

# War on Earth

by Meriwether Wren

“Now a war, a war, good people, arose in heaven, and if there was war in heaven do you think, do you think, dear friends, that there will be no war on earth? I'm reading from the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelations, friends, and you read it yourselves if you doubt me. Now there was war in heaven. It was Michael, God's own angel Michael, who commanded God's army of angels. And it was Satan, the Serpent, the Devil himself who commanded another army. And who were his, who were Satan's soldiers?” The preacher wiped sweat from his brow. He was breathing heavily.

“Oh, friends, oh my dear friends, listen to me! These may be the most important words you will ever hear, the warning that may save your souls from everlasting hell! Who were the soldiers of Satan? Why, what could they be, to make a war in heaven? What could they be but angels! Lucifer, the brightest of the angels of God, seduced a great heavenly host and became Satan, and his host of angels became his army of the damned.”

Alec Rogers scowled. Sunday school and this too. Tommy Hilliard got to mess around outside during church. Couldn't do much, but anyway didn't have to listen to this. Alec tried to show in the face he turned to the preacher how bored he was, but all he showed was bright blue eyes, ruddy skin, and brown hair. Somehow Alec always looked, well, friendly.

“... Oh, my beloved friends, Satan has an army of angels! They lost that war, oh yes they lost the war in heaven, praise God! But where did they go? Where did they go when heaven was lost to them? Some people think there is just one answer. Peter tells us they went to hell. There in hell they became devils. That is true. Now that is true, my friends, but it is not all the truth. The Revelation of John tells us more. The devils are in hell, yes they are, but the angels of Satan, the followers

of Lucifer, they are not all in hell.”

Alec started paying closer attention. He felt a little pressure in his trousers.

“Listen to me, dear friends. They are here! They are on the earth, they are among us, they are in this room, they are in this church! Do you think Lucifer, do you think Satan – call him what you will – do you think the Prince Darkness can't come to church? Woe! Oh woe to us! Oh woe! We are of the earth, and Satan is now at war with us. Do you keep God's commandments? Do you testify your love of Jesus? Then Satan and his host of angels is at war with you! Do you not keep His commandments? Are you an adulterer? Are you defiled by lust?” The preacher, really excited now, wiped his brow with the handkerchief he kept in his hand. He stood on his toes, his voice rising. “Then you, yes you, here in this church, though you look like an angel, though you walk like an angel – though you be an angel, you are an angel of Satan, you fell with Lucifer!”

So that's it, Alec thought. Maybe it wasn't such a good thing, but I know what I am. He felt his erection now, and it was painful. He shifted it slightly so that it would lie along his thigh and not hurt. He was an angel. That was a good part. He'd been told that he was, but he'd never believed it before, hadn't believed it for years that he was an angel. Now he knew they were right. The bone along his thigh ached and he longed to rub it. He could do that now, now that he knew, could take it out and do it right here in church! But his father would see him.

Alec didn't choose to be Satan's angel. No. Wait. He was Lucifer's angel. He guessed it meant war against his dad. No. Dad must be one of Satan's angels too. That would be awful. Dad was an adulterer. Alec hated his dad. Maybe that was part of it. Wasn't Satan the father of hate? So it was natural if one of Satan's angels hated another. No. Lucifer had angels. Satan had devils. It was angels and devils. Dad was Satan's devil. That was the difference. Angels hate devils.

“... they are the tempters. They lead us into unrighteousness, into sin. Oh, my friends, these angels are on earth and they may be beautiful, the better to tempt us, oh my friends. But do not be deceived...”

Alec was a tempter. His erection ached worse. After church he would tempt – who? Someone new. Not Tommy. Tommy tempted Alec for the first time almost a year ago when he came back from living in Peoria, and tempted him a bunch of times since. He was an angel too. That's it! A club. Lucifer's angels. They couldn't buy T- shirts printed LUCIFER'S ANGELS. Dad would beat him for that. The devils hate

angels. But he'd tell Tommy, and any boy they tempted would have a chance to join. The thought of the club eased Alec's erection. Just in time too. The sermon was over and everyone was standing up. Lost in thought, Alec hadn't noticed until his dad nudged him roughly.

*"Stand up, stand up for Jesus..."*

As he sang, Alec looked for someone to tempt. Someone who'd be good for the club. No. Someone righteous. His job was to tempt the righteous. There was Jim Hawley in the choir. The way he sang you could tell how righteous he was.

Jim Hawley looked like he might be one of Michael's angels. Tall, with black hair and a wonderful straight nose. Alec loved to look at Jim Hawley. Jim noticed Alec looking at him and inclined his head just a second to show he noticed. Jim had called Alec an angel just last Sunday. He'd taken the seventh grade boys' Sunday school class on a hike to Perkin's Hill. Alec had climbed up ahead on the rocks near the crest and sat, looking out, loving to see the town from there, and Jim Hawley had to stay with the slower boys. But still he had come up to Alec and said, softly, so the others couldn't hear, "An angel's looking on the earth below," like he was saying something from the Bible. Alec wanted to know who the angel was, even though he knew. "You. A fine boy angel." And then Jim turned away. Alec thought he was embarrassed. He was righteous.

Mr. Fisher was taking the fifth, sixth and seventh classes, boys and girls both, to see the new church at Hamilton. Alec ignored the bus after church and went up to Jim Hawley. "I wish we was going on a hike today," he said.

Jim smiled. He looked happy to see Alec. "We can't hike every Sunday. Today you going to see the new church."

"I seen it," Alec said. "Can't we hike? You and me?"

"Well." Jim paused, not refusing. "Ask your father." Alec turned to run. "Wait. Tell him it's your idea. You asked me."

Alec's father looked, as usual, sour. He had an ulcer and was never comfortable. "Alec shouldn't ask you to take him around like that," he said to Jim.

"I don't mind him asking. If he don't ask he won't ever know, will he?"

"He can't take up your time unless you want. It's a hot day for hiking."

"I was going to hike by myself. I'd be glad to have him for company."

Alec was ready in sneakers, shorts and T-shirt when Jim Hawley stopped in his blue Mustang at Alec's house. In the car, after they turned the corner out of sight of his father, Alec moved over next to Jim Hawley and said, "Can I steer?"

"You done it before?"

"My dad puts his arm around me so he can hold the wheel if I do something dumb." Alec was lying. His father never did any such thing. Arnie Foster's father did that with Arnie. Jim put his right arm around Alec's shoulders. He could reach the wheel only by holding Alec very tightly. Alec liked the feel of Jim Hawley's arm on one side and chest on the other now as he steered the Mustang. He shifted so that he felt more of Jim's body. Jim Hawley was nice. Alec got an erection again but he wasn't going to hide it. He wasn't wearing undershorts and it didn't hurt. He hoped Jim Hawley would notice it.

If he noticed he didn't say so, and when they got to the edge of the field that led to White Haven Alec mostly lost it. "Can I leave my shirt in the car? Sure is hot," Alec said, though it wasn't so awful hot.

"I guess so," Jim said. Then, after locking the car, he unlocked it again and took off his flannel shirt and put it in with Alec's T-shirt. "I guess it's too hot for that shirt," he said, now wearing jeans and shoes.

Alec had never seen Jim Hawley without a shirt on before, and it felt good to see Jim's white skin, so much lighter than his hands and face. He looked very strong, much stronger than when he had his shirt on. He had his own small farm and did most of the work himself, so that must be why his muscles were so big.

They had quite a way to hike, though, and Alec had lots of question about the crops and the bugs and the earth and the rocks, even though he knew some of the answers already, because Jim Hawley liked to talk about those things. After an hour they came to White's quarry, where the water was deep but there was a little grassy edge on one side.

By now the day really was hot and sweat was running down Jim's chest and back, wetting the top of his jeans. "Let's swim," Alec said, and started taking off his sneakers and socks.

"We didn't bring swim suits." Jim was just standing there.

Alec took off his shorts. "We don't need none."

"You didn't wear undershorts," Jim said, his voice a little quavery.

"No," Alec said. "They ain't comfortable when you get a bone on. Look. I'm getting one now."

Jim Hawley looked away. "Don't talk like that," he said.

Alec went to the edge and dived in. He flipped below the surface and

came up facing Jim. “Oh, it's wonderful cold,” he said. Actually it was too cold, but Alec thought he'd already made one tactical error and did not want to make another. “Come on,” he said, leaning his arms on a rock so only his head and shoulders were completely out of the water. He saw that Jim Hawley could look at him now, so he smiled and slowly Jim smiled back.

“Well,” Jim said, “all right. It sure enough is hot.” He removed his hiking shoes and socks and then his jeans. He was wearing boxer-type shorts. He kept them on, but Alec could see Jim was a little excited. Jim quickly went up to a middle height rock and dived in.

His boxer shorts came right off. Alec moved, got them and put them between his legs. Jim came up looking for them, but they were gone. “I lost my shorts,” he said.

“You did?” Alex asked. “I didn't see them. They must have sunk to the bottom.” Alec knew that wasn't likely so he kept them between his legs until, when Jim wasn't looking, he threw them over a rock.

They swam and Alec dived off the middle height rock, and then Jim Hawley did too, and though he wasn't excited Alex liked the sight of Jim's loose genitals, with all the brown hair, and a thin line of hair that went from the thick hair up to his navel.

Alec decided that he'd better get to work or the day would be wasted. He got out of the water and retrieved Jim's boxer shorts. “Look,” he said, “I've got them.”

“How –” Jim said in the water. “Throw them to me.”

“No. Come get them.” Alec folded them carefully as Jim Hawley watched, then placed them in and under the cleavage of his buttocks. “Here they are!” Alex grinned. He didn't look down, because he wanted to watch Jim, but he felt his penis stretch taut in the warm air.

Jim treaded water without responding, looking very serious. Then he swam to the edge, his eyes pleading. “Give 'em to me, Alec. Don't play so.”

“I ain't playing, Jim Hawley.” Alec put both hands behind him, touching the boxer shorts. “Come get 'em.” His heart almost stopped as he watched Jim come out of the water slowly.

He was as excited as Alec, and not hiding it at all.

Still looking serious, Jim approached Alec, stood for a moment looking searchingly into the boy's face. Then he nodded and went down on his knees. Alec felt a new thrill, like never before. Not a new sensation. But because it was Jim. His hands shook as he touched, for the first time, Jim Hawley's hair, then his ears and neck. Jim wasn't

Michael's angel any more; he was just beautiful enough to be one.

Later, Alex lay on Jim's chest looking into his face.

"How did you know?" Jim asked, looking back and pushing Alex's hair to the side. "How did you know I wanted to do that?"

"I just knew."

"I ain't done that since I joined the church. More'n a year."

"I tempted you," Alec said. "And you fell. Just like Lucifer."

"Don't make jokes about it."

"It ain't a joke. And if you don't want to do it, I'll tempt you again."

Jim sighed. "You're a mighty handsome boy."

"I'm an angel." Alec didn't think it would help to say whose angel he was. Not yet anyway.

"You sure look like one."

"I am one." Alex kissed Jim. "You just got kissed by an angel."

"I guess I was," Jim said. He lay quiet.

Then his hands began moving over Alec's body, very gently. "What did you say about —" He paused a moment and then kissed Alec softly. "What did you say about what you'd do if I didn't want to do nothing with you any more?"

"You know."

"Well, I guess I don't want nothing to do with you any more." His hands were moving, and Alec felt pressure against his leg. "Nothing to do with you any more. I just don't want to. Especially right now."

"Well, I reckon I'll just have to do like I said."

"When? When you going to do it?"

Alex didn't answer. He had already started tempting Jim Hawley again.