

# CHAPTER FOUR

As I fell, the ground below me turned into darkness and I could no longer tell how far I would fall before finally landing in Hell to experience torture for the rest of eternity. Based on my very limited biblical knowledge, I assumed that when I landed I would fall into some pit of lava. As the ground grew closer, however, I saw that there was indeed lava but I was not going to land in it. The ground that I was going to land on was made up of spikes! Before I could do or think anything else, I landed. That's when the torture began.

Some part of me had determined that the fall wouldn't hurt: that I would be preserved from the pain of the fall so that I could be tortured more efficiently in some other form. I was wrong, and when I hit the ground I felt razor sharp spikes shoot through me. I knew that if I was human, I would be dead. I was not human, however, and felt every single inch of the rusted metal penetrate and break through my flesh and bones. I screamed out in pain, but my cries were only lost with the shouting in the distance.

I could do nothing but lay there in agony. I tried to move and found out not only that the pain increased, but that I could not move. Spikes had pierced every part of my body, and I

screamed until I could no longer make a sound. That's when I heard the voices. "Here he is. My man, Owen."

Suddenly I was ripped off of the ground and held up in the air. I peered out across the lake of lava in front of me and tried to cry out but was unable to. I looked down where I had fallen and saw that most of my body was still lodged into the spikes covering the ground. It was truly horrifying, but then the voice continued.

"How are you, man? How is the family?"

I looked over and saw a winged humanoid creature. The creature was covered in a rough black texture, and had glowing orange eyes and facial features. Horns protruded off of the creature's forehead, and truly looked like something out of a nightmare.

"You don't remember me, buddy?" The creature continued. "It's your good pal, Jack. We have the same taste in women, it seems."

"Jack?" I thought to myself. "Emsley's ex? He's a demon?" Nothing he was saying mattered much to me, however, as I could not get my mind off of the indescribable pain I was still experiencing.

“We both dated that slut, Emsley. Remember?” Jack continued. “I can’t believe she cheated on you in Heaven too!” The creature paused. “Oh, you didn’t know? Yeah, she cheated on you back on Earth as well...with yours truly. Sorry about that, buddy.”

The amount of stimulations I was receiving was overwhelming, and I didn’t know what to feel. I didn’t even have the strength to shout or cry out, I just had to take whatever this creature was saying.

“When I see a whore like her I just lose control.” The creature continued. ”She is absolutely fantastic, the way she...” I glared down at Jack, and he just laughed.

“Am I upsetting you, Owen? You should meet my friends. They’ve all had their way with Emsley too, and they have way more interesting stories than anything I could even hope to tell you about. I’ll go get them. You just make yourself comfortable.”

The creature slammed me back down onto the spikes, and walked off. It was the most humiliating, excruciating, mortifying and sickening experience I’d ever had. Any happiness and positive emotion I had was gone, and I truly felt hopeless.

I couldn't bear this. I'd only been there for a few seconds and was already being pushed way past my limit. I knew that the Jack was trying to get to me, and I knew that he was likely lying about hooking up with Emsley after we were dating. Likewise with his "friends." Regardless, I had already made up my mind on what to do when he returned. Jack finally showed up with several other creatures which somewhat resembled him. Before any of them could say or do anything, I asked, "How do I join you?"

This stopped the creatures in their tracks. "What did you say?" The one claiming to be Jack stepped forward and asked.

I had no idea what they were going to do, and I had no idea what I was getting myself into. All I knew was I had nothing to lose and had to avoid more torture. This place was the complete absence of God and purity. Emsley was completely out of the picture at this point. "She's a universe away." I told myself. "I have nothing left, and all I can do is fight for myself. It's survival of the fittest down here, and I must do whatever I can to survive."

"Can I join the army of the underworld?" I asked again.

The creatures stood silently, looking at each other. “I don’t know how things work here,” I continued, “but I’m on your side.”

“I don’t think that’s how it works.” One of the demons said.

“Well, can you ask someone who knows?” I responded, trying to act confident and devoted to their cause, whatever it may be. “I didn’t die and come straight here. I’ve been in Heaven. I have insider information. This is personal.”

The demons looked at each other, and all of the sudden they disappeared into a cloud of smoke. All of the screams in the distance abruptly stopped, and everything went dark. The temperature got even hotter, and I felt my skin get so hot it began to boil as a new humanoid creature appeared out of nowhere. This creature looked to be a cross between human and lion, and rode atop a demonic looking horse. It looked down at me, and as it got closer all of the pain I was experiencing worsened. The creature smiled as I cried out.

“You want to join us?” The creature asked, with a deep and rough voice.

The pain lessened enough for me to nod. “Why?” The creature asked.

I was terrified. I was afraid of this creature. I was afraid of what I was getting myself into, but I was willing to say or do anything to stop this suffering.

“God betrayed me.” I said. “He betrayed everyone here, and he must be punished.”

The creature smiled again. I didn’t mean it, and I hoped God couldn’t hear me. The thought of this place and the creatures inhabiting it ruling over Heaven and Earth shook me to the core, but I knew that in the position I was in there was nothing I could do.

“How do I know you’re not just lying to me?” The creature asked.

“God stole the love of my life.” I said. “She is up in Heaven. God banished me from there. I want revenge.”

The creature analyzed me, and all of the sudden I was put back together. My limbs slowly reattached themselves to my body, and I began to heal. Finally, the pain stopped, and I actually started to feel good... almost powerful. I looked down

at myself and saw that I was finally back to normal. I didn't stop changing there, however. I sensed myself getting taller, and as I grew I looked back down at my hands. My skin was turning grey, and I was taking on the form of a demon. Before I could do anything else, I found myself in a room with brick walls and a door made of iron bars, much like a prison cell.

I was looking over a man tied up laying on the ground. The man was blindfolded and didn't seem to know I was there. I heard the creature begin to speak to me from within my mind. "My name is Allocator." The creature said. "You have no choice from this point onward. You are a demon, and you will follow my every command. If you don't follow my instructions willingly, we will slice you open and put another demon within you to control your actions from the inside. I suggest doing what I say if you want to keep your self-control."

I was in too deep to back out now, but was already regretting my decision. "It doesn't get easier than this." Allocator continued. "This man is blindfolded. He can't fight back. He won't even realize what's happening until it's too late. Let's see how you do. Look in the corner of the room."

I did as instructed and saw a rat inside of a cage. "The man you see laying here was a king back in the 1200s." Allocator informed me. "He hoarded all of the food for himself, and in

doing so starved nearly half the province he ruled over. It's time for him to finally help feed the hungry. The rat you see in the corner hasn't eaten in a while, and this man would be awfully tasty."

"That rat is gonna eat this guy??" I asked.

Alloer laughed and said, "Of course not! But maybe several rats would." Suddenly, the rat in the cage multiplied. There were now two rats, and those two rats multiplied. Then the new rats multiplied.

"It's lunchtime." He said. "Place the cage next to the man, and unlock the latch. That's all you've got to do."

I walked over to the cage, trying to adjust to my new height. I picked up the cage and brought it over to the man, gently setting it next to him. I reached down to unlock the hatch, but stopped in my tracks.

"What am I doing?" I thought to myself. "These rats are going to absolutely devour this guy. I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy." I couldn't imagine the pain and suffering I would cause this man if I unlocked the cage.



“I must go now.” Allocer said, to my surprise. “As soon as the rats have been fed, the door will open and you can go to the Houska Castle. There you will undergo a ceremony and complete your transformation into a demon. Don’t take too long.” And like that, I was alone with the man and the rats. I didn’t move, and waited in silence, knowing that I should have just accepted my fate and been tortured myself. I couldn’t cause harm to this extent on another person, even after all I’d been through.

Suddenly one of the rats jumped up onto the side of the cage, and began aggressively trying to tear away the metal walls. I panicked and tried to kick the rat off when it viciously lunged at my foot. I knew what I had to do, and I knew there was no way out. Whether I liked it or not, I chose this path with my foolish and cowardly pleading. I picked up the cage of rats, and one of the rats rushed over to where I was holding the cage and bit off a piece of my thumb. I jerked my hand back and nearly dropped the cage, but managed to keep it balanced in one hand.

Before unlocking the cage, I took a deep breath. A tear formed but I quickly swiped it back, in fear of what may happen to me if caught crying. I decided the best way to approach this would be to quickly do it without thought. Remembering that Allocer said the door would open as long as the rats were fed

and before I could reconsider, I hoisted the cage over my head, unlocked the hatch, and poured the rats over myself.

I screamed as I felt the rats pulling and tearing apart my flesh, and fell to the ground in agony. Quickly, however, the rats stopped and began to collapse. I quickly got on my feet, trying to understand what was going on. Suddenly, I felt sharp teeth cutting into my skin on my leg. I reached down to feel a rat which I instinctively yanked off of my leg threw into the corner of the room. The rat, quickly adjusted itself and began coming towards me. The rat slowed down, though, and fell onto its side. Was my demonic skin...poisonous?

I looked down at the king, to see that he was now shaking. I removed his blindfold and found that he was staring back at me, his eyes wide with fear. "It's okay. I'm not going to hurt you." I told the king. I helped lift the king up and rested him against the wall, opposite where all the rats were. I then removed the gag in his mouth.

"Is this funny to you?" The king asked.

"Are you all right?" I asked the King, slightly puzzled by his question.

“What kind of sick, twisted games are you trying to play on me now?” The king barked back. I then remembered that to him, I was a demon.

“I’m not one of them!” I told the king. “I don’t know what’s going on, but they think I’m one of them. They wanted me to feed you to these rats.”

The king analyzed me, and said, “Yeah, of course they did. That’s the routine. That’s what happens to me. I get eaten every single day. I get absolutely obliterated by those rats, but the creatures here just restore my body so that it can all happen again the next day.” The king quickly scanned the room. “But, you...uh...killed the rats?”

“I fed myself to the rats, rather than feeding you to them.” I said. “They just dropped dead. I’m not sure what happened. The king paused, but then said, “You shouldn’t be here. You’re not like the rest of us. What did you do?”

Hesitantly, I told him. “I actually used to be in Heaven. The love of my life is still up there, but she’s with some fake version of me. She’s with her perfected and better version of myself, and I felt manipulated. I disrespected God and now I’m here.”

Ignoring everything I'd said, a smile grew on the king's face. "You could get us out of here!" He exclaimed.

"How?" I asked.

"You're a demon!" The king said. You have special privileges and powers!

"I don't think there's a way out." I told him.

"I'm not sure either." He responded. "I'll be honest, this is the first time I haven't been either getting eaten or getting prepared to be eaten in a long time. I haven't exactly had a lot of time to look around. But I will take you to someone I know: a priest. His name is Edmund. He will be probably getting tortured too, so we'll somehow need to distract the demons. If there's a way out, Edmund will know."

"What makes this priest so special?" I asked.

"He knows his stuff, all right." The king said. "He's into this kind of thing, and maybe he doesn't know the way out. But if there is a way out, Edmund is our best bet. I'm King John, by the way."

I followed King John who navigated his way through the dark passageways. He led me to the courtyard of an elaborate and fairly sized building where he stopped. “This is where I met him.” He said. “We used to all line up and be punished together. They’ve since stopped doing that, though. Now their forms of torture are much more elaborate, and much more personal.”

“How long has he been here?” I asked.

“He was here long before I was, as far as I know.” The king said.

“Is it possible he’s in this building?” I asked.

“Probably not,” The king said. “although he may be close.”

Not a split second later, a window of the building broke, and a demon jumped out. I froze, and looked at the king who appeared to be mortified as well.

The demon stared at us, and began walking our way. “What are you doing here with this thing?” The demon growled, staring at me. I remembered I still looked like a demon, and quickly tried to come up with an excuse.

“This man knows someone who has valuable information. He’s taking me to them.” As soon as I said it, I realized my excuse made no sense.

“You’re...interrogating the guy?” The demon asked.

“No, I’m gonna interrogate the guy he’s going to lead me to.” I responded, trying to hide my fear.

“Why?” The demon asked. “What sort of information does he have?”

“He knows a priest who can apparently help us take over the world.” I said. It sounded so cliché, and the demon seemed a bit suspicious.

“I wasn’t aware we were trying to take over the world. How can this priest do that?” The demon asked.

“We don’t know.” The king quickly jumped in. “We just know that he can.” The demon glared at the man, and out of nowhere shoved his claw through the king’s chest, spewing blood all over the ground and nearly ripping the king in half. The demon began yelling “I was not speaking to you!”

“Hey, hey!” I shouted. “We need that guy!”

The demon, still hoisting the king in the air, paused .  
“What?” The demon growled.

I tried to come up with something, but out of fear could not form any words. The demon ripped its claws out of the king's chest and threw him to the ground, then began walking towards me.

“Who are you?” The demon barked. “You’re not one of us. I sensed it from the moment you walked in here with this thing.”

“I’m new.” I managed to say.

“We haven’t had any new demons in hundreds of years.” The demon said. “But if you’re telling the truth, I’ll let you two go.” The demon then jumped up and over me and just like that, was out of sight. I couldn’t react to that, however, as I quickly needed help the king up.

“Are you all right?” I asked, panicked. King John’s chest had been punctured and his heart pierced, but he acted as if he had simply been knocked down and sustained no more than a scratch. “I’m fine.” The king said.

“You have a hole in your chest!” I yelled.

“You really are new here, huh?” He asked. “This kind of thing happens every day. I’ll be fine. I’ll heal from this so that I can be tortured more in the future. That’s just how things work.”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. Soon, the demon returned, seemingly falling out of the sky.

“Apparently we did get someone new today, my apologies.” The demon said. “Is there anything I can do to assist you?”

I was still terrified, but it seemed like we might be able to get by. “Well, this man is not cooperating.” I said. “Would you perhaps know where the priest is that I’m looking for?”

“What’s his name?” The demon asked.

I looked to King John, who responded, “Edmund Frances. His name is Edmund Frances.”

“Yeah, I know where he is.” The demon said. “That guy crumbles like no other. It’s honestly kinda pathetic. Follow me.”

The king and I followed the demon for a ways and we eventually came to an unnerving building. The structure went on



as far as the eye could see, and was covered in prison cell doors. There was a moving walkway alongside of it, which was running at a rapid pace. The demon stepped onto it and was quickly swept away, so the king and I stepped on in fear of being left behind. Despite the scorching temperatures, we felt a breeze from being moved, and for a moment Hell didn't completely feel like Hell.

After a short ride, the demon stepped off of the moving platform and the king and I followed. Motioning to the prison cell door, the demon said, "Here he is. You should be able to get what you need out of him pretty easily. Have fun." The demon stepped back onto the moving walkway, and just like that was swiftly taken away.

"Okay." I said. "That was absolutely terrifying. Now what?"

"I've seen them do it before." The king responded. "The door should just open for you. Something in your hand triggers it to unlock."

I approached the door and hesitantly reached out to grab the handle. I heard the lock in the door click, and was able to open the cell door without issue.

The cell was relatively small, and laying in the corner was a man who appeared lifeless, and I would have thought was certainly dead if I did not know better. “Is...is he asleep?” I asked the king.

“No, of course he’s not asleep.” The king responded. “It’s impossible to sleep here. It looks like he just got back from a torture session.”

“And he’s gonna be okay?” I asked.

“Yeah!” The king responded without hesitation. “He’ll be fine!” Quickly, King John knelt down and rolled the man over. The man let out a cry and revealed a huge gash along his throat, causing me to gag. “Edmund, buddy!” The king said. “We need your help.”

The king shook Edmund, and his head rustled enough to fully detach from the torso it was barely hanging onto. Edmund’s head rolled across the floor, and a combination of disgust and being entirely overwhelmed, I completely lost it. I turned as fast as I could and vomited all over the wall of the cell. It had been building up throughout the entire duration of time I was in Hell, and it was a huge relief to finally let it out.

“Whoa!” The king yelled. “That was intense!” Without missing a beat, he went back to focusing on Edmund. “Eddie, bud you dropped something!” The king mocked. His insensitivity and lack of remorse was beginning to exasperate me. “What’s wrong with you?” I started. Suddenly the eyes on the decapitated head opened, and began scanning the room. “What...what happened?” The head asked.

That was enough for me to need to turn and throw up once more. “Sheesh, man.” The king said. “If it bothers you so much, why don’t you fix him?”

“What do you mean ‘fix him?’” I asked, still gagging.

“You have the ability to heal us.” The king told me. “Demons heal us so that we can endure more torture. Do you know how to heal someone?”

I was completely flustered, but Edmund’s head began to instruct me. “Harness your energy into your fists and position my head onto my shoulders.” He said. Hesitantly, I followed his instructions. I slowly grabbed Edmund’s head and positioned it atop his torso, gagging more in the process. “Focus on reattaching my head, as if you’re gluing it back on with a warm paste.”

Edmund's word choice was not helping, but I rubbed my demonic finger across the end of his body and the bottom of his head. I felt the urge to throw up again but was able to resist the temptation. I closed my eyes and tried to distract myself, and before I knew it, Edmund was back in one piece.

"That was... actually not that bad." I said.

"I am pleased that I did not trouble you too much." Edmund said. "So I take it that you're not like the other demons. What are you doing here? What makes you different, and what can I do for you?"

I looked to the king, who was looking back at me. I looked back to Edmund and began to explain. "We believe you could potentially help us get out of here."

"Get out of here?" Edmund asked. "What do you mean 'here?'"

"King John here says that you might know how to get out of Hell." I told Edmund.

Edmund hesitated, and began to think. "I do believe there is a way out, yes." Edmund said. I began to genuinely feel hope. I felt like I could have purpose again. I could get out. I could see

Emsley again and make things right. I was almost able to crack a smile, but before I could do so, Edmund continued. “I don’t think that I can do it, however.”

“What?” I asked. “Why not? Can you help us find someone who can?”

Edmund began to shake his head. “No, no, no.” He said, standing up and walking to the other side of the cell. “James 2:19: You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder.” Edmund was quoting bible verses. “James 4:7: Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Don’t you see? We need God and his angels to get us out. But Hell is the absence of God. There is no God in Hell. He is not looking out for us here.”

“How do we bring him here then?” I asked. Edmund laughed. “God in Hell? That’s absurd! God is much too pure to be in Hell, it’s impossible!”

“Then maybe we can get one of his angels.” I said. Edmund stopped laughing.

“That’s...uh. That’s interesting.” Edmund said. “Perhaps we could summon Saint Michael, the archangel.”

“Would that work?” King John asked.

“It might!” Edmund said, appearing excited. “We could say a prayer! The right prayer could potentially bring Saint Michael

here. He would drive fear into the hearts of the demons and could really make all Hell break loose, if you excuse the pun.”

I’d never heard of Saint Michael, but was willing to give it a shot. I hesitated and realized something. “Why has no one tried this before?” I asked. “If summoning an angel was all it took, why has no one tried?”

“There aren’t a whole lot of opportunities here to go around praying.” Edmund told me. “We’re constantly in pain. We can rarely produce thoughts, let alone words.”

“He’s right.” King John chipped in.

“Also, not just any prayer will do.” Edmund continued. “We have to say a special prayer. We have to pray to Saint Michael and ask for his assistance.”

Without any further explanation, the king said stepped forward and said, “Sounds good! Let’s say the prayer!”

Edmund suddenly looked defeated. “What’s wrong?” I asked.

“I don’t know the prayer.” Edmund said. “It is in Latin, which I never got around to learning.”

“So then we’re screwed.” The king said.

“No, not necessarily.” Edmund corrected.

“What do you suppose we do?” I asked.

“There is a book, the Codex Gigas. It contains all of the information we need. The book has existed for thousands of years, and a few centuries ago I believe a copy of it even escaped to Earth. Get me to that book, I can say that prayer, and we just might get out of here.”

“Great.” I said. “So where’s this book?”

“It’s in Houska Castle.” Edmund said.

The king and I looked at each other in disbelief. “Wait.” I said. “So you want us to sneak you into some castle, get you to some demonic book, attempt to summon an angel which might not even work, and then have him fight our battle for us?”

“That’s our only option.” Edmund said.

I stared at the ground and contemplated everything that was at stake. “This may not even work.” I said. “We all may get caught and tortured in unspeakable ways for the rest of eternity.” I looked back up at Edmund and the king.

“That’s kind of what would be happening to us anyway.” The king added.

I paused and decided it wasn’t really a choice. “All right.” I said. “Let’s go.”