Midnight came and went, yet nobody could go to sleep. I couldn’t sleep, and neither could a stoic Johanna or the usually chipper Olivia at the table. Not even Jordan felt the need to relinquish his sixth cup of coffee. So, I asked permission to return to my suite.

“I see no problem in that.” Johanna exhaled under her breath, tiredly leaning into a chair without looking away from Olivia, still at the screen. She waved me away, “You get some sleep then. We’ll keep you informed of any new developments, Adam.”

After returning to the hotel room, the keycard indenting into the skin of my frustrated paw, I locked the door behind me. Any thoughts of traveling to the empty, cold bed lay dormant on my easily distracted mind. The call for a good night’s sleep seemed more distant than normally found at that hour. Instead of heavy eyelids, they blinked attentively to the tiniest sounds, whether it be the way my neurotic tail swished against the carpeting, or a muffled sound coming from another nearby room. Probably a creaking bed, maybe even a flushing toilet, which then coincided with a door opening or closing shut. Whatever noises a hotel occupant made at 2:00 in the morning.

My thoughts still circled from Hector, Blu, the captured Stephen (and our fallen comrade Donald, I tried not to contemplate), then back to Mom, Dad, and Lowell. The latter wouldn’t want me to torture myself by worrying, so I opted for a different, less painful thing to do when wracked with insomnia: watching the news.

Click.

“—scheduled to partially reopen for civilians as early as March.” Said the wolfish anchorwoman as footage showed cement trucks and construction crew on one of the airport’s destroyed runways. “Moses International’s Commissioner James Lee says repairs to the extensive damage will take longer than expected, but with round-the-clock effort from contracted and even volunteer workers, domestic flights will—”

Click.

“—local news report, a middle-aged tabby couple were the victims of what might have been a home invasion. Police and Archangels on the scene refused comment at this time, and witnesses have not come forward as to the nature of—”

Click.

“—the 1970s were a depraved decade, looking back at official records and preserved film footage.” Said an older tiger in a business suit, the bottom text describing him as a Chicago historian/professor dedicated to Old American History. Seeing how I’d changed to the Devout History Channel, it had to be a new documentary. “Drugs were rampant, unwed pregnancies were at a shocking percentage; crime was at an all-time high, the…the Gas Recession made it impossible for middle-to-middle-lower class family to afford an automobile and a house at the same time. Heck, I personally recall my own parents struggling to pay auto insurance while providing food for my siblings. You gotta remember that this was before Farthing’s New Eden Deal made the idea of electric cars more appealing, so by the time Farthing came into office, the average American welcomed—”

Click.

Next came the Devout American classic *The Lord’s Not Dead*, with an innocent student telling the atheist, evil professor at her community college, “Sometimes the devil allows people to live a life free of trouble because he doesn't want them turning to—”

Click.

Reruns of old wholesome sitcoms. A channel for 24/7 sales adverts, with the occasional government bond commercial every twenty minutes. The other FaithTV channel dedicated to well-known pundits discussing topics such as the ongoing ‘Deviant States aggression’ (without mentioning any sympathy for them) or what the new Canadian occupation promised to provide for the job market. One pundit went into how the Devout States of America condemned murder.

At least, officially. The harsh truth was that it never became a simplified rule. When it came to sexual deviants, they prayed for us as we slept in medically induced comas until we awakened with our belief in God fully returned. Some walked out of clinics after a small amount of time. Others remained in their beds. Meanwhile, most who went into the Devout military were well-aware they needed to take the Seventh Circle Oath; all who defended the homeland would fight, knowing any future orders they followed would likely condemn them to Hell. That likely included Archangels as well.

My tail curled on the living room couch. My tired eyes bore into the TV screen.

As I listened to the faceless pundit talk about the pride of such a ‘sacrifice’ his little brother would take on the frontlines, as their own father did during the early years of Devout America, I couldn’t help myself from frowning. Exactly how did the National Church wish to save somebody like me from sin, while praising the Devout soldiers in knowingly committing sins in the name of God.

**Knock, knock, knock!**