There were children in the pipes, some of them as young as eleven or twelve years. They saw everything.” Ryno notices her breathing has become more rapid.

“I had to drink their mixtures with blood while taking drugs.” Her voice breaks down.

Meryl looks up at Ryno in desperation .

“You have to know, they will come for me. And they will show no mercy.”

## CHAPTER 26

“My dear child,” Ryno pauses for a second. “... That’s why we are here, Karlien and I. To assist you with your battle, in any way we can. This will be a time in your life where you will have to fight a fierce battle with the unseen forces of this world. You will have to fight the fight of faith. It is a total spiritual battle and the enemy will attack you.” Ryno

looks at Meryl as she wrings her fists in her hands. She trembles slightly.

“God gave us His weaponry to protect everyone who believes in Him, especially when satan plots against us.”

Meryl still trembles.

“God is your protector,” Ryno hears the power in his voice becoming more fierce.

“Jesus Christ hung on the cross between two murderers. He assured one of them that he will be in paradise with Jesus that same day.” Ryno pauses as he suddenly feels an unexplainable power. He believes, as a simple human being, that the power can only be from Heaven.

“Please God, forgive me, set me free. Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning and the end. The living God.”

Ryno looks up. Tears are running down

Meryl's face. Karlien stares into the distance.

“The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ healed prostitutes. He has forgiven them their sins and set them free. He can do that for anyone of us. He can set us free from anything that has a hold on us. It doesn't matter the magnitude of our sins.”

There is a tangible sense of holiness in the office and a presence of God's power, something that makes Ryno tremble slightly. “The one living God only has one word, Go! With that word, Jesus commanded several evil spirits to leave the body of a man. There are no evil spirits or powers of darkness that are able to stand against the might of the Word. Because there is only one power and that is within Jesus Christ.”

A mere trickle of sweat runs down Ryno's face.

“If God is for you, who can be against you?”

Ryno looks at Meryl as she brushes a hand over her eyes, trying to stop the tears.

“If God is for you, who can be against you?”

Ryno repeats the question as he tries to make eye contact with Meryl.

“Nobody can separate us from the love of God,” he pleads with urgency while he looks at Meryl as she starts to tremble less. She looks up to make eye contact with Ryno.

“God’s grace is enough for me and for you,”

Ryno says and closes his eyes as he becomes overpowered by the holiness of the moment.

Indeed! The Holy Spirit laid the words of God that filled all corners of the office, in his mouth. As he goes down on his knees to pray, Ryno forgets about the presence of Meryl and Karlien.”

“Dear God,” Ryno mumbles, “. . .Please equip us with your whole amour so that we



can protect ourselves from the forces of evil.  
I know it is in Your Will and I also know that  
if You are with us, nothing can be against  
us. I praise Your holy Name. Amen.”

## CHAPTER 27

It is late afternoon as the leaves of an old willow tree next to the windows of Ryno's office scrape the glass surface in monotonic rhythm. The sound of the telephone disturbs the quietness, something Ryno would wholeheartedly prefer compared to the rush of the preceding four days. He sighs at the sound of the telephone, wishing he could have more time for administrative tasks in the privacy of his office.

"Lieutenant..." The tone of the man's voice on the other side of the line sounds like that of another policeman.

"The results of the forensic tests regarding the candle wax are available."

"Can I get it over the phone?" Ryno asks instantaneously. The results are so important in the investigation; he suddenly feels hurried.

The voice of the man on the other side of the line breaks for a second.

“It is primate tissue... human tissue,” the man says in a hushed whisper.

“I will send you the results through special mail, marked confidential,” he says more audibly. Ryno wants to put down the phone, as he is lost for words.

“Wait please, my officer in command, Colonel Reynecke, wants to have a quick word with you.”

Ryno can hardly breathe as drops of cold sweat form on his forehead. The heat of the basking sun in his office pales in comparison to the blood in his veins.

“Where did you find the burnt candles?” a man on the other side of the line asks without introducing himself to Ryno.

“I have done many cases during my career in the police service, and I have never come

across this.... A result like this, human tissue in candle wax. And I did not join the force yesterday.”

Ryno is shivering from the immediate shock.

“Colonel, couldn’t someone have made a mistake, maybe a typing mistake?”

The Colonel suddenly sounds agitated.

“Please don’t be ridiculous, Lieutenant.”

“Is it possible that the sweat of the forensic staff who handled the sample might have influenced the results, Colonel?” Ryno says to make absolutely sure.

“It cannot be true that the candles are made from human tissue,” he hears himself whisper, still stunned.

The sudden silence vibrates a sense of agitation over the line.

“Listen, Lieutenant, the candles were made with human tissue. The main ingredient of

the candles is human tissue. That's just what it is."

The Colonel's voice is less harsh.

"I would like to see your reports on this.

Believe me, this is a first for me. And firsts for my age are not likely."

The atmosphere over the telephone line turns cold and reserved.

"Now you listen to me, Lieutenant. Make sure I get the report and stop playing around with me!"

The Colonel slams down his receiver, before Ryno can think of something to say to the furious elderly man.

The sound of another call coming through creates a resounding noise in his ears.

Ryno lowers his head into his hands. What now? He thinks to himself, ready to throw his hands in the air, but he is too tired.

All he can think of is candles dripping with human tissue in the storm water pipes. He closes his eyes to take a deep breath.

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Ryno is still struggling with the thought of human tissue, used in candles, while he dials the number of General du Toit in Pretoria. He sounds slightly annoyed, as he hears himself talking to the General about Meryl. Also the shocking results of the candle wax, something he repeats several times.

“I will go and see Colonel Reynecke. Forget about the report he asked for.” Ryno listens attentively.

The calmness of the General in a situation like this, spurs Ryno on to work off steam, loads of raw emotion, he had to keep to himself for days.

“These people are busy with inhumane practices,” he says hoarsely.

“They torture animals. They kill people as if it is nothing, they look on while innocent people die and get kicks out of it.” Ryno pauses. The General has been listening without interrupting.

“They are a grouping, a cult movement, a sick religion that devote themselves to the lie,” Ryno utters in frustration to the elderly man.

“Young man, the only thing we can do at this stage, is to pray. We have to pray for the protection of God,” the General says calmly. Ryno can feel a sense of tranquility coming over him as the General mentions the name of God.

“We have to pray for the police members dealing with acts of crime as a result of occultism. We must ask God to lead the way, so that the police can continue with the

task at hand. We also have to pray for those working directly with these cases, trying to prevent these members spreading out.”

General Du Toit pauses for a moment.

“The investigation you are busy with at this stage, has already escalated into something very big. We didn’t expect this, but you have to keep going. Do not feel dejected – just carry on with the work. God will be with you, all the way.”



## CHAPTER 28

“God will be with you,” Ryno repeats softly to himself while driving home. The house is quiet. Elna, a teacher, has taken the children to athletic practice at the school. He takes his leather jacket from the closet and his helmet from the hat peg behind the door. He needs to get out, to breathe the fresh air and to feel the open road.

With one movement, Ryno swings his right leg over the speed bike and presses the helmet visor down with his thumb and index finger. Ryno decides to block out everything that happened the past week. The thundering roar of the 1000cc engine flows through his veins. Ryno rides to the nearest track in the city, a few kilometres from the N1 highway. He stops in a cloud of dust and enters the track.

Ryno can sense the adrenalin pumping with a feeling of satisfaction bubbling through his slender frame as he opens the throttle with his right hand. He leans forward and pulls his shoulders together in pure anticipation of the straights and turns of the five-kilometre raceway. The peacefulness inside him but also the excitement of speed and the accompanying levels of concentration clear Ryno's mind from the ugliness he experienced the past few days. Lap after lap on the dusted tack.

“What a privilege to drive a motorcycle like this. However, it is a privilege just to be able to use one's legs. It is a privilege to be on earth, to be able to talk,” Ryno shouts into his helmet.

To live is a privilege, Ryno says to himself. It is a gift from the hands of God. Ryno speeds towards a slight rise on the track while the rays of the sun enter the visor of

his helmet at a low angle. He suddenly reaches the top of the rise as the front wheel of the bike lifts off the ground. He cannot describe the feeling of freedom and the sense of being alive.

Within split seconds, he jumps and at the same time stands on the seat of the bike while he flies through the air. As the rear wheel of the bike touches the ground, Ryno begins to praise God spontaneously. “How great Thou art. How great Thou art. Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder....” The dust rises from the wheels of the bike.

“Dear Father,” Ryno starts to pray while racing. “If You are for me, who can be against me?” Ryno leans into the steep turns of the track with his right knee, trying to take it lower and lower.

“God, in the name of Jesus, I need You,” he shouts into his helmet. He hears an echo in his helmet. “Dear God, I need You so much.” Vapour forms on the inside of the visor. “Jesus, Son of the Holy Father, You know about the darkness moving over our city, but You are the light. Your light can shut out the darkness. You can eradicate the darkness.”

Ryno leaves the track as nightfall sets over the city. The city lights twinkle as everything starts to move at a much slower pace. Ryno feels relaxed. “Dear God, I know You are with me, right here at this moment. I know I can ask for Your help, anytime of the day or night. And I also know You will keep me safe. I know You will always keep Your Hand over my head. You are my Protector,” Ryno whispers as he enters the driveway of his house.

## CHAPTER 29

Elna waits for her husband behind the security gate of the front door. As Ryno enters, he kisses her on the cheek.

“Bainsvlei police station phoned. They want to speak to you very urgently,” she says hurriedly, without greeting her husband. Her eyes look concerned.

“You must be hungry?” Elna asks. “And yes, I am looking forward to spending some time with you. Everything is so rushed,” she says with affection in her eyes.

“Give the children a hug from me. I will see you a little later,” Ryno says as he turns around and walks to his motorcycle.

“I’ll quickly go with the bike.”

Ryno drives away. It is nighttime already, with dots of light peeking through the closed windows of the houses in the

neighbourhood. Steam raises from certain sections of the road, leading to Bainsvlei, an area with smallholdings on the outskirts of Bloemfontein.

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The Bainsvlei Police Station complex rises in front of Ryno, a large building with an electrified fence with two high mass lights to light up the premises. The station also has a newly-built jail where prisoners awaiting trial are incarcerated. Ryno rides into the secured area, allocated for police vehicles and members.

“Lieutenant,” the constable behind the desk greets Ryno with the required formality and salute.

“We have a suspect in cell bravo eight and we would like you to have a look – something is not right. I’ll walk with.

Opperman, will you please keep an eye on things here?” the constable says as he walks around the main counter of the charge office. The smell of wet cement is overwhelming as the two men walk to the cells.

“His name is Willem. We caught him shoplifting. He wanted to steal pills in a pharmacy,” the constable says as they walk down a narrow passage leading to the six large cells.

Ryno notices a well-built young man behind the steel bars of his cell. The gate swings open as the constable opens the heavy lock. A dim light bulb swings from the ceiling. Ryno immediately spots a pentagram, tattooed on the man’s forearm. His wrists have several slit marks and his hands are full of lacerations and bruises. He has a fresh scar over his left eyebrow.

“Willem...” Ryno address him unceremoniously.

“They told me you tried to steal pills at a pharmacy.” Ryno pauses.

“Why pills? Are you sick or is there another problem?”

“No,” the man answers bluntly, without making eye contact.

“It is my problem. It’s got nothing to do with you,” he says aggressively.

Ryno keeps quiet.

“And the pentagram on your arm?” Ryno asks him straightforward.

For a second, Willem looks in Ryno’s direction. His eyes turn vicious. He pulls at his shirt with his left hand to try and cover the tattoo.

“Do you believe in satan?” Ryno hears himself asking the inevitable question.



For a moment, Ryno can see he stunned the man.

Ryno is also surprised by his own conduct, for asking the question so soon and so directly.

“What do you mean?” Willem asks, perplexed.

“The pentagram on your forearm is a satanic symbol. Are you a satanist?” Ryno asks in a commanding tone. He tries to remain calm.

A gaze of hatred suddenly replaces the vagueness in Willem’s eyes. He shuts like a clam.

“Let me tell you, there is a way out. Jesus is right there,” Ryno continues without waiting for confirmation from Willem. However, Ryno feels an urgency to tell the man about Jesus without wasting any time.

Willem twists and turns in his chair. His jaw stiffens.

“Don’t come to me with your Christian religion. I stole something but I will pay the price...” Willem tries to escape the real issue, but to no avail.

Ryno feels renewed vigor as he speaks to the policeman next to him.

“Constable, get two more men. We need to take off the man’s shirt,” Ryno commands.

“No,” Willem says hoarsely as two policemen enter the cell. One of the officers puts handcuffs around his wrists while the other one starts to pull down his shirt.

Willem’s upper body, in front and on his back, is full of tattoos. He wears a black upside-down cross around his neck.

“Who are you? What movement or organization do you belong to, Willem?”

Ryno asks without hesitation. Ryno notices

how the two policemen tighten the handcuffs.

“What group do you belong to?” Ryno repeats his question as the two policemen slide the handcuffs one cog tighter.

“It hurts, let go of me,” the man says with pain written all over his face. Ryno realizes he will have to stop the two policemen; they can get unnecessary problems with their method of interrogation.

Ryno takes a step towards one of the policemen, ready to block his hand, but also to place himself strategically in a circle with the other officers to intimidate Willem.

“Ok, I will talk,” Willem says anxiously.

Ryno is actually relieved when Willem speaks seconds before he was about to stop their tactics.

“Constable, stop. Let’s hear what he has to say,” Ryno commands, but the constable had already taken one step backwards.

“I am part of the brotherhood,” Willem says, looking down. He suddenly lifts his head with a hostile gaze in his eyes.

“They will get you. They will definitely come for you.”

Ryno is stunned at the man’s threat. Willem doesn’t even know him.

“Your type, we will kill you. We will destroy you.”

Ryno ignores the man and acts as if he didn’t hear the threat. He takes another step closer to Willem who keeps on retaliating until he is pinned in a corner of the cell.

Ryno moves closer and holds out his hand to Willem’s shoulder, full of tattoos. Willem pulls away angrily, his eyes burning with anger.

“If I could, I would have killed you right here and now.” He pauses.

“But you have something that I do not have. I do not know exactly what it is. It’s some sort of a power.” His voice breaks.

It feels as if a bright light suddenly breaks through the thick walls of the cell.

The power that you feel, is not mine,” Ryno says with conviction.

“You feel the power of Jesus. Jesus is right here, at this very moment. And His power is so great that the darkness cannot deny its presence.”

Willem looks at Ryno in a provocative manner.

“I have Jesus,” Ryno continues while ignoring the look in Willem’s eyes.

“I have life. What do you have?” Ryno lifts his one hand and points at the pentagram on Willem’s forearm.

“That pentagram means death. It is a symbol without hope. You are hopelessly lost without Jesus.”

“Leave me alone! I do not want to listen to anything you say,” Willem shouts. Ryno doesn’t say a word and takes one step backwards.

“Willem, the constable knows my number. Tell him to phone me if you need me. I do not mind coming back to you.” Ryno turns around.

“Take the handcuffs off so that the man can put on his shirt,” he reminds the two policemen who have been watching everything without moving or making a sound.

Ryno again turns to Willem. “I will ask the members of my cell group to pray for you. Not for the way you are right now, but that you will mend your ways and turn to Jesus.

And remember, if you need me, ask the constable to give me a call.” Ryno does not wait to see Willem’s reaction and immediately walks out of the cell. The heavy steel door slams behind his back.

## CHAPTER 30

Ryno cannot believe how time flies when he spends time with his family. It is already the next morning and as the day breaks, Ryno knows he will have to hurry to be in time for work. He leaves the house, thinking about his wonderful wife and children and the special moments they shared the previous night, just being together as a happy family unit.

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Ryno hears a knock on his office door and looks up. Riette, a staff member who types his reports, stands in the doorway with two other women from the administrative section. Behind them are two policemen in uniform.

“Please come in. Have a seat.”



Ryno gets up to get a folding chair. When everyone is seated, Riette looks up at Ryno. “Lieutenant, this is in connection with what you said a few days ago on the parade ground. You read something from the Bible about the spiritual warfare and that we must guard ourselves from falling prey to the tactics of the enemy. We would like to hear from you if it is possible for the Christians in the unit to have a weekly prayer meeting. Maybe during lunchtime?” Ryno notices the thirst and expectation to praise God in Riette’s eyes.

“We can perhaps read from the Bible and then pray...” Riette says a bit hesitantly.

“I think it is a wonderful idea,” says Ryno. He turns to the two men.

“You don’t think the other male members will make fun of you two if you join a prayer meeting with women?” Ryno asks frankly.

“We do not care,” one of the young officers answers.

“We heard about the incident with the girl at Hoffman Square. We were not there in person, but Abel and I are aware that the incident had an immense impact spiritually on the lives of the two men who handled the case. Friedrich told us about the power of Jesus and the victory against evil,” the young officer says boldly.

“We have an urgent need to pray for the members of our unit. We are also concerned with what has been going on in our city,” Abel adds, as the power of God’s presence fills the office.

“Close the door, Abel. Let’s pray and ask for God’s protection in our lives,” Ryno says softly. He is overwhelmed that God sent these men in uniform and the woman so unexpectedly on his path. He looks at Riette.

“Let’s pray,” she says eagerly.

“Heavenly Father, we pray for Your wisdom and guidance at this unit. We ask for your presence every day while we are busy with dangerous and challenging situations; also when we work with criminals. We are sometimes busy with things not known to the public, and we ask for guidance to do our work to the best of our abilities,” Riette prays through the Holy Spirit.

“God, help me to seek Your presence in my life, every second and forevermore. Please guide me in my daily tasks. And Father, shelter us in Your greatness and love here in our workplace,” Abel adds. Everybody remains silent for a few seconds after Ryno ends the prayer with “Amen”.

The power of God is tangible as the group leaves the office one by one, each on their way to their working stations. Riette is the last one to walk out the door, but she suddenly turns around and faces Ryno. “Lieutenant, God has urged me to pray for you. I do not know why or for what reason. I just know one thing for certain; there are a lot of Christians praying for you at present.”

The woman smiles at Ryno. “We all pray that God may protect you, whatever you are busy with at this stage, Lieutenant.” She turns around and walks out of the office. Ryno is stunned. The way the Holy Spirit works is beyond words, unexplainable, it surpasses all human wisdom.

“God Almighty, I praise and thank You that in times like these, where I have been under the impression I am all alone in this, without the support of the other members in the

unit, You are still in charge. You will provide,” Ryno prays once more.

“Thank You for making these people available, people prepared to fight the spiritual battle with me. People who pray for exactly the things I need so desperately right now, without even knowing about the magnitude of the investigation,” Ryno prays as his right hand slowly touches the Bible.

“God, in the name of Jesus Christ, Your only Son, I thank You for providing us with the things we need. Thank You for paving the road ahead, and that You will always carry us,” Ryno prays in deep reliance upon and appreciation for the Greatness of God.

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Some time after the group left the office, Ryno still thinks about the event in silent admiration. He pulls his diary closer and

notices he has an appointment with Meryl in a little while. The morning went by so quickly; he will have to drive to the CBD almost immediately to be in time to see Karlien and Meryl.

## CHAPTER 31

“I was a member of a covenant of a larger cell, with about 20 to 25 people actively involved.” Meryl talks more openly than during the previous meeting. After they finish having tea, Meryl continues. Ryno writes down all the names, telephone numbers, addresses and the types of vehicles of the members of the coven while Meryl speaks.

“I will tell you about the man who cut the pentagram on my stomach,” Meryl sighs, somewhat tired after she had already spoken to Ryno and Karlien for more than an hour.

“But you must promise not to disclose the name or use the information to open a case,” Meryl says warningly.

“If something happens to me, if I am killed, only then can you use the information in a police statement. Will you keep your promise?” she asks with hesitation in her eyes.

“Yes, I will,” says Ryno and tries to swallow the lump in his throat. He is fully aware of the fact that this is very sensitive information.

“He is big and strongly built. He has a clear tattoo of a pentagram on his right forearm,” Meryl says. By now Ryno has a vague idea in his mind while his brain makes some calculations.

“What stands out if this man is amongst a group of men with tattoos on their arms?” Ryno asks intently.

“The scar on his left eyebrow,” Meryl says after a few seconds. Ryno turns cold. Chances are increasing that the man who



did this to Meryl is the same man in the Bainsvlei police cells. The man apprehended for stealing pills in a pharmacy.

“And the upside down cross he wears around his neck permanently,” Meryl adds. Ryno closes his eyes to try and fit some of the pieces in this big puzzle.

“You can open a case against this man at any time, you know that?” Ryno tries again to convince the girl.

“We can then arrest this man for what he did to you.” Ryno’s eyes are still slightly closed.

“No!” Meryl says firmly.

“Ryno, you must keep in mind that I learnt only recently that Jesus and life are one and the same. I only learnt now that to live is Jesus. I am also praying for that man now. I pray for him to get to know Jesus before it is too late.”

Meryl is silent for a moment. “I keep struggling with the thoughts of hate I have for this man. Also feelings of bitterness and resentment for the things he did to me.”

Her eyes are filled with tears. Ryno cannot help but to feel touched by her honesty and pain.

“But Ryno, I read the Lord’s Prayer in the Bible. God tells us to forgive those who have sinned against us. God says He can only forgive us if we have forgiven those who sinned against us. And I keep praying for the man who has been leading so many people into evil and cruelty, so that he too might get to know Jesus.”

“I pray for his soul and that he will be saved,” Meryl repeats her words before the three of them end their session in prayer.

## CHAPTER 32

Before Ryno drives back to the office, he quickly buys himself a chocolate ice-lolly in the café. Actually, two. The bony police officer has one weakness: chocolate. Somehow, it also lowers stress levels, researchers claim. Good enough excuse for me, Ryno thinks to himself as he climbs into the police vehicle. He turns the vehicle to drive back to the office with the afternoon sun basking through the windows. Ryno stops at the robot and looks up at the skies. A few clouds move slowly over the city.

“Alpha, Bravo 124 to Alpha Delta 324, over,” the radio buzzes loudly in the vehicle.

“Come in Alpha, Bravo 124. This is Alpha Delta 324,” Ryno answers automatically.

“Lieutenant, there was a serious motor vehicle accident on the N1 in the direction of Winburg. It is about 50 kilometers south of

Winburg. The only vehicle on the scene as far as we know is a bakkie. The driver apparently lost control. They need medical assistance; that is all we know.”

Ryno switches off his right indicator which indicated his intention to turn in the direction of the office. He activates the vehicle’s siren and changes lanes to get to the N1 as quickly as possible. His medical emergency bag is in the back of the car; he will get to the scene in less than 20 minutes to give assistance to the injured. Ryno passes several green lights on his way and smiles to himself about the incident-free day he has had so far.

Ryno feels the power of the vehicle as he accelerates. “Get an ambulance; I will see what I can do in the meantime,” Ryno reports as he takes charge of the situation. Something similar to the adrenaline on the

speed bike has taken over. He turns from the Nelson Mandela Drive off-ramp to the N1 North. The rows of thorn trees on the highway divider have grown taller, he thinks to himself.

The grassy plains of the Free State province colour the veld in shades of copper and gold this time of the day. The rich colours of the veld blend in with the monotonous rhythm of the wind through the veld, flattening the grasses into an animated carpet. Ryno nears the scene of the accident and notices a bakkie in a ditch next to the road. He switches off the siren and stops next to the road. The blue lights are flashing on top of the car. Ryno takes long strides to reach the bakkie, while the reedy sounds of the cicadas interrupt the stillness of death.

Ryno comes to a halt as he sees the two lifeless bodies, a dark-haired young male

and a young woman with light brown hair, lying on the engine bonnet. The two people crashed through the windscreen, their bodies now severely disfigured. Ryno walks closer.

Ryno immediately knows he is too late. He can see it by the way the blood has coagulated on and around the bodies. It is also obvious from the absolute stillness and the manner in which the bodies are lying on the bonnet, broken and tattered. The scene could have easily resembled a display of human dummies for a road accident.

Ryno walks closer to the young man. The sounds of the insects in the veld are getting louder as the day comes to an end. Ryno tries to find a heartbeat and presses his middle finger on the man's neck, but there is nothing. He observes the man has broken his neck. He feels total sadness for

humankind. The man probably died as a result of the impact of the crash, when the bakkie came to a standstill in the ditch.

The wind plays an accord of dejection through the veld as he walks over to the girl. He turns her body carefully. Her blouse is full of blood. A blunt object must have speared through her chest. They probably died on impact.

Ryno feels the goose bumps on his arms. He peeks at her eyes. They are wide open with the pupils fixed and dilated. She is dead. A shivering goes through Ryno's body. The two people were very young, approximately 20 years old. He tries to swallow the lump in his throat. Somewhere, a mother and a father are waiting in vain for their son to return home.

Somewhere parents are waiting for their young daughter who will never again return home. Never ever. He decides to get something to cover the bodies from the police vehicle. He walks around the bakkie to his car.

A dark coloured book with a short rope tied to the back of the book, catches Ryno's vigilant eyes. The book lies under a cover in the canopy. Ryno opens the window of the canopy carefully and reaches out with one arm to take the book. He carefully unties the rope and opens the book.

"The Book of Darkness", is written on the title page. A five-point star in blood, a pentagram and an inverted cross, are drawn on the first few pages of the book. Ryno cannot believe his eyes, and pages through the rest of the book. The wind is howling



over the grassland, with a hadida  
somewhere calling for his mate.

There is a long list of names, mostly code names, written on several pages of the book. “The person who tampers with this book, will cast an evil spell over himself. Anybody who is not authorized to open this book will be cursed,” is written all over the middle pages of the book in oversized black letters.

Ryno closes the book. He hears sirens from afar and places the book on the front seat of his car. He closes his eyes and prays to show his dependence on his living Creator: “God, our Father, please protect everybody who will be working on this scene. Expel the evil cast under these circumstances. Rise above us all on Your throne of grace. Amen!”

An ambulance with a high-pitched siren stops next to Ryno's car. Ryno decides to say the minimum. "It looks like they are dead already," he whispers as dust whirls against his boots. The bent grass resembles a sea of gold, caressed by the wind. Ryno rubs his eyes. The scene is without a doubt one of the most gruesome he has ever attended, with the severely mutilated bodies of the deceased.

A white police van without windows stops behind his car and the ambulance. The police undertaker gets out of his vehicle. "I have to remove the bodies," the man says reluctantly with his face turned to Ryno. His assistant only mumbles a few vague words.

Ryno feels somewhat nauseous. Deep inside, he knows the two young people are lost forever. He has picked up a lot of evil – everything regarding their lives points to

satan and his followers. This is not a dream, he thinks to himself. The black book he removed from the bakkie, is concrete evidence of what these people kept themselves busy with.

Ryno walks over to the undertaker who is busy lifting the man's body onto a trolley. "I just want to look at something," Ryno says while the man is busy opening the silver body bag. Ryno looks at the man's neck. There is a chain around his neck with a small crystal on it. Below the crystal is a shining five-point star.

"You can cover him now," Ryno sighs. The clouds are gathering on the horizon as he walks over to the girl one more time. He sweeps locks of blood-matted hair from her face and sees a tattoo with the 666-symbol on her hairline. Shivers move down Ryno's spine at the sight of the mark. He wants to

get away from this; he does not want to be here any longer.

“Send me the pictures of the scene,” Ryno says, businesslike, to the two other policemen who arrived at the scene.

“Search the bakkie, see if you can find anything suspicious or something of importance. Let me know if you found something,” he adds, exhausted.

Ryno turns around and walks to his car. A bank of clouds forms in the dimly-lit sky; the sun has set and the plains have turned into deep shades of grey. The dry twigs make crunching sounds under his boots.

“Lieutenant, wait,” calls one of the officers as Ryno hears the sound of police boots

coming from behind. Ryno turns around as the policeman hands him a wallet.

“Lieutenant, what is this inside?” Ryno takes the wallet and opens the zip. He sees a small rolled-up plastic bag, used by the banks for coins. The bag contains a white powder. Ryno opens the bag and looks at the contents that resemble castor sugar.

Ryno puts his finger in the bag and puts the white granules on his tongue. The taste of the powder is unmistakable.

“This is cocaine, Sergeant. Where did you find this?” Ryno says without showing any emotion. This is the only way most of the men in blue can survive this stressful job.

“Underneath the driver’s seat,” the sergeant replies.

“This is about 20 grams,” Ryno estimates the weight of the cocaine with his trained eyes.

“It must have a street value of about R8000 to R12 000,” Ryno says systematically. “Send me the forensic results of this as well,” Ryno says as he climbs into his police car.

The black book on the front seat slides and falls to the floor as Ryno gets in. He wants to close the book, but his eyes fall on a note in black letters on the open page.

“Willem alias murder.” Only those three words without any more detail. Ryno closes the book. He turns the key to start the vehicle. The powerful engine of the car roars over the Free State grassland.

Is this the same Willem, the one in the Bainsvlei police cells? Ryno makes a U-turn and drives back to Bloemfontein. Banks of thundering clouds form in the night sky and will soon deflate in heavenly rains. Could

this be the same Willem, the one who  
crossed paths with Meryl? Or not?

## CHAPTER 33

It is the following week and surprisingly Ryno can take time off to focus on his research into the history of the occult movements in the world as well as the origin of satanism and how it spread to all corners of the earth. An important aspect of his research is how the occults won ground in South Africa, the neighbouring countries and in Africa.

He finds to his surprise that satanism is not a “white thing”, but affects all race groups in Africa and South Africa. In South Africa, the works of evil are increasingly manifesting in criminal activities, especially gang-related crime in townships and rural areas. The leaders of this occult movement have already started to target school learners in provinces such as the Western Cape, Free



State, North West and Gauteng. This is frightening, Ryno thinks to himself.

The quiet of his office is solitude for body and soul. Ryno feels drained from all the wickedness and evil he has experienced since he started with the special investigation into satanism. However, he is fully aware of the fact that somehow this is a special task; he is a warrior for Jesus Christ.

Ryno studies the pentagrams and satanist symbols as well as the rituals performed during occult meetings. The rituals are performed in the same manner in places such as Amsterdam, England and the United States of America. Everything is exactly the same.

What happens here in Central South Africa is exactly the same as in the rest of the world.

As Ryno leaves the office at around 5pm, he decides to drive to the SAPS recreational club to do networking with officers from other units for an hour or so. Ryno, however, does not notice the dark blue car with Gauteng number plates following him to the club. As he turns into the premises, the car stops on the opposite side of the road. At the club, Ryno orders his favourite drink, a large Coca Cola “on the rocks”, and engages in a conversation with a group of about seven fellow police officers.

Suddenly, a woman appears at the entrance. Her shaggy clothes are torn and full of blood. She has cuts all over her face and body. She resembles somebody who has just escaped a terrible ordeal, or rather torture in a civil war. The woman, in her late twenties, starts to run towards the counter while she screams hysterically.

“Ryno! Ryno!” the woman screams at the top of her lungs.

For a few seconds the policemen in the bar are stunned, as their faces turn pale from shock. It looks like their immediate reaction is to flee, but in their mellow state of mind, it is obviously a bit difficult to decide which is the way out. The barman behind the counter is busy polishing beer glasses, but lets the glass in his hands drop to the floor as he turns to stone.

Ryno is the first to react.

“Help me!” the woman shouts.

Ryno decides not to draw any conclusions about the woman; this could even be somebody who wants to infiltrate his investigation. Or worse, somebody sent by the leaders of the occult movement to harm him. Members of the movement in

Bloemfontein must have identified him by now.

“Sergeant, help me to calm her down,” he commands the closest officer.

The sergeant instinctively grabs the woman’s wrist and turns her around, facing Ryno.

“Help me, Ryno, I want to get away from all the pain and anger,” she says with fear in her eyes.

“Where are you from? What is the problem?” Ryno tries to calm the woman down.

“I am from Gauteng – I have lost everything,” she says, trying to sidestep Ryno’s direct questioning.

Ryno asks two of the officers to help him carry the woman to an office adjacent to the reception area of the club. As the woman starts to mumble in a low voice, Ryno

phones the Social Welfare offices . Karlien is on stand-by.

“Karlien,” says Ryno, “can you please help? We had an unpleasant incident here at the police club just now. The woman claims to be in trouble – it might be another occult-related episode. Can you organize for her to be picked up by an ambulance and taken to a place of safety?”

“Yes, right away,” Karlien replies immediately.

Ryno starts to pray.

“In the Name of Jesus Christ, please deliver us from evil, Holy Father. Carry this woman in Your safe Hands. Free her from all the wrongs in her life. Save her soul so that she too, can experience Your eternal love and salvation. Amen.”

The woman stares at Ryno with bitterness and hatred in her eyes. It is obvious she is under the influence of drugs.

As the ambulance arrives, it is clear the government hospital has improved their safety measures to handle extreme cases. Two strongly-built security guards accompany the ambulance man, especially since they were informed it might be a similar incident to the one on Hoffman Square.

Ryno drives home. The sun has just set on the western horizon and has coloured the sky dark orange, pink and purple. He plans to spend time with his wife and children tonight. His little girl is turning more beautiful every day; she definitely resembles her mother, Ryno thinks with a smile on his face as he turns into the driveway.

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It is one of those nights, Ryno thinks, as he tries to sleep. He tosses and turns, while the peaceful expression on Elna's face clearly indicates she is in dreamland. His mind wanders to the investigation and how much he loves his wife and children. During this difficult stage of his career, their marriage has grown stronger. Somehow, they have learnt to understand each other better. Elna has shown immense understanding and support towards him, and this has made him love her even more.

The cell phone next to his bed starts to ring. He will never get used to this, he thinks to himself. The red digits on his electronic alarm show it is 0.39am. Ryno answers and tries to make sense of the stuttering voice on the other side of the line. The man talks confusedly but somehow, the voice sounds vaguely familiar.

Ryno tries to figure out where he has heard the voice before, but to no avail.

“To whom am I talking?” Ryno asks eventually.

“Murder,” Ryno can at least hear one recognizable word from the man. But this word makes Ryno suddenly sit upright in bed.

“Willem, alias murder” – Ryno can see the words clearly in his mind.

“Willem, is that you?” Ryno asks quickly.

The man on the other side turns quiet, but Ryno knows he did not hang up the phone. He can hear the sound of his shallow breathing.

“Willem, is that you?” Ryno asks for a second time with urgency.

“It’s me, Willem,” the man says hoarsely.

“You came to visit me while I was at the Bainsvlei police cells. You gave your cell



number to the constable and said he can phone you if I wanted to speak to you. Well, he gave me your number. Can you come to my house?”

“When?” Ryno asks hesitantly. The clock next to the bed shows it is almost 1am.

“Now?” Willem says in a commanding tone.

“Now, because if I die tonight, I will be lost forever.”

It is the desperation in Willem’s voice that convinces Ryno to get out of bed. Ryno scribbles down Willem’s address. As he takes his jacket, Ryno phones General Du Toit.

“Please pray for me tonight. I am on my way to Willem, the man I told you about. The man my Christian circle of friends have been praying for, for some time now.”

“Please pray that God will protect me, because this man is very high up in satanic

circles,” he asks as the alarm clock in the room turns to 1.21am.

“Jesus has sown his seeds of forgiveness and redemption a long time ago, somewhere in a cell in the Bainsvlei police station. The Word says the seeds must be given the opportunity to grow. General...?” Ryno whispers in desperation while standing in the dark.

“General, please pray that Willem will invite Jesus Christ into his life. That he will allow the light of Jesus Christ to set him free. And that Willem will not be lost forever.”

## CHAPTER 34

Willem has been waiting for Ryno at the entrance gate of his house. As he sees Ryno, he stubs out his cigarette. Ryno notices that the man fumbles nervously with his hands, and he cannot believe this is the same man he met at the Bainsvlei police cells. Willem is stripped from all bravado – the man who was so full of himself and filled with immense anger the day Ryno walked into the cell. Willem now looks frightened and insecure.

“God spoke to me and He said my time on earth is limited,” Willem says as he sits down with Ryno in a small room adjacent to his house.

“I have to make peace with God. I want to get to know your God. Can you perhaps pray for me?”

Beads of sweat form on Willem's forehead and nose, but Ryno feels jubilation in his heart. What a breakthrough, what a miracle! Ryno knows God is true to Himself. He listens when His children cry out for help.

“Jesus can help you,” Ryno says without hesitation. For the first time since the investigation has started, Ryno realizes his mission on earth is not only to try and apprehend figures in black cloaks. His main task is to bring the message of God to these people, to preach the gospel.

Willem's body starts to shake.

“Ryno, there are so many things inside of me that want to prevent me from having thoughts about God. I try to suppress these feelings, but when I think about God, stubbornness takes hold of me. Something blocks my thoughts and this confuses me a lot.”

“Jesus can help you. Jesus can set you free from all of this,” Ryno repeats his words. Willem lowers his head, as the tremors through his body become more intense. “Ryno, I have chest pains. I do not feel well,” Willem starts to cry.

“Jesus came to this earth to heal the sick. He came to this earth for every sinner, everybody, for me and for you, Willem,” Ryno says as he notices Willem’s neck stiffen.

Ryno puts his hand on Willem’s shoulder. “Let’s pray,” he says. Ryno knows that only the might of God can create a breakthrough in this man’s life, because there has been an ominous feeling of evil in the air. “Try to pray with me,” Ryno says in a softer voice. “Will you?”

Willem cannot say a word and he just nods his head.

“Heavenly Father, we pray that You will intervene with Your power and might here tonight.” Somewhere in the house a clock strikes twice. It is 2am.

“I praise Your wonderful Name, Father, and for the work You have already started in Willem’s heart,” Ryno says as Willem’s body starts to shake viciously.

Willem has been quiet for a few minutes; he has not been able to say a word.

“God, in the name of Jesus Christ,” Ryno continues, “... please help Willem to cry out Your name. That he will be able to speak to You.”

As Ryno takes Willem’s hands, he can feel the man grab his wrists fiercely.

Ryno can sense the severe battle within Willem. He can feel an intense inner

struggle through Willem's hands and fingers. Ryno opens his eyes and looks at Willem. Willem's head is bent backwards. His eyes are rolled back as rattling noises escape from his mouth.

Willem's body starts moving uncontrollably as he simulates the movements of a snake. Ryno hangs on to Willem's grip. Ryno closes his eyes and calls on God more urgently.

"Merciful Father, please intervene here, tonight. God, I am just a servant of Your grace. I can do nothing for this man, but You can do anything. Only You can change the life of this man forever and mend his ways."

Tears start running down Willem's cheeks.

"Please, God, You can trample the evil in Willem's soul," Ryno begs as he acknowledges the deep dependence he and Willem have for God's intervention.

“Please, God, let Willem be able to address you in person,” Ryno prays. Willem salivates and breathes shallowly.

Ryno feels troubled as he senses that the evil has intensified. He can literally feel the evil trying to get the upper hand.

“In Jesus Name, the victory of God is near because of the Blood of the Lamb on the cross,” Ryno speaks out loud as the words of Revelation suddenly wash over his mind.

“Dear God, please give Willem the power he needs to be victorious against the forces of darkness,” Ryno asks as he feels the supremacy of God tipping the scale in favour of those who seek His salvation. Something inside Willem starts to relax. As Ryno looks up, it looks as if something has left Willem’s body. An indescribable power has filled the atmosphere. God has intervened.



“We praise a living God,” Ryno jubilates.

## CHAPTER 35

Willem looks up at Ryno.

“I feel much better, Ryno, but I still have a lot of things inside me that aren’t right. I hosted so many demons in my life.”

Willem’s eyes are full of sadness.

“I have done so many wrong things in my life. I committed so much sin.”

“Try to repeat the words as I pray, Willem. You have to talk to God on your own,” says Ryno as he feels the sweat on his forehead and against his temples for the first time tonight.

“In the Name of Jesus Christ, I confess that I have sinned against You, God,” Ryno restarts his prayer.

“God, I confess that I have sinned against You,” says Willem in his first effort to speak to God.

“God, I want to confess my wrongdoings, when I watched while innocent people were brutally attacked and assaulted. I want to confess that I turned my back on people who were left behind for dead after these attacks. I want to confess that I cursed Your Name and denied Your existence in the company of other satanists,” Willem sobs with tears running down his face.

Willem pauses for a second.

“God, I want to lay down my inability to forgive those who sinned against me; I want You to help me to forgive others.” Willem says this with urgency in his voice.

“Help me to forgive my parents. You know how my father assaulted me and how they abused me as a child. You also know about the hell I have been through to take it out on other people just because I was not able to forgive them. Please help me. Amen.”

As Ryno sees the light in Willem's eyes, he knows that the victory of God has taken place in this house.

"How do you feel, Willem? Do you feel better?" Ryno asks cautiously as tears run down Willem's face. Ryno notices the immense remorse and pain in his eyes.

"I feel better, but I still have something here in my chest, something that refuses to let go of me. It has a hold on me and I cannot get rid of it," Willem says wearily. Ryno is also exhausted, but he places his hand on Willem's shoulder for a second time. The clock in the house chimes three times. It is 3am.

"God, have mercy on Willem and bless him with Your love. Let him have complete victory in the Name of Your Son, Jesus Christ," Ryno prays as he feels the presence of God in the room, an almighty

power so intense that the evil forces have lost their powers to tip the scale.

“Open our eyes as we are weary from the struggle, and show us if there are still evil forces inside Willem.”

As Ryno speaks these words to God in prayer, he suddenly remembers the big letters in the black book he found at the scene of the car accident on the N1: “Willem alias murder”. Ryno is paralyzed with shock, and relieved at the same time.

“God, our Father,” Ryno says slowly and with utmost calm as he is filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

“I pray against the evil spirit of killing.” Suddenly a terrible one-pitched scream comes from Willem’s mouth. The sound from within Willem’s body is so ferocious that it seems to penetrate to the marrow.

Willem's face twists and his eyes look glazed and unreal. Ryno stands up from the chair and lifts his hands to the heavens. He has goose bumps all over his body.

"In the name of Jesus Christ, please save this man Willem," Ryno prays out loud.

## CHAPTER 36

It is suddenly very quiet in the room. The evil powers have vanished. Ryno looks at the glow in Willem's eyes, and he finds it difficult to swallow the lump in his throat. He sinks into the chair again. The events are beginning to take their toll on his body and mind.

"This is a Jacob-night," Ryno says, whispering to himself.

"My body is tired and aching," Willem says, exhausted.

"But I am free," Willem says lightly.

"Ryno, please pray one more time before you leave. I want to repeat the words now that I am a free man."

Ryno lowers his head and closes his eyes. There is a sense of complete peace and calmness in the room.

“God, I want to praise and glorify Your name,” Ryno says softly, with Willem repeating the words like a child.

“God, I want to know You better. Show me Your ways and help me to live in Your love. I want to be like You, dear Jesus. Help me to grow in You,” Ryno continues.

Somewhere in the night, Ryno hears the roaring sounds of a motorbike, traveling too fast through the city streets.

“God, I know it will be difficult at times to focus on You, because satan will formulate plans to attack my life. Please God, I beg you to never let go of my hand,” Willem continues on his own.

“And God, please set me free from my past so that it will never get a hold on me again,” Willem asks pleadingly. A slight breeze has come up over the city and it makes this time of the night even chillier.



“Amen!”

Ryno gets up from his chair to leave.

“Wait, before you go, Ryno,” Willem says.

“There are some things I need to show you tonight. My sitting room is full of symbolic statues, images and signs of the occult. I have no idea what to do with it now.” Willem turns and walks away. In the house, he opens the locked door of the sitting room and pushes it open.

Willem walks into the dark room and switches on the light. Ryno follows him into the room where he immediately notices a statue of an angel, stolen from the grave of a child. The wings of the angel were broken off. Several upside-down crosses were painted all over the face of the angel. The eyes of the angel were coloured with black ink. The angel was smudged with black and

red candle wax and the image of a pentagram.

“Go and look for the largest box you have in the house,” Ryno commands when he manages to recover from the shock. The clock in the corner of the demonic sitting room chimes four times, announcing it is 4am.

Ryno picks up the little statue and places it in a box that Willem brings from the kitchen. “Get everything in the house that can be linked to your involvement with the satanistic movement,” Ryno commands. “Even the smallest piece of paper,” Ryno says with finality in his voice.

Ryno takes the books about satanic practices and witchcraft one by one as Willem hands them to him. He also takes the notebooks Willem used for satanic

poetry and throws everything in the large container, together with the little statue. Willem brings small bottles with pieces of animal tissue and body parts that Ryno puts in the container, one by one.

Ryno also throws bags of dagga and other drugs in a second box. Willem brings the satanic book and a burnt Christian Bible while Ryno continues to help his fellow man to start anew. He throws everything in the box with the drugs. When Ryno finishes, Willem bends down and takes out the burnt Bible.

“See, Ryno,” Willem says, relieved.

“Psalm 91 was not destroyed by the flames. Also Psalm 23. ‘God is my Shepherd’ is untouched and stands out amongst the other pages.” Willem is quiet for a second.

“I want to keep the Bible,” Willem pleads, his voice like that of a little boy.

“I tried to destroy this Bible with all my might, but nothing could wipe out Psalm 91 and 23. The Bible will always be a symbol to me of God’s promise that he will never forsake me, even in the valley of death. He promised to be my shepherd for ever.”

“Keep it then.” Ryno looks at Willem.

“Keep it as a symbol that nothing on earth or in the skies above, or even a fire, can keep us from the love of God. Nothing can silence the voice of Jesus Christ. Satan can try everything possible, but he will never succeed,” Ryno says decisively. He takes a few small bottles, marked on their labels as different types of potions, from Willem’s hands and throws them on the heaps of drugs in plastic bags.

Willem hands Ryno a few crystals.

“What about the upside-down cross around your neck?” Ryno asks as he places the crystals on top of the small bottles. In one movement of his right arm, Willem pulls the silver chain from his neck.

Willem closes his fist and slowly opens his hand. He turns the cross into an upright position with three fingers. He stares at the cross for several minutes.

“The cross was actually with me all the time ...” he says timidly as he touches the cross gently with the tip of his index finger. Ryno can hear the gratitude in his voice.

“Come, let’s put the boxes in the boot of my car and then we go and destroy everything. “Now,” Ryno says with a determination in his voice that surprises even him.

As Ryno loads the boxes into his car, Willem carries more of the goods out of his house and brings it to the boot. He carries lots of burnt soft toys with goat horns shoved into the heads and eyes of the teddy bears. Tens of images of pentagrams and the 666 symbols are spread out in the boot.

“Are you ready to destroy everything?” Ryno asks as Willem puts the second box into the boot. Willem looks up at Ryno in the last dark minutes of the night.

“Yes, I want to,” Willem says without hesitation.

The digital watch in the car shows it is 4.27am when Ryno and Willem stop in the veld outside the city.

“Let’s put everything on an open space without any grass. I will take the petrol I always carry with me in the boot and throw it over the goods,” Ryno says as he opens

the boot and carries the first box a few meters into the veld.

The last faint beams of the moon throw a dim light over the dry branches in the veld. The veld is alive with thousands of insects making screeching noises in the quiet of the final hours before daybreak. Willem places the second box next to the other one Ryno carried.

“Let me get the teddies and the other stuff so that you can start to pour petrol on everything,” says Willem as the two men turn and walk back to the car.

Ryno takes the canister with petrol next to the spare tyre and walks back to the heaps of ominous goods in the veld. He pours the petrol in zigzag movements over the two boxes.

“I am actually destroying a lot of concrete evidence today,” Ryno whispers to himself.

For a second, his hand lingers over one of the boxes.

“You can still leave that one,” Willem says, moving closer to Ryno.

“You can always keep it safe in a locked cabinet. These things might come in handy during a court case and can perhaps be used as evidence.”

Ryno looks up at Willem. He can hardly believe it is the same man he met in front of the house a few hours earlier. A man completely possessed by demons. Ryno lingers for a few seconds.

“You know, Willem,” Ryno says as he takes control of the situation, “... our battle is not against flesh and blood. All these are outwardly things, just things for the show. These things have no power at all.”



Ryno puts his hand in his pocket and takes out a box of matches. He hands it to Willem. “Take this and burn all the evil from your past,” Ryno says in a moment that almost feels sacred to him. As Willem’s finger slides over the small box, Ryno stands in complete silence. The small flame soars through the night ...

It is as if the crickets pause in anticipation, holding their breath. The night has turned silent, as the new dawn is about to paint the earth with all the colours of the rainbow. The flapping sound that follows lights up the sky with big jumping flames, engulfing the contents on the ground. The darkness has disappeared. A terrified hare jumps out of a hole a few metres from the flames and flees.

The smell of burning plastic and paper fills the air. Willem stands motionless next to

Ryno. The sweet smell of the burning chemicals of the drugs blends in with the stench of the fire. The clatter of the fire is fierce and final.

“From that day onwards when we met at the police cells in Bainsvlei, my life changed drastically,” Willem speaks slowly as he stares into the engulfing flames.

“Until tonight. I know I still have a long way to go. The members of the coven will certainly try to kill me. I know it, because I was their leader. I was the one with the most demons, the most bloody-minded member in the city. The most vicious and violent, the one who didn’t have any regard for life at all. They will not let me off the hook.”

The fire has calmed down and turned most of the contents in the boxes to ashes.

“Pray for me so that God will protect me and that I will be able to stay strong. Pray for me so that I will be able to resist all temptations, but most of all, to be vigilant. I am scared,” Willem says after the two men covered the ashes with sand and gravel.

“Please pray that God will give me His power. Please pray for me.” Willem’s words remain with Ryno long after he left, while he tries to close his eyes for a few minutes in the safety of his home. The sun has come up, a gift from God.

## CHAPTER 37

“Let me finish my story,” says Willem, still exhausted from his nightlong life-changing experience as he enters Ryno’s office around midday.

“It might help you with cases you are still investigating, or future cases.”

“You do not have to say anything else – we have covered more than enough,” Ryno says with concern in his voice to the man who bared his soul a few hours earlier, now sitting at the opposite end of his desk.

“I feel I have to,” Willem says urgently.

“We had so many rituals in the storm water pipes just outside the city. We sacrificed a lot of animals. We drank the animal blood and used drugs at the same time.”

Willem pauses for a second.

“I feel the worst about what we did to a beautiful young woman. We raped her repeatedly and mutilated her sexually. I even went so far as to cut a pentagram on her stomach.” He is quiet for a few seconds. Ryno can see the pain in Willem’s eyes.

“Willem, we worship a God of forgiveness,” Ryno says, moved, not only for the hurt in Willem’s eyes but also for the scars reflected in Meryl’s eyes. Something he will remember forever.

“I want to build my life around hope – I want to focus on forgiveness,” Willem says as he bends down to open a carry bag on the floor. He takes out two photo albums from the side pocket and hands them to Ryno. “I found this after we went to the veld,” Willem says as Ryno opens the album on top.

Ryno pages through the albums containing pictures of former mayors and well-known businesspeople as well as other prominent figures in society. However, it is the pictures of half-naked women, taken one by one or in different positions with men, that catch Ryno off-guard.

“We use these pictures to blackmail the men,” Willem explains before Ryno can ask questions.

“You know, during these rituals the men usually lose control. Later, when they decide to leave the movement, we have to blackmail them to keep them in the coven.”

“It is important to know that we specifically target the leaders. Our main purpose is to cause havoc. We gathered in front of their houses at night, hundreds of times, to put a curse on them so that they can make the wrong decisions. We create chaos and

disorder, in the workplace and within families. We prayed to satan to sow division amongst church leaders and in their homes in order to destroy society.”

“You can have the albums; let God guide you to do what is necessary,” Willem says while wiping his hands over his tired face.

“There are other covens in the city as well, similar to the one I belonged to,” says Willem, still wiping his eyes.

“Every leader of a coven has a title: the high priest. My group was much smaller compared to other active covens in the city.”

Ryno is lost for words. “We, the high priests, are in contact with one another and we inform each other of what’s going on in the city on a regular basis. As high priests, we also report to a higher ordinance. He is something like a leader for the whole city.

Smaller towns in rural areas have regional leaders.”

Willem pulls his hands away from his face and looks at Ryno.

“I do not know the name of this leader in Bloemfontein. We used to call him the brutal man. All I know about him is that he is someone in a highly ranked position in the government. And he reports to other city leaders in other provinces.”

“Please pray for me,” says Willem as he lifts himself up from the chair. A slight beam of sunlight falls on Ryno’s desk as they shake hands.

“Do not stop praying. I need your prayers desperately,” he repeats urgently.

“Jesus will never leave you,” Ryno says as he places his other hand on Willem’s shoulder.



“I will keep on praying for you. You are welcome to contact me if you need me. My door is open,” Ryno repeats as Willem walks out the door.

Ryno turns to his desk and watches the beam of sunlight through the office window. He is aware of the fact that his investigation thus far has been just a small beam over a very big iceberg. This iceberg has developed into a comprehensive danger in the deep and troubled waters of our society.

As Ryno looks up the phone numbers of Reverend Piet and Karlien, he knows deep in his heart that the Living God is in charge; He even takes charge of the highest mountains and the deepest seas. Only God has the authority to bring certain things to the open, in His own time; the things He wishes to be rectified.

## CHAPTER 38

“Can I see you tonight at your house, Reverend Piet, at about 7pm?” Ryno asks Reverend Piet after they chatted for a few minutes over the phone about general topics of concern. After Ryno puts the receiver down, he immediately picks it up again and dials the number of the social welfare offices.

“Can you bring Bertha with you, if possible?” Ryno asks Karlien, as he repeats the details of his visit to the Reverend’s house.

When Ryno arrives at Reverend Piet’s house, the two social workers are already there.

“I have experienced a lot of challenges the past few weeks, and you were a part of it,” Ryno declares to Reverend Piet and the two women.

“Weird things, to say the least,” Ryno looks at each of the three people in the sitting room.

“What do you think about forming a small group of people who want to pray together on a regular basis?” Ryno asks as the wind blows softly outside the window. Reverend Piet takes his Bible and says: “You know, Ryno, we read in the Bible that God doesn’t send us out into this world all alone.”

Reverend Piet pauses.

“I am aware that we all have different careers and responsibilities. I think it will be a good thing if we come together out of our own worlds and pray together. I am convinced God is busy with a much bigger plan with us here.”

From the corner of his eye, Ryno can see that Bertha and Karlien are nodding their heads in approval. Ryno doesn't say much. "Let's pray for the people who need our prayer – the reason why we are here tonight," says Ryno, fully aware of the peacefulness in the house.

Ryno closes his eyes.

"Dear Heavenly Father, I pray for those people involved with the occult, especially those we know here in Bloemfontein and in the rest of South Africa. I also want to pray for those we do not know personally, those people who cannot get out of the movement because of extortion. We especially want to pray for Willem and for the difficult road ahead. To be able to stay away from the evil he became familiar with. I also want to pray for Meryl, who has been humiliated and degraded all her life. She was raped and

sexually abused numerous times and she was not aware of a better life.”

Ryno stops for a few seconds, waiting for the other three to continue with the prayer. “Please be with the girl who went out of control recently at Hoffman Square and later in the hospital,” Reverend Piet prays next. “Protect all our church leaders during this trying time, not only in the spiritual work that they do, but also in their personal lives where the enemy has attempted to bring them into disrepute.”

“Please protect the information we have to work with and those busy with sensitive investigations regarding occult movements,” Karlien adds. Ryno listens to the pleas of everyone in the sitting room. He notices that their words have been spoken with a

determination to put on the Armour of God in the battle against the forces of darkness. Ryno can feel the omnipresence of the powerful living God in the house.

Ryno feels a freshfeeling of spiritual renewal.

“Let’s constantly pray the words of Ephesians 6 from verse 10”, Reverend Piet concludes the prayer meeting.

“I will phone a few close friends to pray for Willem and Meryl,” Karlien says as she walks with Ryno to where they parked.

“Thanks,” Ryno says softly.

As the three cars pull away from the Reverend’s house, Ryno knows that life has no meaning without Jesus. There is absolutely nothing without God.

## CHAPTER 39

Ryno notices a small note on his office door the next morning. He is early today, and opens the note with a heart filled with renewed hope.

“Lieutenant, our small group in the unit are still praying for you during our lunchtime sessions,” reads the note from Hettie, written in her petite handwriting.

What a privilege to work with other Christians, Ryno thinks while he switches on the kettle to make a cup of coffee. He looks through his office window and notices a wisp of smoke hanging low over the city. He can almost see the silhouette of Naval Hill’s southern tip if he broadens his imagination.

At that moment, Ryno freezes to a complete standstill. His right hand with the cup of

coffee in it stops, as he was about to take his first sip. He can see it clearly in his mind! He can see a cross on Naval Hill. The cross looks as if it is hanging in the air, and it is not a standard cross. Its shines like a star. The cross is ablaze with light.

“Father, does the thought I just had come from You?” Ryno prays out loud while the steam from his cup of coffee forms spots of vapour on the window.

“What do You want me to do?” Ryno asks as the image of a large cross, shining in the darkness on Naval Hill, fills his mind.

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The image of the cross with thousands of lights shining over Bloemfontein, is imprinted in Ryno’s mind when he arrives at the municipality buildings the next day. He



is about to start the process of negotiation with the department of electricity and the office of the City Engineer. His intention is to ask the municipalities permission to use one of the mast towers on Naval Hill to erect a cross overlooking the city.

“Dear God, let Your will be done with this idea in my head,” Ryno remembers the words of Elna’s prayer that night when they pleaded with God to protect them from the evil that surrounded their house.

“Father, let it be Your will should this idea become a reality,” Ryno repeats while he completes a form and adds his letter of motivation.

“I leave this idea in Your hands,” Ryno prays as he drives back to the office.

“Dear friends in Jesus,” Ryno types a letter on his computer when he arrives back at the office.

“Please pray with me because a very strange idea has entered my mind. You might think I went completely overboard this time, or I’m seeing things, but it feels like this idea is coming from God.”

Ryno looks up and notices the clear blue skies from his office window.

“I had a vision of a cross hanging over Naval Hill. I am busy at this stage to try and get permission to erect a cross against one of the mast towers on Naval Hill. The cross will consist of a framework and thousands of lights, shining like a star in the night. I made some calculations after I spoke to several people. Please pray with me for this initiative – we need R7000 to build the cross and its fittings, as well as the special light bulbs. The lights of the cross will have to be switched on simultaneously with the street lights at night.”

Ryno is hesitant to send the letter, and wonders if he had used the right words. What if the email is too long, he thinks. He decides to send the message to the people in his cell group as well as the fellow Christians in the unit who recently formed a prayer group. Ryno opens the Bible on his desk and starts to read from the Book of John. He reads about the light of God that cannot fade in the darkness.

This is similar to the cross on Naval Hill that he visualized, Ryno realizes. There is a light in the darkness. Darkness cannot extinguish the light. The Light, Jesus Christ, will remain forever, indelible by the dark.

“Lieutenant,” Ryno hears Hettie from a short distance. Ryno is surprised that he was not even aware that she entered the office. He is usually very alert when it comes to movement and sound.

“Lieutenant, can you please excuse me from work for an hour or so?” she asks with urgency in her voice that makes Ryno wonder if there is a problem. He decides not to ask questions.

“It is fine Hettie, you can go,” he says softly as Hettie walks quickly to the door and leaves.

“I will be back soon, Lieutenant,” Ryno hears her voice from outside his window. Hettie is one of those staff members in the unit who always does more than what is expected of her. This must be very urgent, Ryno thinks.

Ryno closes his eyes and folds his hands on the open page from the Book of John. “God, if this idea is coming from You, please bless this project. Make everything clear to me so that I can follow Your will. You already know what the financial implications will be. You know it will cost a lot of money.

This is not about me, but that Your will be done. Amen.” Ryno keeps his eyes closed.

He sits motionless as if expecting a phone call. He opens his eyes. Ryno already knows who he wants to approach to build the cross. That can only happen if God puts the plans into action. He starts to draw the cross on a piece of paper, with a scale indicating the cross must be seven metres high and five metres wide.

Ryno writes down the name of a man on the bottom right corner of the paper . He writes down another name, of an electrician, a Christian friend of his. He will be the best person to work with the lights.

The phone suddenly rings.

“Mr. Stevens here. I am phoning from the electricity department of the municipality.”

Ryno freezes in his chair, unable to say a word.

“Yes?” He replies at last, too anxious to breathe.

“Mr Bosman, your application has been approved. You can use one of the mast towers for the purpose of erecting a cross.”

Ryno lowers his head into his hands and forgets about the voice on the other end of the line. He barely listens to the man who is requesting that Ryno needs to come to his office to sign a few documents. Ryno is filled with raw emotion.

## CHAPTER 40

The phone rings again, minutes after the call from the municipality. Ryno is still overjoyed and blows his nose before he picks up the receiver.

“Ryno, it’s Piet here...” the Reverend says, a welcoming voice in Ryno’s ears.

“I read your letter about the cross.” The Reverend pauses for a moment.

“Reverend Piet,” Ryno says, ecstatically.

“God sent me a sign. The municipality approved my application!” Ryno says jubilantly.

“Please pray that we will be able to get the funding. God has cleared the way – we just need to follow!”

The Reverend is noticeably overjoyed.

“I will, Ryno, I will go down on my knees right away,” he says as they end the call.

Ryno picks up the telephone directory. There will definitely be business owners interested in supporting the cause. He can approach them for donations and pay the rest of money, even if he needs to borrow the money from the bank. A lack of funds will not stop this project; he is more than willing to make the down payments from his salary. It can take years to pay back the loan, but the dividends will be uncountable. Ryno looks up as somebody knocks on the door.

Hettie walks in.

“Did you manage?” Ryno asks with a neutral expression on his face; he does not want to sound inquisitive. Hettie does not say a word but takes out an envelope from her handbag and hands it to Ryno. As he reads the words on the envelope, Ryno is dumbfounded. “For the cross on Naval Hill: R4000.”



“No Hettie, I cannot take this. I cannot take your savings!” Ryno says while he cannot stop the goose bumps all over his body.

Hettie takes one step closer to Ryno’s desk. “Lieutenant, hear me out before you reject the money. I can do what I want with my money. And no, this is not my money only. I added something to the amount I collected from a few Christian business people today. I explained to them what you have planned. One of them gave R2000 and said to me it was his way of giving something back to God. He said God has given him so much, and he was blessed in so many ways.”

Hettie takes out another smaller envelope. “I have another R800 from the Christian members in the unit who would also like to contribute to the project.” Hettie smiles at Ryno.

“There are a lot of people in Bloemfontein who would like to be a part of such an inspiring initiative.”

Ryno is at a loss for words. Within hours, he has received more than half of the money he will need to establish the cross. He does not know how to respond to all of this. The telephone rings and pulls Ryno back to reality. Hettie has left the office in the meantime; she just placed the second envelope on the desk without saying another word.

“Hi, it’s Reverend Piet. Listen, Ryno, can you come to my house tonight? A commission of the church council approved a donation of R2000 for the cross. I can give you the cheque right away.”

Ryno is dumbfounded as he puts the receiver down. He managed to collect enough funds for the cross in a single day! As a matter of fact, in a single afternoon! I have so much to be thankful for, and God is blessing me in so many ways, Ryno thinks to himself.

The humble policeman with the besom-like moustache bends his head, his heart filled with gratitude.

“Dear God, this is not about me! It is all about You! I do not know how to thank You Lord! I just want to praise Your Holy Name! I feel as if I can run down the streets of Bloemfontein and shout out loud! Thank You Father, thank You, in Jesus Name. Amen!”

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Ryno arrives at home and as he greets Elna, she can see from the expression on

his face that something incredible happened today. The joy in his heart is written all over his face. Ryno takes her hand but before he can speak, she interrupts her husband in sheer anticipation.

“Ryno, what is it? What is going on?” Elna asks, having known her husband for so many years, that she shares in his happiness as well as the trying times.

“A few days ago, I had a vision of a cross with thousands of lights, hanging over Naval Hill. I thought about it and decided to pray. I then decided to take the bull by the horns and phoned other Christians, our friends as well. Finally, I also made some calculations and set up a budget.”

Elna looks up at her husband in amazement. She squeezes his hand tighter. “You won’t believe what happened today. The municipality phoned me today and told me that the application has been approved

to erect a cross on one of the tower masts. And to top it all, within one afternoon, I already received donations of R7300.”

Elna is astonished as she listens to her husband. “I have enough money to get somebody for the construction of the cross. I was thinking about Dawie, and I want Etienne to handle all the electricity-related work.”

Ryno’s happiness fills the house, and that is the most important thing for Elna. She cannot help but smile to see her husband like this. The past few weeks have been tough, but they came out even stronger. They have grown closer as a couple, and Ryno’s investigation has had a positive effect on his career.

“Let’s pray, Ryno,” Elna says, deeply moved by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is a miracle, out of God’s hand.

“Father, thank You for taking charge when things are too big for us to handle, and thank You for the things that seem so small and insignificant. You are always there. We want to thank You God, that nothing is too small or too big for Your intervention. Thank You for Your presence in our lives; nothing can surpass Your greatness and Your glory. Amen.”

## CHAPTER 41

Easter Friday, 1995.

The municipality has scheduled the official opening of the cross on Naval Hill for 8pm. The event consists of a short ceremony during which the lights on the cross will be switched on for the first time. The first democratically elected mayor of Bloemfontein, the honourable Jani Mohapi, as well as journalists from local newspapers and the electronic media will be present. In fact, the local media has taken great interest in the initiative and published several stories leading up to the event.

It is 5pm and Ryno and Ettienne are standing under the tower mast where the gigantic structure of the cross has been mounted. The delicate steel framework creates an image of eternal light and hope with its thousands of small light bulbs.

Etienne switches on the lights to see if everything is working. Ryno can feel the butterflies in his stomach. The lights are on! “Thank You, God,” Ryno says softly.

At around 7pm, hundreds of vehicles are ascending the hill on the narrow tarred road leading up to the southern viewpoint. Ryno is totally surprised.

“I did not expect more than 50 or 60 people here tonight,” he says while holding Elna’s hand. Families are walking to the viewpoint with cameras, folding chairs and picnic baskets. Small children are running around excitedly. Tonight is a historic moment for the city.

For a moment, the event on Naval Hill earlier when a group of dark figures were moving close to his car, flashes before Ryno’s eyes.



“The vehicles are parked from the entrance of Naval Hill all the way up to here,”

Reverend Piet says all of a sudden, standing next to Ryno. He is trying to catch his breath after a three-kilometre walk.

There is no available parking close to the viewpoint; the cars are parked bumper to bumper.

“There must be approximately a thousand people here tonight!”

Ryno looks at his watch. It is 7.45pm and the butterflies in his stomach turn into a deep sense of gratitude. Ryno holds Elna’s hand in a tighter grip when a local gospel singer, Hettie, takes her guitar and moves closer to the microphone. Songs of praise rise up over the hill and into the streets while nightfall sets over the city.

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Somewhere in a house in Pentagon Park, a neighbourhood about 3km from Naval Hill, a group of about 20 people are gathering. They are all dressed in black. The group is aware of the event on Naval Hill, and they are discussing the movements of the vehicles and the people walking up to the viewpoint.

“They must be stopped! They must be stopped!” a man with broad shoulders shouts out loud. He is busy walking up and down in his garden, surrounded by a very high brick wall. He curses and spits on the ground, acting just like a maniac.

“This cannot happen, not tonight. These Christians cannot do whatever they please! We have to pray to our king of darkness to prevent these people from winning. We need to pray that satan starts sowing division amongst them, that there will be people consumed with pride. We need to

pray that there will be people acting out of self-glorification tonight. We need to break the chain of love and hope.”

The man’s eyes flash with malice in the darkness.

“We need to pray to satan to send his demons to the city and harass these people!”

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Meanwhile, the songs of praise and worship on Naval Hill are getting more and more intense. The night is filled with the voices of people praising God Almighty. A few hundred metres from where the hundreds of people are celebrating, Friedrich and a few colleagues from the unit are hiding under a tree. Ryno is not even aware of their presence.

“OK guys, let’s pray for the people here on Naval Hill and pray against those who do not want to see the lights on the cross going on tonight!” he says and looks at his watch. The time is 7.55pm.

Friedrich closes his eyes.

“Dear God, in the name of Jesus Christ, Your only Son, we pray for the function that is about to take place. We pray that You put the electrical system in Your hands. Please bless this event and the official switching on of the lights. Please heal the people of the city who need Your healing so badly. Bring a sense of spiritual renewal over the city.

“Let Your love be a virtual image of everybody present here tonight. We plead this in Your Holy Name! Amen.”

Suddenly the crowd on Naval Hill turns quiet. The praise and worship songs stop. It is as if the night's lips are sealed.

In Pentagon Park, the group of satanists start to cut themselves with the sharpened blades of several long knives. The high priest, the man with the broad shoulders, takes one of the knives and cuts his wrists. He smears the blood from the wound against the walls, doorframes and window sashes while he screams violently. The other black figures lisp unidentifiable words. They are fear-stricken by the acts of their master.

Somebody starts to scream a few quotes from a satanic book.

On Naval Hill, the crowd remains silent for a few minutes. Friedrich whispers: "God heard

our prayers. He is present here at Naval Hill tonight; He is here to conquer darkness.”

There is a sudden excitement in the crowd when Ryno takes the microphone, with the mayor standing next to him.

“The lights of the cross we are about to switch on is a symbol of hope,” Ryno hears his voice loud and clear over the several speakers, facing the crowd.

“The cross reminds us of Jesus Christ who carried his cross on his own to Calvary. It also reminds us that the cross is empty now. This cross, that will send its light into all the streets and corners of the city, is empty. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was resurrected from the grave. For me and for you.” Ryno feels the mood of the crowd turn into an atmosphere of prayer.

Ryno looks up. He sees hundreds of people sitting under and around the tower, but his

gaze fixes on an unknown man, standing at the back of the crowd, in the dark. He immediately recognizes the secretive general from Pretoria, the man he has to report to on a regular basis. General Du Toit looks fixedly at Ryno and nods his head in approval.

“The darkness is not an unknown world to me,” Ryno says.

“But God has shown me on numerous occasions that the darkness has to flee before His Might and Power.” Ryno has to swallow a lump in his throat before he continues.

“We read in the Book of John that God tells us His Light shines in the darkness and that the darkness cannot extinguish the Light. May this cross be a reminder to you of the power of His Light every night.”

There is a tangible sense of holiness on Naval Hill. It is as if Ryno can feel God's presence amongst the crowd.

"Let us pray for our city." Ryno finds it difficult to speak, as he suddenly feels overcome with emotion.

"Let's pray for one another. Let's pray against the attacks from satan and his demons. And let us live in peace with one another and rejoice in the love of Jesus Christ."

Ryno pauses for a second.

"Let us pray together," he says softly over the microphone. He is aware of a sudden subtle noise in the crowd as the people rise to their feet. Ryno closes his eyes. The moment has come, and it is all of a sudden very overwhelming and very near to his heart. As he prays, the mayor moves closer to the switch.



“Amen,” says Ryno while trembling slightly. He can see the mayor’s hand pulling the switch. Ryno gasps.

The crowd heaves a sigh of anticipation and amazement as the thousands of sparkling lights touch the night skies.

“The Light shines in the darkness, and darkness cannot fade the Light,” Ryno repeats the words from the Book of John as a sense of holiness spreads over Naval Hill. A very strong light in the form of a cross sparkles across the night-light, reminding the city of the only Living God.

Ryno is silent for a moment.

“The cross is empty,” he says.

“Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has risen from the dead.” Ryno cannot help the tears of joy as he looks up at the cross.

“Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. The Beginning and the End. To live is Jesus. Amen.”

## CHAPTER 42

“The cross is empty. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has risen from the dead.

“Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. The Beginning and the End. To live is Jesus. Amen.” The sparkling lights reflect over Naval Hill and Bloemfontein.

At the house of the high priest of satan, the group of figures in black are panicky. The sounds of whining voices are rising into the night.

“I am filled with horror, thinking about that cross!” yells the broad-shouldered man.

“I fear that cross. The cross must be taken down! Because the cross represents Jesus! The cross is Jesus!” The man curses and swears. He closes his eyes in disbelief. All that he can see is an image of the cross, high up in the night sky, shining in the dark. And the cross is empty.

Willem suddenly wakes up from the sound of the doorbell of his house. He gets out of bed, somewhat perplexed. He can hear the engine of a motorcar, taking off with screeching tyres. He switches on the lights and walks to the front door. He can see a black envelope under the door. Somebody must have shoved the black envelope through the small opening. He opens the front door.

The only thing he can hear is the sounds of the insects. There is nobody in sight. He picks up the envelope and feels the folds of the paper inside with his fingertips. His heart starts to beat faster. He knows the people who sent this, are living in the darkness. Willem trembles slightly.

“Please God, keep me in Your Light. Protect me from the forces of darkness,” he prays as he tears open the envelope.

Willem's heart skips a beat. He notices a red substance staining the paper as he takes it from the envelope. An iron stench fills the air and there is a drawn image of a pentagram on the paper. A cross with a question mark in the middle is drawn next to the pentagram. In the middle of the page is an upside-down cross with the 666 symbol drawn above the words: Welcome to hell.

However, at the bottom of the paper, the movement sends him a clear message in large letters: "Come back! Come back!" Willem experiences a tightness in his chest. He starts to shudder as he recognizes the letter has blood on it, and that means only one thing. The figures in black want to kill him. He closes the door and goes down on his knees in the sitting room. "Jesus, Son of God, please help me," he calls out anxiously.

“Please God, break the will of those people and the plans they are formulating against me. Father, please protect me, please do not forsake me again!” he asks pleadingly.

Willem is on his knees when a sense of peace and tranquility fills his being.

“God, I know I am not alone,” he prays even stronger. A power and might that surpasses all darkness fills the house.

“Father, please break the curse of this letter. I pray that you will bless my enemies. I beg You to save every soul lost without Jesus. You are my Shepherd. I praise Your wonderful Name. Your protection, love and grace are more than enough for me. Amen!”

In the streets of Bloemfontein, the beggars look up into the night. A man with long dirty hair and an untidy beard lifts his hands to the heavens. A man lying under a bush on a

piece cardboard at the foot of a small hill, repeats the sign of the cross in the air.

Street kids shout: “Morena! Morena!” into the night as they move closer to one another on the cement floors of a dilapidated building. A terminally ill man in the Universitas Hospital closes his eyes: “God,” he whispers with short and hasty breathing.

“I am handing over my breath and heartbeat into Your Wonderful Hands!”

The next morning, newspapers in the city flash pictures of the cross in the night sky on Naval Hill. The big letters on the front page read: “The Light shines in the darkness”.

In Ryno’s office, the phone rings uninterrupted with Christians offering to donate money for the maintenance of the cross. Christians phone from all over South

Africa to plan gatherings at the cross and pray for the healing hands of Jesus Christ.

“The cross is empty. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has risen from the dead.

“Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. The Beginning and the End. To live is Jesus. Amen.”

## POSTSCRIPT

To the reader of this book:  
choose **Jesus Christ!**





