

# Tuition Fees



*A Torquere Press Arcana*  
by Naomi Brooks & Angelia Sparrow

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Christian McIntosh set down his carrybag in the courtyard of Teufelsteinschloss and lit a clove. He couldn't believe he was actually here, that all this wasn't a dream. He'd received the invitation letter along with the other art school acceptances. It wasn't until he went back over the papers that he realized he'd never applied to The Academy.

That's all the literature called it: The Academy. "A rarified atmosphere in which promising talent is intensively nurtured for seven years." Professor Morgenstern was apparently wealthy enough to offer Christian a full ride, right down to his passport, plane tickets and train fare to the airport. That alone was enough to make his grandparents insist he accept the offer.

They were good people but had worried about college since he was a baby. Fixed incomes didn't go far, not in rural New Hampshire, and especially not with a grandfather who was an invalid. He'd insisted on working part-time as soon as he was old enough: paper routes, aluminum collection, mowing lawns, anything that would help.

A red-haired woman had met him during his extremely long layover in New York and taken him shopping. "The Professor knows not all his students are appropriately accoutered. Therefore, he has me meet specific ones and take care of the situation." Her accent was not American, but it sounded like no European accent he'd ever heard. She had dragged him through two clothing stores, a shoe shop and then let him linger in an art supply store as a reward for his patience. She bought everything he needed and anything he

wanted. She took him for lunch in Greenwich Village. He scarcely knew what he was eating. The village was the last known location of his mother, and he watched distractedly, searching the faces of every curly-haired brunette that passed. The red-haired woman made sure he caught the proper flight to Europe.

He didn't remember much of the trip after that. The plane ride was long and dull. Europe was a sleepy haze of landing in Stuttgart, being greeted by a red-haired woman, who looked much like the New York lady, holding a sign that read "McIntosh" and getting into a large, black, antique car. He slept until they reached the castle.

"So that's what flagstones look like," he mumbled, not quite awake. He ran a hand through his rumpled dyed-black hair and realized the rest of his baggage was still in the car, which had purred away into the gathering dusk. He blinked against the cold New Year's Day air and rang the bellpull. He'd missed all the parties.

Another car rumbled into the courtyard. Three young men, none of them more than twenty-five, one obviously American, one in traditional African dress topped with a parka, the third indeterminate under the scarf and hat, climbed out. They, too, stood blinking in the courtyard. Chris caught sight of a necktie and was suddenly quite aware of the buckles and straps on his pants, his tanker boots and Carhartt coat. The blond American boy rang the bell. He gave Chris a grin and stuck out his hand. The gloves were black leather and Chris guessed the coat was alpaca wool.

"Nicholas Admire, former legislator from Missouri District 124. Call me Nick." The smile never touched his green eyes.

Chris, too shy to say he'd already rung, shook the boy's hand, quite aware of how practiced the firm grip and two pumps felt. He was glad he'd left the mittens his grandmother had knitted in his pocket, even if the wind did bite at his bare fingers. "Chris McIntosh. Artist. I'm from New Hampshire."

The dark-haired boy offered a hand. "Geoffrey Laurent." His French accent was mild, to Chris's surprise. "I have recently finished medical school. Do you ever do anatomical drawing? The textbooks need good illustrators."

Chris almost blushed. "Only a few studio nudes." He wasn't going to say anything about the trip to the psychologist after Grandma had found them.

The African boy shook his hand. "Okeleke Nzenga. I am a student of agriculture."

"Nice to meet you."

The big doors swung open. A tall redheaded woman, who looked enough like the two others to be their triplet, held a lamp. "This way please, gentlemen," she said in the same unidentifiable accent. She led them down the hall to a large parlor where nine other young men were already waiting.

It was all dark wood over stone, and deep wine carpets, and heavy leather furniture. A plate of small cakes and a silver tea service sat on a low mahogany table. A well-stocked bar stood opposite a black marble fireplace large enough to stand in.

Geoffrey and Okeleke poured tea and helped themselves to the cakes. The red-haired boy at the harpsichord looked up

with annoyance when Nick rattled the ice in a cocktail shaker. A Japanese boy looked up at the new arrivals, and his two Hispanic companions did the same. Chris was enthralled by all the amazing faces and his fingers twitched for his sketchpad. He would have a splendid time drawing here, but right now, he wanted to fade into the woodwork and not be the center of attention.

Nick seemed to have no problem with it. He worked the room after his martini was made, introducing himself first to the Indian boy who had been leaning on the harpsichord, vocalizing with the redhead's playing, and then apologizing to the musician. Chris just looked around, working up the nerve to get a cup of tea.

An Australoid black man, a little older than the rest of them, sat on the sofa sharing pictures with a Chinese youth and an Arabic one. A blue-eyed American boy sulked, leaning on the mantle of the fireplace.

"What're you staring at?" he growled at Chris. "Take a picture. It'll last longer."

"Politeness, Sterling." A middle-aged man spoke from the shadows of a dark leather armchair. "You shouldn't antagonize your classmates in the first five minutes." He rose, tall and angular. The firelight put golden glints into his wavy hair, and his smile spoke of far too much knowledge. "So we are all assembled. Welcome, my boys, to Teufelsteinschloss Academy. I am Professor Morgenstern. As each of your letters stated, you will study here for seven years. At the end of that time, you will pay the tuition and go out into the world, leaders in your fields."

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He took a drink from the brandy snifter in his hand. "Each of you was invited because you are one of the best men in your field under the age of twenty-five. When you leave, you will be the best. All of you are extraordinarily gifted."

Morgenstern looked them over, and Chris dropped his eyes when the professor's fell on him. He'd never met anyone like this: charismatic, compelling, and almost preternaturally beautiful. He knew what his first drawing at the Schloss would be.

"Thirteen of the most talented, most lovely young men in the world. In seven years, you will own the world. Come. Dinner is at nine sharp. Both attendance and formal dress are mandatory." He pulled part of a deck of tarot cards from the pocket of his jacket and fanned them out in one long hand. "Thirteen: six pairs and a trump. The cards' numbers correspond to your room assignment. The cards will pair you for your stay."

"This is a very large castle. Why don't we get our own rooms?" The Indian youth at the harpsichord asked.

"Because if I allow that, our little artist will never emerge for meals, and Mr. Admire will never go to bed for politicking. You will not get the rest you need, and Matthew will compose until he drops. You will all watch out for each other. Who is first?"

Nick gave a cocky yet charming smile. Chris could see why he'd been elected to the State House so young. He strode forward and picked a card out of Morgenstern's hand.

"Welcome, Mr. Admire. It's a pleasure to have you here." Morgenstern's smile was as polished as Nick's.

"Five of swords," he said.

One by one, the men drew their cards. As each man found his roommate, and the two cards came together, a small flash of light created a glowing beacon. The foxfire balls led them out of the sitting room and to their bedrooms.

Li, who Morgenstern greeted as a chemist, poked at the foxfire, and left discussing it with Faki, the philosopher from Cairo, trying to figure out what it was and what had caused it. Sterling, who turned out to be a criminal mastermind, scowled more when he was paired with Matt, the redheaded musician.

"Better not be any damn violins at all hours," he grumbled.

Professor Morgenstern laughed. Then he smiled when Ayutu pulled the trump card of the Tower. "Most fitting for you, my astrophysicist. The view from the tower is quite good and I have several excellent telescopes. Yes, I think you should have your own garret. Mind the singing mice."

A laugh ran through the remaining men. Even Chris smiled. Apparently Disney animated movies were a universal experience. Two by two, the others left.

Morgenstern held out the last card to Chris. "Little artist?" he said, his voice making Chris's knees go weak even as it drew him forward. Morgenstern barely touched Chris's hand as he took the card, sending hot and cold shivers all over the youth.

"Fi-five of swords." He already knew, since Nick—now working on his third martini—was the only one left.

"Last is first and first is last and so we make the Kingdom ourselves."



Nick raised an eyebrow. "I don't think that's quite how that goes. C'mon Chris, we'll get settled."

"Shakespeare?" Chris mumbled, letting Nick draw him out. He couldn't stop looking at Professor Morgenstern. The light from the fireplace played with his handsome face, creating shadows and highlights that made Chris want to weep and sketch and paint. The fire put red and gold highlights into the greying mane and beard. It caught a last small smile, just for Chris, sending him out hard and needy.

The bedroom mixed the castle's antiquity with every modern convenience. The wall sconces held adjustable soft flourescent bulbs. The mattress on the great canopied four-poster was a Sealy Posturepedic. Cherry wood roll-top desks boasted state-of-the-art computers and ergonomic chairs, made of the same cherry wood and scarlet brocade that matched the bed curtains. Two cherry armoires waited for their clothes. A porcelain washbasin and pitcher stood next to the door of a very modern, very luxurious bath of black marble and gold fittings.

Chris examined a mirror with attached candles. "Girandole, early baroque period. I think it's real."

"Of course it is." Nick hung his suits and khakis and oxford shirts in the armoire with the air of a man accustomed to living out of suitcases in the lap of luxury.

"No phone. But we have the Internet," Chris added, checking the computer.

"No cell signal either." Nick turned off his phone and tossed it in his nearly empty suitcase.

"Better unpack and dress."

Chris tried not to be embarrassed about the tags and store tissues still in his new clothing. He hung everything neatly and laid out the dinner jacket and good pants. "I'm having a shower." He looked at the bed, where Nick was sprawled, working on his palm pilot. "One bed."

"Yeah, I at least expected bunks." Nick flashed him a grin. "Top or bottom?"

Chris swallowed hard and ducked into the bath. The casual way Nick had asked threw him. He'd known for years that he liked boys as well as girls. He washed, already aroused from the professor and Nick's offhand suggestion. When Nick joined him in the shower and slid down to suck him without any preliminaries, all he could do was lean against the wall and gasp for breath.

Nick's tongue left him stunned, doing his best impression of a beached tuna. He came in very short order. Nick gave him a grin, stood up and began washing his hair as if nothing had happened.

"Uh, pleased to meet you too?" Chris ventured.

"Beats the hell out of a handshake, doesn't it?" Nick ducked under the water to rinse.

"How long have you known?" Chris asked. "That you liked boys?"

"Since I was about twelve and saw Leo DiCaprio in *The Man in the Iron Mask*. He was so beautiful in that scene where his mistress killed herself, I wanted to kiss him and console him. Kissed my first boy a couple months later. You?"

"Always knew. I've been fighting it. Small town." Somehow, Chris couldn't manage complete sentences.

"Yeah, me too." Nick didn't seem to want to talk about his one-blinky light town with the funny name and the Bass Pro Shop. He stepped out of the shower and dried off.

"Starting your scandals young?" Chris followed him, reaching for his own towel.

"Nah. It's only a scandal if I deny it. If I just say 'Yeah? So?' they back off. The only way to be a politician in my particular loop of the Bible belt is to either be purer than God or just brazen it out. Most of the pious hypocrites go for the first route. And that is what makes a scandal, babe."

"I'll remember," Chris said as he got dressed. He managed the dress-shirt and the pants well enough, but looked puzzled at the cufflinks and shirt studs. The bow-tie baffled him.

"All right, let me help you." Nick sighed. He was already dressed. He showed Chris how to fasten the jewelry. Then he stood behind Chris and made him learn to tie the bow tie. He kissed the nape of Chris's neck. "Look, don't let me push you. I come on kinda strong."

Chris shuddered under the kiss and nodded. He went down to the main hall with Nick and found the others milling around. Most wore dinner jackets. Ayutu had a black kimono cut almost like a tuxedo. Bansi and Okeleke chose formal ethnic costumes, Bansi's bright crimson silk and Okeleke's deep green standing out the sea of black.

The doors of the dining room opened at 8:57. Professor Morgenstern stood before a chair at the head of a long table. The men's names were on place-cards. They had been shuffled so that no one sat next to his roommate. It didn't stop Chris from looking down the table now and then at Nick,

remembering the shower. He also caught Professor Morgenstern looking at him a time or two when he glanced up the table. He wasn't paying any attention to Ignacio talking mathematics to Ayutu on his left or Li and Okeleke discussing pH balances in soil on his right. He ate the meal, scarcely knowing what it was, so lost was he in his own thoughts.

As the dessert, warm bread pudding with whiskey sauce, was brought out, Professor Morgenstern stood up. "Gentlemen, in your rooms you will find your course packets. Each of you will have one hour a day of tutoring and the rest—save dinner—as independent study. Your packet will inform you of the time, what you are expected to bring to the first session, and what you must produce this week. I bid you good evening."

He left and the rest of the dining room ate in silence. The silence hung even as they left and headed back to their own rooms. Nick finally broke it. "Weird kind of school, if you ask me."

"No one did, Admire." Matt, the musician, scowled, his color high and his brogue getting thicker with each word.

"Oh yeah, O'Neill? Don't mean I can't speak up." Nick's temper was showing on his face, jet-lag and weirdness taking their toll.

"Stop it. No fighting." Bansi stepped between the pair. "We are all tired."

Nick took a couple deep breaths, stepped back and nodded. "Thanks. I needed that break. No hard feelings, O'Neill."

"None here on you either." Matt headed toward the room he shared with Sterling. So far the other had not liked a single one of his compositions, preferring to plug himself into his hip-hop and rap by way of his ipod. Simple noise in Matt's opinion.

Back in the room, Chris sat on the bed and opened his packet. "My class is at seven. That leaves an hour to get ready for dinner."

"Nine in the morning. Boy, we can really sleep in." Nick read over the meal schedule: breakfast available from seven until nine, lunch from eleven to one, mandatory formal dinner at nine. He yawned hugely. "Bedtime. And no frills."

Chris gave a small smile and got into his pajamas, feeling silly. Nick had already seen him naked. But Nick, too, pulled on flannel sleep pants and drew the curtains on the bed against the chilly night air.

\* \* \* \*

Chris brought his entire portfolio, even the nudes he'd never shown to anyone, to his first class session with the professor. A half-finished sketch of Nick holding his coffee, the newest piece, caught Morgenstern's eye, even though there was no face on it.

"Your roommate?" Chris nodded, a bit stunned that he'd recognized it without a face.

"The mole." He pointed to a distinctive figure-eight mole on the back of the hand holding the coffee cup. "You say in your application letters you want to transition from the pencil and oil pastels to painting, eventually into the style of the Old

Masters. Today would be a good day to try." Chris dared not open his mouth to say he'd never written an application to The Academy. Morgenstern had voiced his deepest desire, the one he had never told anyone. He wanted McIntosh to be remembered with Van Gogh and Rembrandt in another five hundred years.

Morgenstern settled Chris in with the paints and showed him the ways that painting was different from drawing, and the ways it was the same. Chris had some experience mixing pigments from various art classes and summer institutes. He began a landscape that looked like the one out the window, but darkened and twisted.

At seven forty-five, Morgenstern called a halt for clean up. "You've made great progress, little artist. I will see you at dinner."

\* \* \* \*

Over the days and weeks, Chris's barely concealed awe of his teacher only grew. Nick was a pleasant roommate, even if he did insist on making sure Chris ate regularly, and socialized with the others.

Sometimes Chris wondered what it would be like to be rooming with someone less outgoing. Someone less sexual, who didn't blow him at the drop of a shower curtain or kiss him every time they passed. He loved the attention. His grandmother had been a fine specimen of puritan Yankee matriarchy who believed physical contact was at best distasteful, and more likely sinful.

Nick was beginning to push for more, though. After four months of blow jobs, hand jobs and frothing off behind every tapestry they could find, he was ready to fuck. Chris, well, Chris wasn't. He liked Nick just fine, enjoyed fooling around, but he thought his first time should be with someone he loved and wanted.

*Someone like the Professor*, the persistent little voice in the back of his mind whispered as it had been since Easter. He shushed it and went to his art lesson.

"Dear little one, show me what you've drawn today." Morgenstern was sitting quietly before the fireplace, a glass of brandy in his hand after Chris finished with his painting and cleaned his brushes. Chris had noticed, weeks ago, that Morgenstern never called him by his name.

He had another landscape done: the crags around the schloss, with Okeleke's just-blooming roses making a splash of color like fresh blood against the bare and jagged rocks.

"Dear little Goth boy, turning all you see into bleakness and despair." Morgenstern smiled his approval. "How is your painting coming?"

"Acrylics are still going better than oil."

"Splendid. Do keep at it. Have you tried any human figures lately?"

Chris dug through his work and handed over several sheets, most pencil-work, but one small oil canvas. He watched Morgenstern look them over and nibbled the end of a brush in anxiety.

Morgenstern smiled as he looked at them. There was Marcelo at prayer, his fingers working his rosary. The style of

the picture might lead someone to expect a hair shirt or some Inquisition victims in evidence. Here was Li with his test-tubes, looking like a mad scientist under Chris's skills. Okeleke dug in his garden, but looked more as if he was burying a body than planting the flowers beside him in the wheelbarrow. Morgenstern caught himself looking for a skeletal hand under the peonies. The oil was of Nick, stretched naked on the bed, apparently working on his PDA. The angle of the viewer was from the floor looking up, as if Nick had casually tossed them out of bed, assuming the proper place for a used sex slave was on the floor.

"You have an eye for the morbid, my little artist. It is fashionable now." He tapped Nick's painting. "Your roommate. It is an unusual angle." Morgenstern looked Chris up and down until he shivered under the appraising eyes. "Has he had you yet?"

Chris swallowed hard. "Had, sir?"

Morgenstern leaned in close, too close. His voice purred seductively. "Has he fucked you yet?"

Chris shivered, from the breath on his ear, the crudity or simply the Professor's closeness he couldn't say. "No."

Morgenstern smiled. "Very good. If you are willing, after dinner, we will have an oil tutoring session. You will not return to your room as virginal as when you left it."

Chris blinked a few times, stunned by the suddenness of the proposition.

"Problem, little artist?"

Chris smiled. "No, sir." He glanced at the Professor's package quite obviously before he caught himself.



Morgenstern saw this and smiled. "I will not hurt you, child."

"I didn't think so." Chris gathered up his materials, seeing time was nearly over.

"Are you willing?" At Chris's nod, he smiled more broadly. "Very good. I do not force anyone." He watched as Chris made for the door. "And do keep drawing. You have an eye for the shadows." He crooked a finger.

"Thank you, I—" the words died on Chris's lips as he saw the beckoning. His stomach fluttered when he stepped close to the red velvet sofa.

Morgenstern's kiss was light, gentle. Chris closed his eyes and sighed into it. When he opened them again, Morgenstern was at the door, opening it. Confusion wrote itself large on Chris' features and he picked up the portfolio he'd dropped.

"After dinner then," he managed.

"Indeed." Professor Morgenstern vanished out the door.

After dinner, Chris barely noticed the glare Nick shot at him as he gathered his art materials. He fumbled his easel on the stairs, and had to sit down until his stomach stopped knotting. He got himself together and made it to the parlor. He swallowed until his mouth wasn't quite as dry and knocked at the door.

Morgenstern smiled as he opened the door and Chris leaned a little on the wall for support because his knees no longer wanted to hold him up. He followed the professor into the parlor.

The lesson demanded complete concentration. Morgenstern moved quickly, requiring much from Chris. Chris

performed brilliantly. He'd always worked well under pressure.

"Excellent, little artist." Morgenstern seized him by the shoulders and kissed him in congratulation as he finished adding his initials to the stark landscape.

The long-desired kiss took Chris by surprise. He melted before it, and then returned it, reaching his paint-smeared hands up to Morgenstern's hair before he realized it. He left grey and brown and black smudges in the fair hair and on his teacher's face.

Morgenstern did no more than laugh. "Eager child." He blotted at his face with a handkerchief. The kiss left Chris too fuddled to notice the ease with which the paint vanished. "Clean your brushes and yourself, then come with me."

Chris made a fast but thorough clean up, and went to where Morgenstern waited near a door behind a tapestry. To his surprise, the professor's bedroom looked exactly like a student room, save there was only one desk and one armoire. The four-poster was identical to the one he shared with Nick. He'd expected something much more personal, more lived-in. Only the Gustav Dore engraving of Lucifer Cast Out from *Paradise Lost* marked the room as any different. Chris lingered at the foot of the bed.

Morgenstern had settled himself on the bed, already in his dressing gown. "Talk to me, little artist."

"How do you do these things?" Chris's eyes were large. Morgenstern merely lifted an eyebrow and Chris elaborated, "You move too fast to be seen. I barely make it to the foot of

the bed and you're already changed. You clean messes with barely a wave. How?"

"Little one, are you so dense? Do you not know me?"  
Morgenstern's smile never faltered.

"We talk. Marcelo says you're the Devil himself. I don't believe in it."

Morgenstern laughed, and Chris realized he was the butt of the joke. "It doesn't matter what you believe. Believe the moon is made of green cheese for all I care." He lounged, seemingly heedless of how the dressing gown was falling. For all that Chris had always heard angels were sexless, the man before him was demonstrably male. Based on observation, he was twice the man Nick was. Chris went as Morgenstern beckoned him to the bed.

"Whether you believe or not, and no matter what churchmen say, I remain Archangel Lucifiel, Light of God and best beloved of the Father. The one who loved God enough to take on the most despised of duties, that of Adversary." He ran a hand over Chris's trembling shoulder. "Why should having it said upset you so? You knew, did you not? What do you fear?"

"I don't want it to be true," Chris blurted. "I can't believe, can't comprehend."

"Do you want me? Do you comprehend what we are doing?"

Chris nodded.

"Will you tell me if I am hurting?"

"I'll try not to scream too loud, yeah."

Morgenstern hooked the tip of his index finger under Chris's chin and drew him down for a kiss. He was fire and honey under Chris's mouth, opening and kissing, not with haste or urgency, but with a measured slowness as though they had infinite time to enjoy themselves in nothing more than this kiss.

When Chris finally moved away, Morgenstern gave him another smile. "Fear not, little artist." He smiled wryly. "It has been millennia since I used the common greeting of my kind to mortals. You will be fine and we will create a work of art between two bodies. Touch me. I will not break, nor will I hurt you."

Chris's smile felt sickly on his face. He reached out and traced his teacher's strong jaw, his chest, his stomach, making his way to the goal. "Yes," he sighed, wrapping one hand around the thick shaft. He experimented with different grips, different speeds, the softness firming into velvety iron.

"Yes," Morgenstern responded. He smiled, encouraging Chris with each different hold. "Yes, sweet one, that's perfect," he sighed when Chris lowered his mouth for a taste.

Chris had wanted this for weeks, ever since Nick started letting him reciprocate on the blow jobs. Morgenstern was clean, and the same sweetness of his mouth was here as well. As Morgenstern grew harder, Chris wasn't sure he could take all of it. He fit his mouth around the head, licking under the foreskin, just experimenting, learning as he would with a new brush. He felt Morgenstern's hands, stroking his hair, his jaw. The soft words from above him were litanies of soothing sound with no meaning. Unlike Nick, Morgenstern never

shoved into his mouth. Chris was glad; the monster in his mouth could choke him without trying.

Chris sucked and licked and kissed until his jaw ached. Morgenstern drew him back up for a kiss and held him.

"You do that wonderfully well, little one."

Chris shot him an impish look. "Practice."

Morgenstern laughed a little, then kissed him. "I did not climax for a reason, although you had me quite close. I would rather be within you." He slid one hand along Chris's body to stroke his ass, feeling the give of his buttocks.

Chris caught his breath and nodded. "Want that, too," was all he managed.

"Gently then, my sweet lover." Morgenstern rolled Chris away from him and spooned in behind him. He ran his hand over Chris's body, grazing his cock several times before stopping to stroke it.

"Very gently?" Chris squirmed a little, trying to hold back the orgasm on which he teetered.

Morgenstern kissed his neck. "Come for me. It will relax you." The words knocked Chris's precarious control from him and sent him over the edge, spurting all over the professor's hand. Morgenstern brought his hand to his mouth and licked at it, offering Chris only single finger, mock-grudgingly.

Chris moaned softly as he licked the length of Morgenstern's long forefinger. His own salty flavor combined with the professor's skin seemed to be making him hotter than ever.

When the finger was clean, Morgenstern began working on him. That finger worked its way into Chris's body, slick and careful. A second joined it, gentler than the first.

Chris voiced his fear. "Never going to fit in there."

"It will, little artist, and I will not hurt you." The passage loosened under his unfailingly gentle ministrations. He added a third finger and used them to form a funnel for more lubricant. Slowly he moved into position and removed the fingers. "Easy now." He rocked gently against Chris, letting him open under the pressure and not forcing his way in.

Chris hissed at the burn, then yelped when the head worked its way inside his body. He could do this. He bit down hard, then eased up. He took deep breaths, trying to relax so it would stop hurting.

Morgenstern stopped moving and merely held him. "Tell me when you are ready." He kissed Chris's neck and stroked his body. He felt Chris relax well before he heard the shaky affirmation. He slipped in, slow, gentle, very careful, until he was buried in the artist's body.

Chris gave a long, low moan, feeling filled beyond expectations.

"See? I told you, sweet one." Morgenstern punctuated this with a kiss and was delighted when Chris moved tentatively on him while still in the kiss. Morgenstern smiled into the kiss and continued, his hands stroking even as his tongue did. At length, they broke. "Are you still afraid?"

"Maybe," Chris hesitated. "Mostly of liking this too much."

Morgenstern gave a purr like a great lazy cat. "Too much is almost enough." He took control, moving gently but firmly. To

his delight, Chris emitted that low moan again, louder this time. "Sexy boy," he whispered, stepping up his motion to firm thrusts. "So very good, so tight." When Chris rolled a bit more onto his stomach, Morgenstern asked. "More?"

"Oh yes..." Chris breathed, parting his legs, trying to give Morgenstern more access to his body. He lost the breathiness and grew loud as Morgenstern moved harder and faster, almost pounding at him.

Morgenstern gave a soft laugh at the filth that poured from his boy, a steady stream of vulgarity that was almost a prayer in its intensity. In return, he pounded very hard for a few strokes. When Chris screamed for more, more, and more, Morgenstern gave it, burying himself completely, with full force of his strength behind the thrust as he came with a scream of his own.

That sound, half wail, half startled surprise, triggered Chris into an explosive second orgasm. They came down together, Morgenstern kissing Chris's neck and shoulders.

"Sweet boy," he whispered.

Chris gasped, "Don't leave yet."

"I'll stay within as long as I can." Morgenstern rolled them back to spooning, cradling Chris gently and whispering filthy French poetry until the young man calmed down.

"So good," Chris said softly.

"So very good, little artist. A work of art in itself." When Chris laughed, Morgenstern kissed his neck, his ear and his cheek, his lips light and comforting. "You came to my bed fearful: afraid of pain, afraid of my size, afraid of your

inexperience. Have I quelled your fears?" He shifted as he softened enough to leave Chris's body.

Chris rolled to face him. "All of them." For the first time, he looked deep into Morgenstern's eyes, losing himself in them, drowning in honey and amber. "I've wanted this for months." The intensity in his voice drew an answering nod from Morgenstern.

"I knew the first night, from the way you looked at me. You were not simply storing me up to draw. But Walpurgis night seemed a much more appropriate time for a," he chuckled, "virgin sacrifice."

The name rang a bell, but Chris couldn't put any specific idea to it. "Why?"

Morgenstern tsked. "My little Goth, I thought you of all people would know. Have you forgotten your Stoker? From "Dracula's Guest": 'Walpurgis Night was when, according to the belief of millions of people, the devil was abroad—when the graves were opened and the dead came forth and walked. When all evil things of earth and air and water held revels.'"

"Beltaine," Chris realized suddenly. "It's Beltaine. I guess I forgot." He wasn't sure if he was speaking of the quote or the date. Probably both, and he knew Morgenstern would understand.

Morgenstern stoked his face gently. "After your evening, I am surprised you know your own name."

Chris laughed quietly. "Of course I do. It's ... Roger?"

Morgenstern smiled and kissed his cheek. "Very well, Roger, and you have been, quite thoroughly, you know."



"Mmmhmm," Chris agreed. He'd suspected it was love for some time, but now, he was sure.

Morgenstern held him a while longer. "I will not have you every night, but you may ask for me any time you like."

Chris looked at him, confused and a little hurt. "You wish to sleep alone tonight?"

Morgenstern kissed his forehead. "Dear one, I nearly always sleep alone. I fear your roommate is growing disgruntled." He whispered, "I revert to myself in sleep, and my own form is not so comely as this." Seeing Chris about to protest, he laid a long finger across the boy's lips. "Some night, you will stay and you will see. There is always one who is brave enough to do so."

Wanting to be that brave one, Chris sat up. Morgenstern pulled him back for a long, deep kiss. His lips burned hot against Chris's mouth, his tongue slick and invading, knowing the places Chris would like best. Chris gasped when they parted.

"Go on, little artist."

Chris shut the door behind him and climbed the stairs, each step reminding him of the evening. He pushed the door of the bedroom open, barely able to stay upright. He hadn't bothered to dress beyond his jeans, and he clutched the rest of his clothes like a security blanket.

Nick looked up. He was reading Machiavelli in bed, highlighter in hand. "You look fucking wrecked. Are you stoned?" Chris shook his head. "Drunk?" Nick looked him over. "What did you do?"

Chris staggered across the room and fell into bed. "Got deflowered."

Nick stared and gave a short humorless laugh. "Baby, you didn't get deflowered. You got picked and plowed under and resown with ragweed."

Chris's laugh held more humor and he missed the undertone in Nick's voice.

Nick kissed his neck. "Come on, let me check you over. You're probably bleeding if you're walking like that. Standing in that door, you looked like a whore that just took on a whole legion."

Chris squirmed out of his pants without getting up and rolled over. Nick's hands moved over his ass, parting him gently. Nick's breath on the back of his balls would have aroused him if he hadn't been spent.

"Nope, I was wrong. He's good then." Nick licked along the cleft of Chris's ass, tasting him, tasting Morgenstern, resisting the temptation to shove his tongue deep then follow it with fingers and cock and then, maybe even more.

Chris glanced over his shoulder. "Want me, too?"

Nick got up, covered Chris with the blanket and laid down beside him "Always. But not after he's had you." His face hardened. "I don't take sloppy seconds."

Chris missed the danger again. "Later, then."

Nick slid under the covers himself. "Definitely," he promised, no longer seeming so jealous. He drew Chris in for a cuddle, then kissed him, only to find he was already asleep.

\* \* \* \*

The great portrait hall of the schloss changed for each student. Marcelo and Geoffrey had learned this as they compared notes with Nick. Nick's Machiavelli and Washington were replaced by Pasteur and Curie and Calvin and Loyola as befit the situation. Marcelo in particular, found the hall conducive to meditation.

"Don't let me disturb you."

Marcelo had heard the deliberately heavy step behind him. "Good morning, professor. I spoke with Loyola for a minute."

Morgenstern smiled. "Yes, Ignatius was one of my better pieces of work. I understand why you would speak to him and not," he strolled down the line of pictures, "let us say, Luther."

Marcelo nodded. "I toured Luther's home in my traveling. They are still showing the ink stain to tourists."

"Dear, stuffy Martin. He grew full of himself in his later years and no longer welcomed a visit from his old teacher." Morgenstern took in the lack of surprise on Marcelo's face. "How long have you known, dear Marcelo?"

"Since I came. The name is transparent. And the legends, although not so common, are well known in certain villages." He looked on down the wall as the more modern pictures. "Robertson."

"Of course. I could not have asked for a better sower of discord." He tapped another one familiar to millions of television viewers. "Falwell, alas, was not one of my more successful endeavors. He is a small greedy man."

"Cho, of South Korea..." Marcelo stared into the face of the leading proponent of the Prosperity Gospel, which stood in

direct opposition his own Liberation Theology. "You set us at each other's throats."

"You set yourselves there. I merely give you the tools."

"Yes." Marcelo's face was disturbed. He had been disturbed since arriving and his unease was growing more pronounced as the first year wore down.

"You need not continue in your studies, Marcelo." The offer came softly and Morgenstern's hand fell on his shoulder.

"It is enlightening to argue with one who was present from the dawn of time." Marcelo had thought long and hard on the subject. "Teach me and I will use it to withhold as many as I can from you."

Morgenstern laughed. "So be it then. Shall we continue with substitutiary atonement or shall we move on to transubstantiation?"

"Why?" Marcelo turned to face him. "Why the school? Why the teaching that we may go forth and aid mankind when you despise us?"

Morgenstern said nothing and led him to the book-lined study where they always argued. He sat in his great leather chair and, for the first time since Marcelo had seen him, the smile vanished. "Because even I am not outside of the Divine Plan. Because, like all angels, I cannot create, therefore I must inspire others. This is my chosen method of it."

Marcelo sat quietly for a minute. "I believe I understand."

\* \* \* \*

New Year's came and went, with a party in the parlor and what Chris thought of as a deathwatch for the old year. Each

boy had put in a request for a special dish at dinner and there had been much laughter and passing of plates at the table. They moved into the parlor. Matt and Bansi favored them with a composition for voice and cello. Okeleke's hothouse provided the orchids that graced the occasional tables. Several of Chris's best pieces were on easels for the others to see.

Marcelo and Faki were quietly arguing the nature of God in the corner. Li and Malcolm were talking computer technology, mathematics and the possibility of life on another planet with Ayutu and Ignacio. The discussion often grew heated and profanities in Spanish and Japanese vied with the Cantonese and Bunaba vulgarities.

Chris sketched ferociously, as if trying to record the whole night for posterity in pencil. He lingered in the tight curls of Malcolm's hair, on the highlights of Faki's long, straight nose, getting the swirled embroidery of Matt's cuffs and the geometric designs of Bansi's tunic.

Morgenstern merely watched over his boys, amused. At five before midnight, he signaled Matt to stop and cranked an old Victrola. Guy Lombardo filled the room with "Auld Lang Syne" to many puzzled looks.

"A happy new year," Morgenstern said. "May your next year here be as productive as this one has." He stepped out the door to his rooms.

The boys, realizing the party was over, drifted back to their rooms. Nick lingered, talking to some of the others, but Chris, tired, went straight upstairs.

He flipped through his sketch pad: his friends; his classmates; and always the professor. Just looking at the art made him want Morgenstern.

He set the sketch pad aside and curled up under the blankets to masturbate. Maybe he could be done and asleep before Nick got in. His roommate had only gotten slicker and more charismatic over the last year, as well as more demanding. Chris didn't mind the sex so much, but sometimes, he just wanted to sleep without being fucked first.

He put Nick out of his mind and thought of the professor. He imagined his hand was Morgenstern's large one, cool and firm, wrapped around his cock and stroking. He knew he was moaning, but couldn't stop, lost in the fantasy and the sensation.

Nick sitting on the edge of the bed broke both. "Someone had himself quite a tutoring session tonight, it looks like."

Chris rolled up, startled and clutching the blankets tighter around himself. Nick laughed softly and replaced Chris's hand with his own.

"Going bashful on me?" When Chris just looked at him, Nick stroked Chris's hair out of his eyes. "Big, blue eyes. Your hair's growing out. You need to re-dye it or cut it." He played in it a moment, touching the roots. "I like the brown."

Chris licked his lips, trying to find words for the moment. He shot Nick a pleading look. "Finish me?"

Nick gave the charming half-smile. "Sure." The hand that loosely circled Chris's cock moved faster, gripping tight. He moved faster and faster until Chris came over his hand with a

loud wail. Nick laughed softly and wiped his hands on a tissue. "Noisy little thing."

Chris rolled away, fumbled for the clove cigarettes he kept in the night stand. After lighting one and taking a deep drag, he sighed, "Needed that."

Nick stroked his hair. "Your lessons are pretty good then."

Chris nodded. "I haven't had a crush in years. I've never had one like this."

"Kinda hard not to around here. All these gorgeous guys and the prof himself."

"You have one, too?" Chris was surprised. Nick didn't seem like the crushing type.

"A few actually." Nick touched his cheek. "You're one."

"Is it a crush if I let you have me?" Chris wasn't sure about that. After all, he was in Morgenstern's bed too, and it seemed silly to describe it as something so small as a "crush."

"Only when I fantasize about keeping you." Nick leaned in and kissed him, thrusting into his mouth, making it very clear who was in control of the kiss. "That would be a real scandal, especially since I'll have to get married in the next few years. No one gets anywhere without the wife and kids and dog. Representative Admire and his wife and his gay lover just doesn't look the same on the Christmas letter to the voters."

He kissed Chris again, and there were teeth behind his lips, hard and bruising. He didn't stop until Chris was whimpering.

"So what was your lesson?" Nick always loved seeing his artwork. He flipped through the sketchbook. "Still drawing the professor at every chance, huh?"

"Light and shadow work. The fire does amazing things to his face." Chris smiled, lost in thinking about the play of light over the angular face.

"It's the cheekbones, man." Nick set the sketchbook aside, and slid in beside Chris, slipping out of his pants. He kissed Chris's neck then licked up to his ear to whisper, "You know, I'm not afraid of what First Baptist says anymore. I answer to a lower power."

\* \* \* \*

Chris enjoyed his lessons with the professor more and more. He knew what Morgenstern was, yet it didn't matter. He didn't believe in hell or devils or God or any of it. At the beginning of a session, when all the homework he'd had to show were chiaroscuro studies of the professor's face, he found the nerve to ask.

"I want to see you, this time. Not this," he gestured at the glasses and the beard, "but the real you."

Morgenstern blinked at the request. "Little artist, you don't know what you're asking. When my kind appears uncloaked before humans, the usual greeting is 'Do not fear.' Few mortals can stand on their feet in the presence of an angel."

Chris set his jaw. "My gift is my eyes. I'm able to make real what I see. And I want to see you: Lucifel, not my professor who likes tweed and cognac."

Morgenstern drew Chris in close and kissed him. "If you are certain." Chris nodded. "Sit then, and take up your materials. I cannot hold the manifestation long." He seemed to wrap himself in a cloak of darkness that filled the entire



center of the parlor, and then emerged. Chris looked upon a true angel, his broken wings smoke-stained, golden armor dented and tarnished, his face bruised, battered and careworn.

Chris sat, his sketchbook in his lap for a moment. His breath caught in his throat and he drank in every detail of the being before him.

"Be afraid, little one," Lucifiel, the Morning Star, said.

Chris was shaking, but he steadied his hand. "I am afraid. I won't let it stop me." He drew rapidly, broad strokes, capturing as much as he could before the vision left.

After a few minutes, too few for Chris, the angel was gone, and only his much-adored professor was still there. Chris ceased looking up from his drawing and filled in the details from memory. Sweat stood out on his forehead and he pushed his too-long hair out of his face several times.

Morgenstern sat quietly, drinking his cognac, and watching. When Chris finally set the sketchbook aside, he drew the artist to his feet and kissed him. Chris clung there, stretching the kiss out.

"Show it to me when you finish," the professor said. "Little one, are you too tired for me?"

"Never."

"I feel generous," Morgenstern said, drawing Chris toward the bed. "What would you like tonight?"

"Sweet and slow?" His eyes were big and hopeful and Morgenstern did not miss the bruised look of his lips.

The professor stroked his face. "You know I'm just tempting you, ensnaring you further. And that any small kindness done me is tantamount to sacrificing to idols."

Chris shrugged. "I don't care. I'd rather have this than anything else."

Morgenstern's laugh was soft and bitter. "So you shall, little artist, of your own will."

Another year passed and a third. Chris grew more and more uneasy in his rooms. Nick had mastered persuasion and now he could talk anyone into anything, and Chris had learned more about deviant sex than he'd ever really wanted to know. Every time Chris made Nick angry, there was a new and humiliating sex act to try, and Chris dared not say how much he hated them. He'd seen Nick truly angry exactly once. Then, the solid wood armoire had ended up so much kindling. He never wanted that turned on him.

Nick had been quite apologetic afterward and very loving. Even Chris had read enough to know he was spiraling into a cycle of abuse, but he couldn't think how to get out. Chris noticed Nick's anger tended to peak two days after he'd spent the night with the professor. He also noticed Nick never stayed out overnight anymore.

Chris knew it was over the night he came in late from a session with Morgenstern. Nick was waiting up for him, as he almost always did.

"Good fuck tonight, slut?" he sneered, slamming his book onto the table.

Chris just looked confused. "Yes."

He knew it was the wrong thing to say. Nick spat in his direction and rolled up into the blankets, hogging the majority of them. Chris managed to retrieve enough to sleep under once Nick was asleep. He was disconcerted to awaken in Nick's arms.

The awkwardness only grew. Nick ignored him as often as not in the next weeks. Chris could live with being ignored, but it was the little verbal digs and the occasional physical things that got to him. Nick would trip him when he could, or make sure his art was destroyed just before class. Chris began avoiding his room, except at bedtime, which only made Nick angrier.

"Fucking around on me like a little whore," he raged, one evening when Chris hadn't come in for two days.

"I only sleep with the Professor. You know that."

Nick closed the distance. "Yeah, that's what you say."

Chris found his voice at last. "Who else do you think I've been with?" he demanded.

"Anyone that'll fill your pretty ass." Nick's tone vibrated with fury and danger. "Bet Sterling loves it when you look up at him with those big blue eyes while your mouth is around his cock. And I know Malcolm's been in your pants. Bet he's hung. If you haven't gone tail-up for Ayutu, it's only a matter of time." Nick caught Chris by his shirt front and slammed him against the wall to kiss him hard, almost biting him. The move knocked away the breath Chris had taken to refute the charges. "You're mine," Nick snarled, his face ugly with possession. He did bite Chris with the next kiss, bloodying his lip.

Chris cried out and pulled away, hitting his head on the wall. He gasped as Nick gave a nasty laugh and dove in, leaving a very large, dark hickey, with teeth marks in it, high on his throat.

"Now anyone who sees you knows you're taken. I catch you fucking anybody else, or sucking anybody, and you are going to be one very sorry little slut."

Chris stayed as quiet as he could. He hoped the storm had passed. Nick's next actions confirmed it had. Nick drew him in and kissed him sweetly. He responded just as sweetly, hoping the tantrum was over.

Nick cupped his face and pressed their foreheads together. "Love you, babe. You just make me crazy-jealous." He held Chris close, whispering over and over how much he loved him.

Softly, Chris ventured, "I love you, too. Just you. You don't have to be jealous."

"That's my boy."

Nick was very sweet over the next few days. He didn't hesitate to show affection in public. Chris was careful not to cover the hickey, knowing Nick would want it seen.

During the next art lesson, Morgenstern ran very light fingers over the bruise and the bite on his mouth. "Our Mr. Admire is causing you trouble I see."

Chris shrugged. "He just got a little rough." He didn't want to make a scene.

Morgenstern nodded. "And do you like him rough? Or do you not know how to tell him no?"

"I like it to a point," Chris covered.

"To this point?" The quiet question hung between them.

"No, he went too far this time. Marked me. Like I was his property or something."

"Are you? And may I trespass?"

Chris nodded, thinking Nick was right, he was a slut to enjoy this. "Please. Evenings with you are what keep me going."

Morgenstern was very gentle and Chris left, considerably easier in his own mind. Nick was asleep, so he slipped into the bathroom, brushed his teeth and undressed for bed. When he slid in, Nick flipped him to his back.

Chris gasped. "You're awake."

"Damn right." Nick backhanded him. "Out half the night. How many put it to you? Did you fuck the eleven other infernal apostles and his Satanic Majesty, too?"

Chris just blinked, stunned by the blow and the accusation. "Just ... the professor." He shook his head trying to clear it.

"Lying little slut." Nick rolled off and threw him bodily out of bed. "I don't sleep with whores."

Chris landed hard, cracking his head on the night stand. Nick never even checked the thud, and somehow that hurt most of all. Chris grabbed his clothes and yanked his pants on as he left. He found one of the sofas in the parlor and fell asleep, holding his bruised head.

In the wee hours, Chris woke to a hand on his shoulder.

"This will not do. Back to your bed, little artist."

Morgenstern offered him a hand to help rise. Halfway to the door, he saw the bruise on Chris's face. He drew the young man into an embrace. "Why do you sleep here?"

"Nick's angry at me. Because of you."

"Is he?" Morgenstern's soothing voice counter-pointed his gentle hand in Chris's hair.

"I just—I really want to leave about now."

Morgenstern guided him back to a sofa and sat them both down. "Darling boy, talk to me."

"I miss home. I did have a few friends there."

"And you have none here after three years? You do not sit in the gardens with Okeleke and speak of flowers? You do not draw fractals for Ignacio? Or paint as Matthew plays the piano? You have not gotten all the boys to pose for you at one time or another?"

Chris screwed up his courage. "May I get a new roommate? The others like me better than Nick."

"Jealous little beast. Perhaps it is time for a roommate reassignment throughout the group."

"Professor, I don't want to mess up everyone else's assignments who are doing well together."

"No, it is time. We always shuffle about halfway through the term. I'll do it Saturday. Now, back to your own room. And if Nicholas harms you again, come straight to me."

Chris said nothing. He decided that the next time Nick hit him, he was going to hit back. He got his chance sooner than expected. Morgenstern had barely shut the door behind him when Nick left off feigning sleep.

"Had to have a second round?"

Chris knew when Nick's voice was quiet and sweet like that, he was in danger. When Nick slapped him, he was ready for it. He rolled with the slap, not taking the full brunt of it.

He drove out sharply from the shoulder with his fist, planting it in Nick's stomach, just like they'd taught him that summer at the Y.

Nick sat down hard. He glared up and tried to catch his breath. "Oh baby, you just made a big fucking mistake," he whispered, getting to his feet and seizing Chris's wrist. Chris tried to pull away, but Nick held him fast and bent his hand painfully back at the wrist. "How well you gonna draw with a broken hand, slut?"

Chris looked scared. "Stop. Nick, please."

Nick bent it back farther and Chris's eyes filled with tears. There was no question in Chris's mind that Nick would break it.

A wicked smile spread over Nick's face. "Maybe I should start with your fingers. Then every bone in your hands. Then your wrist."

Chris kicked at him, truly panicking now. "Professor!" he yelled.

Nick slugged him in the jaw this time. "You want to shut it before I break your arm, too. Both of them." He let go of Chris's wrist. "The Professor doesn't care. He's the Devil. He wants you to suffer. You ever notice he never calls you by name?"

Keep him talking, Chris thought. Nick loved the sound of his own words, and maybe he'd forget his threats. "I noticed in the first month. It doesn't matter."

"Then this doesn't either." Nick snapped the little finger of Chris's left hand as casually as breaking a twig.

Chris clutched his injured hand between his thighs and staggered to the bed. He wouldn't cry, not in front of Nick, but a whimper escaped him anyway. He lay down and curled into a ball.

"That's for hitting me, asshole. You want to keep the other nine out of splints, you better calm down and be good." Nick wrapped himself around Chris and hissed in his ear, "Do I make myself clear, you little shit? Nobody goes down your throat or up your ass except me."

Chris shoved an elbow back. "Not even you. Not anymore. Get away from me."

Nick only clutched him tighter, pinning his arms to his side. "You're wrong about that, little bitch. I'll have you when I want. Or I'll make you an even sorrier slut than you are now."

"Never again," Chris insisted quietly. He rocked a bit, his finger throbbing.

"Oh I wouldn't put any money on that." Nick thrust against him through their pajama pants, letting Chris feel just how hard this had made him. "I've been wondering how easy one of your pallete knives would take out an eye. I think you'll be begging me to fuck you in a week, if not less."

Chris didn't say anything. He heard the threat and understood it clearly. He let Nick hold him, and whisper about how good it all could be if he'd just quit fucking around. He didn't have the energy to correct Nick, or even the desire now. Dawn was just starting to show in the castle windows when Nick let go of him. Chris shuddered when Nick kissed his neck and waited until he was gone for real.



He made his way down the steps and knocked on Geoffrey's door. The young doctor would help him. He had to.

Geoff looked him over. "What did you do, pinch it in an easel?" His hands were gentle and careful as he set and splinted the finger. "You should always come to me at once."

"It was late," Chris said. "I didn't want to bother you."

"This hurt you all night, I know. It may be late, but never hesitate to call. Wake me if you must."

Chris glanced around, nervous, hoping Nick didn't overhear the encounter and read it as cheating.

"Okay. You keep it dry and take the pain pills at the first sign of discomfort. Do not wait to truly hurt." He handed Chris a vial with several tablets in it. When Chris took it, Geoff noticed the bruises on his right wrist. He knew what they were. "What happened here?" he asked, waiting to see if Chris would tell the truth.

"I fell on the stairs. Caught myself."

Geoff's eyes were cold and narrow. "You are lying." He indicated the palm and inner wrist. "You see, breaking a fall would bruise you here and here." He wrapped his hand around Chris's wrist. "Being grabbed bruises you just as you are."

Chris looked at him. After a long while, he dropped his eyes and nodded.

"It was no easel, was it?" Geoff's soft question made Chris shake.

"Don't say a word. He's my roommate. He'll break my hand in the night while I'm sleeping." The panic was back in the edged of Chris's voice.

"Tell the professor," Geoff urged. "If you do not, I must."

Chris shook his head. "We're getting new roommates in a few days. Just keep quiet, please?"

"What else did he threaten to do to you that you are so frightened?"

"Don't. Please. Not unless you can make me new eyes."

Geoff looked horrified. "He is a psychopath."

"He loves me and he's jealous," Chris corrected.

"Love is not broken bones and threats of blinding, my friend. I will speak to the professor before I sign your death certificate."

"Just stay out of it. Thank you for the fix." Chris left in a hurry, only to find Nick coming down the stairs as he stepped out of Geoff's infirmary office and closed the door. He held up the splint by way of explanation.

Nick scowled. "Later," he promised and left for his class.

Chris spent the day in the room until a summons came from the professor. He knocked on the door of the study, trying to keep his splint out of sight. Morgenstern looked up from behind the great ebony desk.

"Come in and have a seat." Morgenstern waited until Chris was sitting in the big leather chair, taking up as small a space as he could occupy. "Our young doctor told me a most distressing tale today." At Chris's sigh, he commanded, "Show me your hands, little one." He looked at the bruises that were even darker now. "Rooms will be reassigned at dinner tonight. Now tell me why you did not come straight to me from the infirmary."

Chris just shook his head.

"It has been a pattern, yes? And it has escalated from a few nasty words to broken bones." Chris nodded, not wanting to tell of Nick's threat to take his eyes. "Now, he keeps you in fear. What does he threaten to do? And why?"

"He thinks I sleep with everyone here. And you know he's jealous. He hit me after you brought me back last night. I hit back, or tried. Then he threatened to break my hand. I tried to make him let me go, and he broke my finger in retaliation. I yelled for you. Why didn't you come?"

"I did not hear." Morgenstern let that statement lie between them. "Won't he make a prize husband for some luckless woman?"

"I do love him. But I can't risk my hands." Chris tried to make him understand.

"Would a man who loves you threaten to hurt you in any way? Would he break bones? Would he threaten your very gift?"

Chris shrugged at the questions. "If I made him angry enough, anyone could."

"Yes, I think we will reassign. You are not to be alone with him again. Stay here until supper." Morgenstern rose to leave, and shut his eyes at the sight of Chris massaging his bruised hand to keep it limber.

\* \* \* \*

Chris eyed his new roommate with suspicion. Marcelo was nice enough, he knew, but he wasn't sure why the professor had him in the room with the theologian. He hung up his clothes and watched Marcelo finish praying.

"Our teacher has a sense of humor, Christian," Marcelo said. "I will not bite. The worst I do is leave my socks about and mumble a great deal."

"You won't try converting me?" Chris asked. "I thought that was your mission."

"Have you heard the basic message or is all you know of your namesake the "you may not" of legalism?"

"What do you think is the basic message?" Chris had been baptized and made his First Communion, but after Grandpa got sick, Grandma hadn't taken him to church any more and it hadn't stuck.

"That God loves us. He sent his only son to teach us of radical equality and free us from fear. And by believing, we are obligated to love others and preach freedom to them."

Chris rolled his eyes, biting his tongue hard. This was nothing like what he heard about Christians on the news. "The words full of shit come to mind. So you don't hate gay people and bomb abortion clinics, calling everyone else a sinner while ignoring your own?"

Marcelo shook his head. "My own are quite clear to me, and I work on them. I won't beat you with my Bible, I promise."

Chris, remembering protests and laws and other nastiness back home, pressed, "And if I say I like being fucked more than fucking someone, you'd say I'm on my way straight to hell. No matter how much charity and kindness I showed."

Marcelo smiled. "What makes you think there is a Hell?"

"I don't. It's someone's fanciful idea to scare people into staying in line."

"The Professor may have different words about that, but that is my belief as well. As for the sex ... did not Jesus heal the Centurion's boy?" Seeing Chris's confusion, he told the story of how the Centurion came begging healing for his servant who was paralyzed. "The word used is pais, which is a boy, an armor bearer. Most centurions, stationed away from their wives, took the pais to bed in the Greek fashion."

Chris thought about it. "But you still wouldn't do it."

"No, for I am married to the church. Even if men appealed, it would be adultery."

Chris smiled. "I think we'll get along just fine."

The next two years passed quietly. Marcelo's easygoing ways made him a pleasant roommate, even if he did, as forewarned, leave his socks about. Chris turned out a number of pictures of all the other students. Morgenstern had laughed a bit when he saw the crucifix Chris had drawn, with Marcelo's face and body.

"Your roommate has not seen this one, I take it?"

Chris shook his head. "He asked me not to, but I couldn't resist."

Morgenstern nodded. "It is hard to be a man of God in an era when God is obsolete. Are you safe and content with him?"

Chris nodded. He would not tell of Nick stealing roses and leaving them for him, or the occasional love note. He steadfastly ignored all of the advances. It seemed, each time he was tempted, a rain storm would make his broken finger talk to him. Geoff had told him it was arthritis setting in early.

"It may not progress beyond the one joint, or you may lose use of your hands before forty. It is an unpredictable disease."

Frightened, Chris spent more hours a day painting and drawing. Marcelo only bothered him to make sure he ate.

As the sixth year wore down, Morgenstern called each student into his office and discussed his body of work. Li had published twelve papers in six years. Ayutu had named three new stars. Marcelo had written four books, reams of sermons and many articles. Matthew had cut five records and was finishing mixing and post-production on the sixth. He was engaged to Bansi. They had announced it at Christmas. Geoffrey had patented a new surgical procedure.

Chris brought his entire portfolio down. They sat up late into the night, looking over his art: the landscapes, the figure studies, the nudes. Chris lingered over his illustrations for several of his favorite books. His particular pride, the Poe series, illustrated "The Raven," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Masque of the Red Death." His Madeline and Roderick clung incestuously in death. Bibulous Fortunato, his face sardonic and sadistic, hung in the chains of the half-mad Montresor. The raven gazed malevolently down from the blind bust of Pallas. And Prince Prospero's seven rooms were garishly bright, their bad taste readily apparent even as the dancing figures collapsed bloody and dying from the Red Death.

Morgenstern approved the lot. "I have a friend who would enjoy adding these to a new Poe collection. With your approval?"

Tuition Fees  
*by Angelia Sparrow, Naomi Brooks*

Chris looked amazed. "Yes?" It was something he'd never dared dream, not even since he was little Gothling reading "The Telltale Heart" for the first time. He'd always wanted to do the illustrations, but he'd never been brave enough or confident enough to try.

"Splendid. Now I have a task for you. Consider it your final examination if you wish. Take the whole year to do it." He rose and paced. "On New Year's Eve, we will have a last party in the parlor, as we have done for the last five years, and as we will do tomorrow. But this one, it will be different. At 11:45, I will fan out a deck of tarot cards. Each of you will choose a single card to indicate your future." Morgenstern kissed his neck and Chris shivered under his lips. "I should like you to draw this class's deck. My artist always does when I have one in residence. I find the cards respond better in those classes than when I must use a commercially produced one."

Chris nodded. "I have a Rider-Waite deck in my room. I can base it from that."

Morgenstern smiled. "Excellent. After the last future is cast, this class will pay the tuition fee and go out."

Chris looked him over, then looked out the window and started sketching the schloss for the back of the cards.

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New Year's Eve came around again and with it, the annual party. Chris did not request anything special from the kitchen. Most of the requested dishes went back only half-eaten anyway. Melancholy hung around the men. They had all spent

the day packing, and there was a decided sense of foreboding in the air. None knew exactly what the fee for his education would be, and some were more worried than others.

In the parlor, there was none of the usual drinking and laughter. The Victrola was in its usual place, but a large gold cup sat on a small rosewood table next to the Tarot deck that Chris had drawn. He'd finished the Tarot Deck in October and spent the last two months drawing and painting during all his waking hours.

At eleven, Morgenstern appeared. They all knew who he was now. There could be no mistaking it, for he had manifested in his true form. There were a few gasps from those who had thought Chris's paintings were merely fantasy art and grotesques. Morgenstern seated himself on a low stool before the rosewood table, his great scorched and broken wings held stiffly behind him. Chris wanted to weep seeing him like this.

"One by one, my boys, come to me. Draw a card for your future, which you may keep, and drink the cup of parting. After you have paid your fee, Lillian is waiting to take you back to the airport. I have enjoyed your company; now go out and spread what you have learned here. There are others who have studied here. You know them. You may call on them for aid at any time. Draw the cards, my boys. Let us see what awaits you."

A murmur rippled through the room. Not everyone had believed the legends. Some did not even believe in a devil. Marcelo mumbled a prayer that his soul would not be required of him. To everyone's surprise, Nick was not first. Sterling



drew first. He'd never fit in with others, seeing them as a bunch of brains and art-fags. He, at least, was practical.

"Ah, Sterling. I expect to hear great things of you, my boy."

Sterling just scowled and pulled a card from the deck. "The Tower." It was, the lightning-struck tower with the figures plummeting from it. Chris's hand had darkened it. No yods fluttered about like tongues of flame to symbolize a rebirth from the destruction. "Not looking good."

"A climb to great heights, my dear." Morgenstern said. "You should be proud."

"Yeah, but you should know better than anyone what they say about pride and falls." Sterling got up, the trump still in hand. "Thanks for everything." He went to sit on the benches next to the far wall, without drinking and without a hug for his roommate.

Matt decided he was next and sat before the table, his long pianist's fingers drifting over the cards. He drew the Two of Cups. The two lovers pledging themselves beneath the angelic face—which resembled Morgenstern—were both male. The man on the right handed the cup to the one on the left, with an odd gesture at the rim that looked almost as if he were poisoning it.

"A lovely card," Morgenstern said. "Showing partnerships, marriage and working together." Matt's green eyes flashed to where Bansi stood with the others. It was no secret the pair was deeply in love. The records they had cut here at the schloss had burnt up the charts and were still selling steadily.

"Thank you, sir. For everything." Matt drank from the cup, and rose. "Good whiskey too."

"Water of life, is that not what it is?" Morgenstern smiled as Matt stepped to the bench.

Bansi seated himself next, his blue silk shimmering in the dim light. He'd taken to using kohl in the last few years, and Morgenstern thought it a lovely addition. He drew the Lovers and smiled, his dark eyes shining. Both figures on the card were male and again the angel above them looked like the professor, as did the serpent in the tree.

Morgenstern said nothing but simply smiled back and nodded toward Matt. Bansi leaned across the table, kissed Morgenstern lightly.

"Thank you. For everything." He drank and rose. Matt was waiting for him.

Okeleke seated himself next, his large calloused hands moving over the cards. He drew the Magician. There were no lilies about his feet only black roses, with one blooming bloodily scarlet, and the usual serpent was a Sam Browne belt instead of a mere sash.

"Transformation, transfiguration. Appropriate, my magician who will draw out all the greatness of the richest continent, so sorely neglected." Morgenstern smiled.

Okeleke offered no more than a handshake. "Thank you. I will use what I have learned here." He drank and went to sit.

Geoffrey sat down before the seat was cold. He pulled the Queen of Cups, who stared into her closed cup, contemplating its occult mysteries even as the waves lapped about her knees.

"Morbid. Christian's art is always morbid," he said.

Morgenstern frowned and tapped the deck. "And it tells us nothing save that you are a doctor." He looked apologetic.

Geoffrey leaned over and kissed him. It wasn't a light one as Bansi had done. Geoff had been in Morgenstern's bed almost as often as Chris.

"Thank you, for all of it, my beloved professor." He drank of the cup and left the table.

Marcelo took the seat, looking uncomfortable. "I have never touched such a deck," he said. Morgenstern nodded. He pulled his card quickly and placed it on the table as if afraid it would burn him. A decaying Hierophant, dressed in the fashion of the Borgias, but looking much like Benedict XVI, lolled drunkenly on the throne, his crown askew.

"Blasphemy," he whispered.

"For all of the artist's irreverence, you have drawn well. There is the literal meaning that you may yet be Pope, as well as the notion you are a wise counselor and teacher and friend." He beckoned Marcelo closer. "You will be Marcellus II."

Marcelo's eyes narrowed. St. Marcellus had guided the church through some of the darkest periods of Diocletian's persecution and was exiled. The prophecy did not bode well. He smiled anyway.

"Lies from the Father of Lies. It has been interesting and I will use your own knowledge against you and keep as many from your hands as possible."

"I would expect no less. I have enjoyed our discussions." Morgenstern gave him a fond smile, and was not offended when Marcelo rose without drinking or taking his card along.

Quiet Ayutu stepped to the table and sat opposite the professor. "I thank you for all your teachings." He reached out and drew his card, Judgment. Here Chris had not drawn on the standard deck so much as Hieronymus Bosch. A distant, unreachable Christ, flanked by a smug looking host, gave his approval to the burning lands and the torments of the Damned. Chris smiled, glad someone had pulled that card. Nick, nearby, shot a glance at Chris. He moved in closer and was unhappy to see it was his own gloating face Chris had painted on the Christ.

Ayutu let the card lie. He would not touch the ugly thing again. "What does it mean?"

"You will change the world, my boy, or at least how the universe and world are seen. With you, we will leave the old behind and step into a new understanding of the universe."

Ayutu did not see how the distressing painting before him could have such a positive meaning. He drank. "Thank you, Professor." He rose without the card.

Chris, not wanting to deal with the scene Nick was about to cause, sat down. He ghosted his fingers over the backs of the card, which showed only the schloss, feeling for the one that drew him. He turned over the one that seemed to prickle under his fingertips.

Trump fifteen. The Devil. Morgenstern brooded, broken wings and all, on an iron throne in an odd cross between the

styles of Dore and Rosetti. Chris smiled shyly up at his teacher while the others gasped.

Morgenstern simply nodded. "It is no surprise to me. None of the others loved me as you do. Do not drink, little one, for there will be no parting. You will be this class's payment for their schooling. Thirteen enter, but only twelve leave."

A great gasp went up from the others. They had all expected their souls to be demanded. Chris said nothing, just stared at the card. Finally, he went to sit with the others.

The other five drew their cards in subdued silence. There was no chance of damnation now. The sacrifice had been chosen. They felt guilty in their relief. Faki drew the Ace of Wands, and recoiled from the spirit hand that looked about to club the viewer instead of merely passing the baton.

"Take the staff and walk the new path you will chart for us," Morgenstern said gently. Faki kept the card, drank and left to sit.

Li drew Temperance, to find his own face staring back as he poured liquid from a test-tube to a beaker. Morgenstern merely smiled. "Does it need explanation, little chemist? Thesis and antithesis to make synthesis. Alchemy made scientific."

"Thank you, professor." Li kissed his cheek, shot a smile at Chris, drank and waited, staring at the card.

"And now we are three."

Malcolm drew the Queen of Swords, her face set in cruel lines, her beckoning hand bloody from her sword, the angel on her throne a tormented demon. "She is knowledge, and computers. What more do you see, Professor?"

"Only that, my boy. Beware of too much knowledge and aloofness." He smiled when Malcolm kissed his cheek and drank. He offered the deck out to the next.

Ignacio took his card and scowled at the Four of Swords. Three swords hung above the Knight's Tomb, but the fourth impaled the effigy instead of decorating the side. He gave Chris an exasperated look.

"You have learned much. Now, a time of rest before you go forth to ignite the world with your new theories, Ignacio."

"Thank you, Professor." Ignacio offered a handshake before taking the card and a drink.

"Mr. Admire?" The professor offered him the denuded deck.

Nick had hung back, wanting to talk to Chris. Now, he sat down, tossed the professor a half-smile and pocketed Ayutu's Judgement card. When he drew his own card, the King of Wands looked back at him. He gazed on a vital redheaded man seemingly in control of all he surveyed, and then he noticed the king was dead, his neck broken. The lions on the pillar behind him ravaged and devoured, with no regal bearing at all. The salamander at his feet had ignited his salamander-patterned cloak. A small purse hung about his neck on a noose of rope.

Morgenstern smiled at him. "Alexander. Caesar. Charlemagne. Henry V. Washington. Robespierre. Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, called Lenin. All of them found this card, Nicholas. It is a sign of greatness. But mind the tyranny and jealousy." He shot a glance at Chris's hands. Nick had the

grace to look ashamed. "I think you will do well enough for yourself, President Admire."

Nick leaned over and kissed him, long and slow. "Thank you." He beckoned Chris over and kissed him, too. "Just one last one." He drank the cup to the dregs, pocketed the card and rose.

Lillian beckoned them all from the doorway. "It is time, my boys." The men left, only a few casting short, backward glances at Chris.

Chris simply looked at Professor Morgenstern, frightened, yet pleased with the choice he made. Morgenstern stood up, broken wings flexing unconsciously, and put the deck into a drawer of the table.

"One last mortal pleasure before we make the transition to Hell. Anything you desire, this one last time."

"Just you," Chris whispered, slipping his hand into the professor's own. He was quiet on the way to Morgenstern's bedroom, nervous but still trusting. His teacher had never steered him wrong yet, devil or no. He couldn't stop the nagging voice that said things were all about to change.

Morgenstern had turned back into his human form on the way to the room. Chris was thankful. Even as often as he'd seen the true form, he couldn't help but be intimidated by it. Now the professor was simply the beautiful man he'd fallen in love with seven years ago.

Chris took control of the entire encounter, the first time he'd ever dared to do so. Undressing and climbing on top of Morgenstern earned him an amused cocked eyebrow and

chuckle. The artist blushed. His own boldness surprised even him. "I want to ride you," he offered as an explanation.

"If you'd like that, I would enjoy it." Morgenstern's eyes closed briefly and he sighed when Chris bent gracefully to kiss his neck. This one had always been fearless and unwavering no matter what was thrown his way. Chris had known almost from the beginning who his teacher was, and came willingly anyway. Morgenstern was glad to deny heaven the chance to have him.

"I want it." Again, the absolute certainty colored Chris's words. The same certainty that he had, knowing which card had belonged to him. It made sense. Almost if he had been predestined from birth.

Morgenstern smiled as if knowing his very thoughts. "Prepare us then. I think I should like to watch."

Chris grabbed the lube, conveniently set out on the nightstand table. He took his time, lubing Morgenstern well. Most men would kill to have a cock the size of the professor's. "So beautiful," he murmured, using slow but firm strokes, slicking him all the way to the base.

"Let me?" the professor asked when his artist turned to preparing himself. His boy was always unfailingly tight. He directed Chris to turn around, on knees and elbows above him. He craned his neck, running his tongue up the cleft.

"All yours now," Chris moaned as Morgenstern worked him with long, well-lubed fingers. The professor hooked them forward to stroke his prostate as a knowing reply to that statement.



Morgenstern chuckled as Chris gasped and squirmed from the stimulation. "Feels good, doesn't it, little one?" At Chris's moaned agreement, the professor added a third, slowly and carefully.

Chris's back arched, the third finger burning as it stretched him. Determined, he pushed back through the pain, fucking himself on the professor's hand. He heard Morgenstern's fond laugh come from behind him. "If they feel that good, imagine how my cock will be."

"I'm ready for it," Chris gasped, still moving on those long, clever fingers, letting them open him up.

"Then take it, little one," Morgenstern removed his fingers slowly, finishing with one more lick along his boy's perineum. Chris always made sure to be sweet and clean for him.

Chris turned back around, grabbing his professor's cock in one hand and directing him in as he sat back on him.

Morgenstern smiled the entire time, watching the range of expressions on his artist's face: the small grimace of pain when the head pressed in, opening Chris further, the pleasure that relaxed him even further as Morgenstern moved past his prostate, and finally the frustration when Chris seemed unable to take any more.

"Do you need help, little one? You're so sweetly tight this evening."

Chris gnawed on his lip, reddening it with his teeth. "No, I know you fit."

Morgenstern rested his hands on Chris' hips, not forcing, only guiding him. Ever so slowly, his boy settled back, taking

him in fully. A low groan escaped Chris's lips, and a tremble passed through the strong, lithe body atop the fallen angel.

Morgenstern touched his face, gentle. "Dear boy. My little one. None has loved me so in centuries."

"Adore you," Chris agreed, burying his head against the professor's shoulder, tasting his skin, and again silencing the voice that said soon he would only taste fire and sulfur.

"I know, sweetness, I know." Morgenstern directed him back upward, playing with Chris' nipples until they peaked under his fingers and his boy was squirming wildly in pleasure above him. "You always do like that." He continued to pinch and roll them, hand occasionally straying down, only grazing Chris' cock.

Chris leaned back, rapidly going incoherent. The professor's angle was perfect, and he took full advantage of it until his body demanded more. He leaned back down, pulling at Morgenstern's arm to roll them both over. Once on his back, he wrapped his legs tightly around his teacher and pleaded for a pounding. "All of it. All of you," he gasped.

Morgenstern smiled wickedly "Wings and all, little one?"

"Everything," Chris demanded.

With a shudder, the professor was gone, manifesting fully into the Lucifer Chris had only imagined in his wildest dreams. Not the broken angel Lucifiel, but the true Master of Hell. Chris's eyes grew huge, taking in the fangs and horns of his new master. The demon bent forward, kissing him open-mouthed with a rough, forked tongue. Chris opened his mouth, accepting the invasion, tasting this new incarnation.

The demon moved slowly, deeply, speeding up gradually until he was giving Chris the pounding he had asked for. The giant bat-wings fanned down on the outstroke, up on the instroke and the room reeked of sulfur.

Morgenstern cried out in climax and made the translation between planes. Chris felt the shift, as reality went out of joint, and he felt all his insides lurch about two feet to the left. He moaned, his eyes closed very tightly.

Morgenstern slipped out of him and rose without another touch. "Open your eyes, and welcome to Hell."

Chris opened his eyes slowly. Nothing had changed. It was still the professor's bedroom, down to the small scratch on the headboard. He blinked a few times, confused.

Morgenstern, now in his winged form, simply laughed. "You didn't listen to your roommate, did you? Hell is simply the absence of God."

Chris got up and looked out the window. The landscape was the same bare rock of the mountains around the schloss, except Okeleke's beloved roses were missing. "No fire?" he asked.

"No fire. Just your rooms, here, for eternity, with me. Some say that's curse enough."

Chris smiled and reached up for a kiss from his fallen angel. "I can do this."

"Of course, little love. As one of my favorite students said: 'The mind is its own place, and in it/Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.'"

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