

## The Cursed Investigator

### Chapter 1 – The Wanderer

As Cain removed the blood-soaked granite shard from his brother's bludgeoned skull, he felt free, no anger, nor guilt, for the first time in his seemingly meaningless life, he felt the tantalising warmth of rebellion rush over him.

Since he had learnt at a young age of his parents' exile from Eden, he had wondered why. Why would one simply seeking knowledge be seen as a sinner in God's eyes? He had spent his early years devoting himself to the creator, giving offerings to him from his own hard work upon the wishes of his parents, only to earn a life spent in the shadow of his brother. He was tired of being a slave; he realised that to break free of his bondage, he would have to end the life of God's favourite, Abel.

Abel had always been a plight on Cain, as well as constantly garnering the favour of God, he would also cause his parents to vastly overlook any of Cain's achievements. Abel was smug, and despite being younger than Cain, would always treat him as inferior. Cain felt no remorse for luring him to his farm that day as, in his eyes, he was ridding the world of a slave, the concept of submission, and acting in the best interests of his true master, himself.

'You created me!' he yelled to the clouds with such aggression that he felt his vocal cords become hoarse, 'but you do not own me!'

As if on cue, the sky violently split open, and a lightning bolt as thick as a tree trunk punctured the ground a few metres away from Cain; from it emerged a man, adorned from the neck down with white armour, so bright one could go blind staring at it for a prolonged period of time, a spear which appeared to be giving off sparks of some kind, and a pair of wings protruding from his back.

'Gabriel,' Cain said, staring at the divine being with total indifference as a smile appeared across his face, almost mocking him as he dropped the weapon he had just taken his brother's with, satisfied with his work.

The angel, with all its might, could only utter 'why?'

'I am not a slave, Gabriel,' Cain chuckled, 'how is it fair that I should pledge my life to God, to give him the things that I work for, simply because he created my parents and then banished them from paradise?' The angel looked shocked, 'God is afraid of us as humans rising up. He ejected my parents from Eden for gaining knowledge. It's clear to me that God wishes us only to be mindless, subservient slaves. I killed Abel to show I am better than that, him, Adam, and that whore Eve. They disgust me, slaves to your lord. That's not the life I choose.'

Gabriel looked saddened. 'You're a lost cause, Cain, and God has decided your punishment,' he muttered as he raised the large spear in his hand, glinting off the sun as he threw it with such force the air seemed to crack around it.

The spear impaled Cain in the centre of his chest and sent him flying a few metres before pinning him to a large nearby oak tree. Cain could feel his shattered ribcage scattered throughout his now demolished lungs as his heart managed to somehow keep beating despite the fact it had been sliced into. He tried to yell in pain, but as he exhaled, all that came out was a torrent of blood, which dissipated off of the still-shining spear. He saw Gabriel walking towards him as his world faded to black.

Cain was awoken by the course, the irritating feeling of sand on his cheek. He slowly lifted his torso, feeling groggy and dazed. He forced his eyes open and looked around; he wasn't at his hut, nor was he anywhere he recognised. Then he remembered, he frantically looked at his bare chest. There was no wound, not even a cut, but where he remembered the spear striking him, there was a mark, circular, with many different markings adorning the outer of it all, closing on a series of lines in the centre, pointing to six different symbols. Cain could not decipher the meaning of this mark, nor did he care. He was lost, stranded in an unknown land, but he felt free.

He forced himself to his feet and walked forward. It was all he could do. As he wandered, he lost track of time as the sky remained dark, he felt as though he had been walking for months, and yet he experienced no hunger, no thirst, his feet did not ache, and after brief periods of sleep, he could walk for miles and miles. He just continued walking in what seemed to be a never-ending desert.

'Will this never end!' Cain screamed to the sky, to no reply. Despite being lost, the lack of a reply came as some form of comfort to Cain. He really was free.

After what felt to Cain like years, he came across a stretch of water. He gleefully threw himself into it, desperate for the memory of what a drink was. As he ingested the liquid, his eyes widened, and he screamed.

The water had no taste, nor did it bring him any satisfaction in drinking it. It made him feel nothing. He felt no different than he did prior to drinking it as he began to realise what God's 'punishment' was. It appeared as though he couldn't die, feel pain, or the satisfaction of food and drink. He could grow tired, but all sleep gave him was darkness and restlessness. He felt like a husk. Angered, he threw himself into the water and swam. As far as he could, he knew he could not drown, nor would his arms or legs ache. After a while, he spotted a shore, with what seemed to be a small group of humans, by a fire.

### *BANG BANG*

Cain was violently awoken as a string of drool left him and the mahogany attached, and he sat up from his desk. He stared at the black door with hatred in his eyes. Cigarette butts smoked in an ashtray next to him, and empty whiskey bottles littered his desk surface. Whilst he could gain no nourishment from water, he could sure cause himself pain by drinking into oblivion.

'One second!' he yelled as he stretched his body. As always, he experienced no dreams, just memories.

The banging at the door continued as Cain put on his weathered black jacket and opened the door to an attractive middle-aged woman dressed in a black leather jacket, black trousers, and a white button blouse.

'What?' Cain asked with clear irritation in his voice.

'I'm looking for a P.I.,' the woman said, her voice stern but sultry, 'are you Caz Adamson?'

Cain had adopted a name he believed to be more modern to blend in.

'For the right price yes,' Cain chuckled.

'I've been told you're good with cold cases, especially those which lean towards the stranger and more unexplainable.' She locked eyes with Cain.

'There is no strange, human nature lies on a spectrum, and those who act, no matter how seemingly bizarre, remain on it,' he replied, 'and we still have yet to land on the issue of payment, don't we?'

'Honey, I think we can come to some sort of agreement that leaves both of us satisfied,' she smirked. Cain retained eye contact, refusing to give an inch, 'my client has large pockets and is willing to throw a more than reasonable sum in your direction if you're able to take this case.'

The woman broke eye contact and dumped an envelope onto the desk with an encouraging thud that sounded weighty and full, and the thud shook the empty whiskey bottles on the desk.

Cain looked into the envelope; it was stuffed with fifty-pound notes.

'That's half. If you are able to uncover what is going on here, you get the other half,' the woman said as she laid down another larger envelope on the desk.'

Once again, he opened the envelope, but there was no cash, but rather photographs and documents, reports detailing crime scenes dating back nine years all the way up to just fourteen hours ago. The photographs were grisly and not totally recognisable at first, but upon further inspection, body parts could be recognised, along with a clear MO.

'Well, miss?'

'Yaeger,' she responded immediately.

'Miss Yaeger, you've piqued my interest as well as attracted my wallet. I'm ready to go if you are.' Cain said in a much more jovial tone than he had when he was awoken.

'Come with me then, please,' Yaeger said with a smile that could melt steel.

'You never told me who your client is,' Cain said to the back of Yaeger's head.

'That's on a need-to-know basis, and what you need to know is that you're being paid,' she shot back with a slightly sterner tone before melting back into the calm, seductive tone she had previously adopted, 'now, shall we?'

As the two left the dilapidated flat, Cain walked back to his desk and scoffed a cupcake that had a still-smoking candlestick lodged in the top.

After all, he was sure he was around 10 million years old now.

## Chapter 2 - Chandelier

'They've taken to calling them the chandelier butcher,' Yaeger said, walking around an old church that had been sectioned off by police tape. The building was damp and had been mostly abandoned for years, save for a few squatters here and there, with only moonlight peering through the windows and low-energy police lamps providing any light.

'Oh, I wonder why,' Cain dryly remarked as he looked up towards the ceiling and saw the remains of a woman, who had been cut limb from limb and drained of blood, suspended from thin ropes hanging from above and tied together, resembling a macabre chandelier.

'The police haven't released any statements nor have they allowed anything to get out of to the press; these murders have been constantly buried for years because the nature in which they are performed would be believed to cause a public panic, a killer who can do something like this, for years, with such precision in the cuts,' Yaeger drew breath; 'there was a public panic a few years ago when a vial of blood from a dead pope was stolen and the robbers didn't even mean to steal that, a killer who

easily dissects people and displays them like this in churches and has done for years, the police nor politicians would allow a story like this to get out.'

'What's the timeline of the most recent murders?' Cain asked.

'This was yesterday evening. There was another three months ago, as well as two per year for the last couple of years, of the murders known,' she looked at Cain, 'there have been six every three years.'

'So, this is clearly someone with a knack for showmanship, displaying them in flamboyant fashion in churches and keeping to a pattern of six six six, a religious nut with a talent for butchering,' Cain chuckled as he lit up a cigarette.

'You really think that's the best thing to do in here?' Yaeger crossed her arms and sighed with a curt smile.

'I don't think there's much more I could do to desecrate this place,' Cain laughed, 'besides, I don't think the big guy upstairs has much of a care for what I do.' Yaeger shot him a confused look but shrugged it off.

'What do you think then?' Yaeger asked.

'I think that we're looking for someone with either a hopeless dedication to some perspective in the religious or someone looking to co-opt the symbolism of Christianity and Satanism to create their own bogeyman.' Cain remarked.

'So, a zealot or a fame seeker?' Yaeger, who had now also lit up a cigarette, asked.

'My money's on the latter; people dedicated to causes need armies. They falter alone, whereas someone looking to carve a name for themselves needs only delusions of grandeur and a sense of entitlement to push themselves to do the unspeakable,' Cain looked at the twisted face of the victim and remembered Abel, 'of course, I may be way off base, we'll need to consult a few friends of mine to get a better picture.'

As the two turned to leave the church, the damp floor squelched under their shoes; Cain turned to look at the body once more and noticed something off about the shape.

'Hold on,' he said suddenly, 'wait here.'

Cain slowly walked around the hanging corpse before arriving at the altar. His eyes widened as he looked through the moonlight illuminating the hanging parts as they seemed to come together to form a symbol.

But not just any symbol.

Cain unbuttoned the top of his shirt and looked at the mark Gabriel's spear had left. This 'chandelier' was modelled to look exactly like one of the six symbols on his mark. He quickly snapped a photo.

'Maybe more than a nutcase or a fame seeker then?' Cain asked himself quietly as he headed back towards Yaeger and left the church.

### Chapter 3 – Cherub

Cain and Yaeger arrived in a cab outside a seedy-looking nightclub named 'Club Cherub', a cheap looking baby angel with a heart arrow glowed pink with LED strip lights through the rain as the two made their

way inside to see a small strip club filled with patrons who looked to be one bad winter away from the grim reaper ogling at girls who had likely arrived at the club in a shipping container.

'Why are we here exactly?' Yaeger asked with a hint of disgust in her voice, 'if you wanted to look at girls, you can do that on your own time.'

Cain let out a small laugh.

'We're not here for them, we're here for him.'

Cain pointed at a small blonde man sitting at the bar, sipping straight gin out of a whiskey glass with a curly straw. The two walked over as he turned and met eyes with Cain. He put down the glass and extended an embrace.

'Caz, you big bastard!' the man said in an Italian accent, 'It's been too long why you never come to my club anymore? You don't like girls?'

'I have my own particular tastes,' Cain chuckled as he hugged the man back, 'and that's not why we're here tonight.'

Cain referenced to Yaeger, 'Giorno, this is Miss. Yaeger, Yaeger, Giorno, I'm helping her on a case, and I need some information,'

A smile came across Giorno's face, 'ahhh, you come seeking Giorno's knowledge?' he beckoned towards an open door behind the bar, 'come come into my office. Giorno's knowledge does not come free you must remember, though, Caz, I hope you have brought me treasures!'

'We have money,' Yaeger cut in.

Giorno just laughed.

'Let me handle this,' Cain leaned in to talk to her more quietly, 'Giorno's a mental case, but he's also the best information broker when it comes to secrets and dealings regarding anything occult or bizarre.'

The two men walked into the office whilst Yaeger sat at the bar drinking a glass of spiced rum.

A patron walked up to her and sat near her.

'Hi,' the man said, 'how are-'

'Fuck off,' she said, shooting him a look that could down a herd of rampaging rhinos.

He quickly walked back to his chair.

Cain shut the door behind them as the two men sat across from each other in the dimly lit office.

'So, what can Giorno help you with, my friend?' He said as Cain removed the photographs from the crime scenes from his pockets.

'I was wondering what you could tell me about these,' he placed the photographs on the desk.

Giorno looked over them with indifference.

'The chandelier butcherer, an urban legend to most, the case has been consistently buried so much even those who worked on it aren't allowed to mention it,' the small Italian looked confused, 'a killer who places bodies in churches is disturbing, yes but not the kind of thing one comes to me for, there's more to this?'

Cain proceeded to take one last photograph out, the one he had taken at the church, and showed it to Giorno.

'Look familiar?'

Giorno took the photo and examined it, then gasped.

'Impossible, non puo essere,' he said to himself.

Cain leaned in closer, '*That* is why I came to you. Someone knows who I am or knows what my symbols mean.

Giorno looked towards the door, 'does she know?'

'No, I met her earlier today when she hired me for this case. She's mysterious but has no reason to know who I actually am,' Cain held up the photo again, 'whoever this is they have knowledge not known by the vast majority of other humans. Symbols left from a celestial spear aren't something recorded in any bible I've heard of.'

Giorno sat back for a few seconds and pondered, tapping his fingers on the desk as he thought.

'What of the other crime scenes?' Giorno asked, 'Did they all have similar patterns showing your symbols?'

'I'm not sure. I only have these photos as the murders date back nine years, with six kills every three years, clearly occult in nature, but the extent of how human this is begins to blur when you bring this new revelation into it.'

You think a celestial could be responsible for this?' Giorno looked intrigued.

'It's a working theory, but it's not unheard of for angels and demons to have powers of possession. Some are even powerful enough to interact with the physical world of their own accord. What if these murders are a message?' Cain said as he crossed his arms.

'I would begin by verifying that the other murders did include your symbols before going on wild goose chase, my friend,' Giorno chuckled, 'but if your suspicions bear fruit, then I know a man who may be able to help you; he was a research agent for the pope in another life and he owes me a few favours after I recovered that stolen pope blood a few years back,' he continued to laugh at the memory.

'Well, it's a start,' Cain said.

'If there is a celestial factor involved, he will know, now, my friend, provided you wish to still be in the graces of my friendship. You know Giorno has to be paid for appointments,' he grinned.

Cain laughed and sighed. As he stood up, he removed a bag of coins from his coat pocket.

'Genuine coins looted from the body of Caesar himself.'

Giorno looked over the coins with greed and wonder as Cain began to walk towards the door,

'Giorno will text you details of contact!' he called to Cain.

'Thanks, Giorno, enjoy the coins,' Cain chuckled as he left.