

# Advocation and Devotion

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*Gatesfield Boarding school is the meeting place for two unlikely characters:*

***Lael**, a devout Christian and a straight-A student with a painful past;*

*and **Adin**, an angel-faced Satanist with a love of black and hatred of authority.*

*When the boys are forced to be roommates, you can be sure that fur is about to fly! And yet, as time goes on, secrets about the past are being revealed and a visitor from long ago might just send Lael over the edge . . . and send Adin come crashing down with him.*

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# 1 - Opposites

9/8/06

## Advocation and Devotion

### Chapter 1: *Opposites*

Gatesfield Boarding School; a co-ed establishment for the students in the general area who were either privileged or rich enough to attend. A large and magnificent place, the ancient school was built of stone and wood. Formerly a convent, the building was mansion-like and built on grounds surrounded by woods and a lake. The main building was for classes, while the wings had been built long ago for dorms and other living quarters.

Now, as the day grew later and the sun drew away to the west, some of its rays struck the school glancewise. The many windows sparkling gave an impression of a million tiny diamonds stuck fast in an immobile rock . . . and maybe that was a fitting description, for what are young minds but precious gems that must be kept against the day?

School was winding down for the day around four in the afternoon. Most classes at this time of day were either Art, Home Economics, or Study Hall- classes that wouldn't require too much of tired students. In one of these latter rooms, oak tables were spread out to accommodate the students working and talking therein. The dull roar of the many kids all talking and moving at once quieted to a murmur as an announcement echoed through the large room. "Lael Reinhart, please report to the principal's office. I repeat . . . "

The boy in question was startled out of his work and looked up at the speaker just in time to catch the last of the announcement. " . . . to the principal's office. Thank you." There was an audible click as the sound was cut off.

The girl next to him, who had been occupied with using a barrette to fix her auburn hair away from large emerald eyes, blinked at him. "Wow, that's a change! You *never* get called to the office." she said, amused. "He probably wants to give you a medal or something. Or have you actually done something bad?" A teasing note entered her voice. "Like, I don't know, been caught smoking behind the school or something? Lael, you devil you!"

Lael rubbed the back of his neck, embarrassed. "No, I'm sure he just wants to talk about Homecoming or something. I *am* class secretary this year, remember, Deb?"

Deb (short for Deborah Cassia) nodded and sighed. "Well, yeah. I had to do an article on you for the school newspaper, remember? Anways, how am I supposed to finish my Algebra homework without you? You **know** I can't do math, and my parents'll kill me if I fail." She looked down at the paper in front of her with disgust.

Lael, in the process of picking up his books, looking at her with raised eyebrows and a crooked smile. "Don't worry about it, you caught on pretty quickly. If you feel unsure, look at the notes I gave you. I'm sure you'll do fine on the test tomorrow. You'll manage without me."

*Everyone does.*

As he walked down the pathway in the middle of the tables, Lael heard remarks from all sides of him- most of them from a group of delinquents who particularly disliked him for no other reason than that he got good grades. "Aww, lookit Lael!" one sneered.

"Wow, he actually got called to the office! What'd you do, break a record or something?"

"He probably bribed the principal. Hell, maybe he even-"

At that point, the study hall teacher sternly told them to be quiet. By that point Lael was at the door. As he turned back from the other side to close it, he felt something hit it- a pass by the sound of it. Not that it really mattered; he was pretty used to this sort of thing. Still, it was a good thing he hadn't been a few moments slower; the school passes were heavy, painted wood. Not exactly the sort of thing you like flying into the back of your head. Hearing the teacher's voice crescendo beyond the door, he turned and walked down the hallway, not wanting any more involvement.

Lael Reinhart was fifteen, tall and gangly for his age. The bangs of his blue, shouldblade-length hair covered his left eye, but the one visible was, behind the glasses, a warm golden-brown. Unlike the students that had been teasing him, he sported no piercings or jewelry of any kind, aside from the ornate golden and black cross with a blue gem in the center that hung around his neck. He even wore modest closing, a golden-yellow button up shirt and jeans.

He wasn't thinking of that right now, however; what he **was** doing was studying the bits of the ground he could see from out the windows in the hall. Having grown up in a rural area himself, he knew to appreciate the majesty of the mountains and forests surrounding him; city-dwellers, like those bullies, didn't much care for them. Another reason he disliked them. But Lael, being soft-spoken and somewhat timid, wouldn't speak up against them, which often irritated the teachers.

Rounding a corner, he found himself standing in the main hall in front of the office he'd been summoned to. He knocked on the wooden part firmly. "Mr. Lindan? I'm here to see you."

"Oh, Lael! Come in." Came the reply from the other side of the doorway, and he went in, shutting the door behind him. As he turned to look at the principal, a sight stopped him in his tracks.

It wasn't Mr. Lindan- no, the thin, balding principal sat behind his desk as always. It was the person lounging in the other seat in front of him that caught his attention. *Oh, what a pretty girl.* Lael thought, stunned. For the person in the chair had to be a girl- the slimness of figure and face attested to that.

"Lael, this is Adin Duanson. Adin, meet Lael Reinhart." the principal said with a nod at each of them.

*Wait a second . . . Adin's a **guy's** name . . .* It hit Lael in a flash, and his face went bright red. *No way!* But, sure enough, when he studied Adin more closely, he could see that the body beneath the black, baggy jeans and tanktop was definitely male and the face was masculine, though with very delicate and pale features. Anyone at first glance could mistake him for a girl, especially since he was decked out in the piercings and black lipstick of a goth. Still, this didn't lessen Lael's embarrassment one iota.

As if he felt the weight of his gaze, Adin looked up at him, met Lael's eyes with his own large, violet ones, and looked away with rudeness that made the other boy angry. Normally he wouldn't have cared, but it was the expression in his eyes that miffed him- one of complete boredom and contempt. He'd just been dissed. At the principal's gesture, he reluctantly sat down in the next seat.

"Now, " Mr. Lindan said, making a steeple of his fingers, "I'm sure you're wondering why you're here, Lael."

"Yes, sir." he said, somewhat abruptly. This wasn't exactly the way he'd planned to spend his afternoon.

"Adin is going to be a new student of ours, " the man continued, ". . . and all new students, as you might well remember from your time here, need a helper around the school. You are a straight-A student and have almost all of the same classes Adin will be taking; in this perspective, you are the perfect role model and guide for him. He will also be your new roommate. If I remember correctly, your last one graduated a year ago, so it's a perfect solution."

**What?!** This guy, this young man who looked like a complete juvenile delinquent, was going to be his roommate? Lael would have protested normally in any case, but at that moment he caught sight of the necklace Adin was wearing- a silver circle with a red, six-pointed star within. A **pentacle**. Satan's sigil. This kid had an evil sigil around his neck like normal punks would have a chain or dogtags.

A wave of rage and despair threatened to overwhelm him for a moment, but he forced it, and the memories that came along with it, down. "Mr. Lindan, is this necessary?" he asked, forcing his voice to be still.

Adin, apparently, didn't like this idea either. "Why do I have to be in a room with **this** guy?" he snapped, sitting up in his seat. "I don't wanna be paired with some stupid fag!"

Lael wasn't going to take this sitting down. He sprung to his feet and glared down at the punk. "And **I** don't want to have my room invaded by some wannabe goth!" he retorted. "And I wouldn't be talking about 'fags', kid. You don't exactly look normal yourself!"

The other youth, who was sporting black locks with blood-red tips, jumped to his feet. Lael was viciously amused to find himself several inches higher than him, so the little brat had to stare up into his face, even if he went on tiptoe (which he was doing now- and that had to be hard with those heavy boots.) "Bring it on, pal." Adin hissed.

"Boys, sit **down!!!**" Mr. Lindan ordered loudly. The steepled fingers had come down flat upon the

wooden desk with a slamming sound. Still glaring at each other, they sat down in their respective chairs, Lael straight-backed and proper, Adin with an arm insolently sprawled over the back of the seat.

"Now, will you two behave long enough for me to finish?" The principal's voice was stern now, with none of the kind politeness he reserved for new students. Lael nodded stiffly; through his peripheral vision he saw Adin shrug carelessly. It was enough to make your blood boil. And he'd have to **live** with this cretin?!

"Lael, Adin, despite how you might feel about each other, this arrangement will **work**," he said matter-of-factly. "There are few other openings in the dorms, and no others with such a convenient placement. You two **will** get along with each other, at least for the time being. We'll see how this works out in a month or so. Do you understand me?"

The look in Mr. Lindan's eyes allowed for no argument, so Lael swallowed his pride and nodded. After a pause, Adin did the same. The principal nodded and got to his feet. "Now, why don't you show him to your room, Lael? He should be able to get organized once there, and you can spend tomorrow helping him find his way around."

"Yes, sir."

Both of them were ushered out the door by their principal and given one last warning glance before he shut the door. Practically before it closed Adin had turned to glare at Lael with a look of pure annoyance. "This wasn't my idea. I hope you know that."

"Of course," he replied with a glance filled with equal venom. "If I had a choice, you wouldn't even be in this school."

He started to walk away, but Adin called out. "Hey, whatever your name is! Get back here!"

Lael turned partway back and raised an eyebrow. "The name is Lael, and why the heck should I come back?"

The other youth looked at him like he was the stupidest kid in the entire world and gestured at the pile of baggage at his feet, which hadn't been there before Lael had entered the office. Someone must have dropped it off while they'd been inside. "Aren't you going to at least help me with this?" he snapped.

"And why should I do **that**?"

"Oh, I just thought that since we were roommates, you'd be all nice and helpful and give me a hand." Adin said sarcastically. "Never mind, I'll do it myself."

Much as he'd liked to have held onto his hostile feelings, the sight of the frailer boy hoisting a bag almost as big as him onto his shoulders was too much for Lael to take. There really **was** too much luggage there for the punk to carry up by himself. So, with an annoyed sigh, he strode back and loaded himself with bags, putting his own books in one. Both ended up looking like pack camels, but by the time they were done, all the bags were being carried.

"Jesus Christ, isn't there an elevator we can take?" Adin groaned as they set off down the hallway.

"**Don't say that!**" Lael growled. "And no, not in this part of the building. There will be once we get into the other wing, but this one's the main building; classrooms and stuff. It's gonna be a little while before we get there."

"Hmph."

"And don't you **dare** think I'm gonna do anything like this for you again! You're a pain in the butt!" And in the shoulders, and the back. They hadn't been walking for even five minutes and the baggage was already causing muscle strain. What the heck did the brat have in here?

An annoyed sigh from behind him. "Just say '@\$\$' and have done with it, you idiot! Don't you ever swear? And what's with the flipping out about my saying 'Jesus' anyway? You some sort of religious nut?"

Lael, laden with bags, wasn't going to turn around to glare at the guy, but he came close to it. "I **told** you, don't **say** that! And yes, I'm a Christian. I don't like swearing or hearing the Lord's name in vain. Got a problem with it?"

Silence for a moment, then Adin spoke again. "No, not really. As long as you don't push it on me, we'll be fine."

Silence reigned for another few moments as they walked through the hallways. Finally, though, they passed the door leading to the male dorms, and Lael inwardly cheered as he spotted the elevator. Both of them set down the luggage with relief, and Lael punched the button. A brief pause, and the doors slid open with a "ding."

Adin slid in first, dragging the bags and occupying the left side. That wouldn't do at all. "Adin, get on the right." Lael ordered.

The other boy folded his arms and didn't move. "Why should I?" The bespectacled boy lost his patience again. "Look, just move! I don't like people being on my left side!"

"Jeez, touchy!" Adin grumbled, but moved to the other side nonetheless. It was only then that Lael got in with the rest of the baggage and punched in the floor number. In this case, two.

Waiting for the doors to open again, Adin looked over at the other teen curiously. "What was that all about? That some stupid religious shoot again?"

"None of your business." In truth, Lael just didn't want to explain the reason to Adin. He wasn't about to tell a stranger something that most of the school didn't know about him. Especially not **this** brat.

The brat in question snorted and leaned against the wall of the elevator, crossing his arms. A few moments passed, then the familiar odd feeling as the elevator rose abated and the doors opened with another bell-like sound. "Come on." Lael said, picking up all the baggage again. Adin did the same and followed him down the hallway.

They stopped at room 247, and Lael had to put some of the stuff down for a moment while he rummaged in his pockets for the key. While he unlocked the door, Adin looked around with surprise. "This place's more like an apartment building than a school."

"I suppose." Lael said absent-mindedly, fiddling with the keychain. His mother had loaded it with too many little things, and he was having trouble finding the key for some reason. "We've even got our own shower. You'll see once we're in there." *In my room*. he thought rebelliously. But it was only half-hearted; with his new roommate standing right next to him, it was easier to realize that this was going to happen whether he wanted it to or not.

He finally found the darn thing and opened the door with satisfaction, dropping the bags as soon as he got inside. "You're on your own from there." He remarked as he retrieved his schoolbooks from the bag he'd placed them in, and headed over to the left side of the room.

Adin stopped for a moment to look around. The room was good-sized; big enough to hold two twin beds with enough room for two desks, dressers, and small tables beside each. The walls were white, with green trim on the windowsill and a green-blue carpet. A door in the side led to a small bathroom, which was decorated with a marbled white and gold color.

"Holy crap, man." Adin said, sounding incredulous. "Not only are you a Christian, but you're a neat-freak too? This is gonna be worse than I thought. And what's with the colors in this place?"

"Green and white are the school colors." Lael said, rolling his eyes. "You would've seen that in the pamphlet. And what do you mean, neat freak? I like to keep things so they aren't messy."

"Bull, dude! There's not a friggin' spot on your side of the room!"

And it was true; all of Lael's belongings were in the place they were supposed to be. He had just now added his algebra and science books to the shelf on his desk, next to the black computer. More books, presumably for normal reading, were lined up in the hollow of the end table. Most conspicuous was the lack of clothes flung around everywhere, usually a staple in a teenage boy's room. They had all ended up in a small hamper in the corner of the room. Even his bed was made.

"Your point? Look, just keep your stuff on your side of the room, and we'll be fine." Lael said, his tone final, and sat down on the bed to regard the other teen with baleful golden-brown eyes. "Just get a few things straight; **don't** bother me while I'm doing homework, stay the hell away from my computer unless you actually need it for **school**, and do your own laundry. And no smoking or other stupid stuff."

"Like I gotta listen to you." Adin growled, stuffing socks into the top drawer of his dresser. Lael, who had taken out his Earth Science book and was starting on homework at the desk, heard him say something else a few moments later in a much softer voice. "Besides, I don't smoke."

He looked up and raised an eyebrow. "Sorry, but you kind of look the type."

"I don't care what I look like, **I don't smoke!!** Not cigarettes, not dope, nothing!!!" Adin turned around from packing his wardrobe (which was mostly black) and glared fiercely at Lael. "Got it?"

"Yeah, alright, I get it." Lael returned to his book with a shake of his head. He must've really hit a nerve there. Maybe the punk had actually smoked at one point in time, and quit. But something in the way he'd looked said that wasn't true; he'd actually sounded insulted when Lael had said that. Well, that was weird, in any case. But none of his business.

Lael had finished his science homework and was starting on the English when Adin had finally finished unpacking. When he finally looked up, he couldn't stop staring.

Adin had covered his side of the room with posters; some were for bands like Evanescence, others were for video games, but all were dark and creepy. Books were lined up semi-carefully on the desk; it was obvious that it would be messy before long. They were sharing space with a lean black laptop. Adin saw him looking and raised his eyebrows. "What? Got a problem?"

"All those posters . . . ?"

"What, we're not allowed to hang up posters?"

"Of course . . . but couldn't you've hung up better ones?"

"What, you expect me to hang up pretty little posters of that slut Brittany Spears or of some ridiculous pop band? That's not my style."

"Obviously."

"What's that supposed to mean?!"

"Nothing."

"Whatever." Adin kicked off his boots and fell onto the bed. He put his hands under his head and stared at the ceiling. After a few minutes of this, he started talking again. "Yo, what do you guys do for fun around here? I'm bored as hell."

Lael rolled his eyes. "You haven't gotten any homework yet, that's why. Most of our nights are taken up by it. Go on the computer if you want; there's a hookup under your desk. But don't start looking up porn or something, because I'll turn you right in."

"I'm not into that." Adin snorted. "I'm not some depraved little kid. Besides, I'll find a girl if I want one."

The other teen glared at him. "Watch it, pal. I'm not sure where you came from, but leave the girls here alone."

"Just shut the hell up. You don't know what you're talking about." Adin snapped. He swung his feet over the side and jammed them into the boots. "Why don't you show me how to get around here? I don't want to get lost tomorrow."

"Fine. We can get your key at the office, too." Lael sighed, resigned, and put a bookmark in "Great



Expectations," the book he was supposed to be reading for English. He'd got back to that later. He almost welcomed the distraction; reading Charles Dickens had begun to give him a headache. Yes, he was a classic writer, but he needed to stop using obscure language and just get **on** with it, in Lael's opinion. Besides, if he didn't do this, Adin might just get into trouble or something. So he left with the other boy.

The next few hours were spent introducing the new kid to the many hallways and rooms of Gatesfield Boarding School, after a short stop in the office to pick up Adin's key to their room. He immediately clipped it onto a keychain already loaded with other keys, with the same pentacle hanging from it that was around his neck. *I really have to talk with him about that.* Lael thought uneasily. Just the sight of it made him uncomfortable.

After that, Lael took him on the main tour of the classrooms, pointing out what ones Adin would be using the next day and recommending the best route. Not that he wanted to- if he had his way, he'd have the punk be late, fail, and leave- but he knew Mr. Lindan would want to know why he'd let that happen, so he'd have to do his best for now. What a pain.

The left wing, he explained, housed all the female occupants of the school, including the staff, who were almost always on the top floor. The left, where they lived, was for the males. They both shared a huge cafeteria in the basement section of the main building, the rest of which was divided up into the classrooms. The school itself had only three floors, but it covered a lot of area horizontally. Swimming classes would be held in the pool in the basement, or occasionally in the lake nearby. Gatesfield boasted basketball, baseball, fencing, and track teams, all of which were extremely popular with the resident students and very competitive with other schools.

Adin didn't show any interest whatsoever in the sports, though his amethyst eyes did light up briefly at the mention of the swords used for fencing. Lael made a mental note to not let the crazy kid near any sharp objects in the near future.

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By six, their tour was over and they'd returned to the room. To Lael's relief, Adin didn't bother him, preferring instead to surf the net. Lael, when he caught sight of dark-looking site splashed with red, decided he didn't need to know what the goth was doing and fell to trying to read. He got about twenty pages farther through "Great Expectations" before he couldn't stand it anymore and went on to his other homework. World History and French seemed to go too fast, leaving him bored and without much to do. So he decided to go on the computer as well.

The first thing he did was check his mail. After signing into Yahoo Mail, he scanned the page: No new messages. Well, what did he expect? It wasn't like he had that many online friends, and his mother wouldn't send one to check up on him until Friday. So he signed out and into Yahoo Messenger. Unexpectedly, an instant message assailed him almost immediately.

**BumbleBee15:** Hi, Lael! What happened today? I haven't seen you since you went to the office.

Lael smiled. He had once told Deb that her name was from the bible, and meant "bee." She'd taken it as a compliment, and was known to use it ever since. He'd also told her that his own meant "belonging to God" and she'd made a Yahoo account for him using it. She was one of the few people he could count on to actually **type out** their sentences online. This was probably due to the fact that she was a reporter, and seriously disliked chatspeak. As did he. Once, So he typed in a response.

**LordsBelonging:** I got a new roommate. :(

**BumbleBee15:** Really? What's he like? Can't be good, if you're making that expression. ;)

**LordsBelonging:** You have no idea. I'll talk to you tomorrow, okay? He's right in the room with me.

**BumbleBee15:** Okay, I understand. Hey, thanks for the help in math! I actually helped my roommate do it tonight when she asked for help. :)

**LordsBelonging:** Really? That's great! See, I told you so! :D

**BumbleBee15:** Yeah, I know!

Here Deb was silent for a few seconds, then said something quickly.

**BumbleBee15:** Sorry Lael, but I've gotta get off. I just saw Barrak sign on, and I don't feel like talking to him.

Lael winced. Barrak, a.k.a. "lightening flash" for his basketball achievements, had been Deb's boyfriend for a year straight up until a few days ago. They had been arguing a lot lately, and finally decided to separate before things got any worse. Deb was still upset over it. Lael, who knew both of them well and had seen their relationship evolve, was sympathetic.

**LordsBelonging:** I understand. I'll talk to you tomorrow. Good night!

**BumbleBee15:** Okay, I'll see you. Night!

Lael watched her screen name disappear from the short list of his computer and signed himself off. There really wasn't anything left to do now, except maybe surf the net. As he went to click on the Internet Explorer icon, he heard an all-too-familiar voice on his left. "So, who was the babe?"

He jumped and turned to find Adin sitting on his bed. "What the heck were you doing just sitting there!?" he yelled. "Why didn't you say anything?"

Adin just stared at him with a perplexed look on his face. "I've been sitting here in plain sight. What, are you blind or something?"

Lael turned back to the computer and watched the page go to Google. After a few minutes, he answered. "Yes, I am. In my left eye."

There was silence for a few minutes, then a small "Oh" from the other teen.

"Sorry, I didn't know." Adin apologized quietly. "I figured you just had bad vision because of the glasses."

Lael shrugged. "It's fine. I'm used to it. If you need to get my attention from that side, tap my arm or something." He turned and glared at the other teen. "And **don't** read over my shoulder when I'm using the computer."

More silence. "How'd it happen?"

"It's a long story." Lael didn't want to talk about this right now; hell, he **never** wanted to talk about his past; but especially not today, when bad memories were so close to the surface. "I don't really feel like talking about it."

He heard the rustle of Adin's shirt as he shrugged and got up. "Suit yourself." He sat down at his own computer and continued to surf the web. A somewhat awkward silence fell in the room for the rest of the night.

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Lael and Adin went to bed around nine, both tired by the events of the day. Adin, by the sounds of it, dropped off quickly; but Lael, for some reason, just couldn't manage to fall asleep. He tossed and turned for what seemed for hours, until he finally stopped and just stared up at the ceiling.

"Damn it all." he muttered under his breath. He jammed on his glasses and sat up to look out the window. The nearly full moon was bathing everything with silver; even the gleam from the lake was visible through the trees. It was a shame they weren't allowed outside at night; he'd have loved to go outside and look at the stars, as he always had years ago when he couldn't sleep.

He raised one hand and covered his left eye; a useless move, since all he saw from that one was darkness anyway. He could remember the details of how he'd lost the sight in it if he really wanted to; the events of today, the sight of the blood-red pentacle, they'd both brought them close to the surface. But he wouldn't if he wanted to get any sleep at all tonight.

A change in the room's noise alerted him to something, and he turned around. Adin, who'd been snoring quietly, had turned toward him in his sleep; that's why the sound of it had increased slightly. Lael studied his face as it was lit by the moonlight. The curves and the contours of it, already pale, had turned pure silver like that of some god. It wasn't really surprising that he'd mistaken him for a girl earlier; with all the anger and frustration gone out of his face, Adin seemed oddly . . . angelic. It was hard to realize they were the same age when he looked like that, so young and vulnerable.

*The way he acts . . . he reminds me of you, big brother.* he thought.

But no, that wasn't exactly true. He felt something different for Adin that he'd never felt for his brother. He acted so rude, but the flashes of true emotion he'd seen before- the remembered sorrow in his eyes

when he'd said he'd never smoked, and the understanding in his voice when he'd asked about Lael's eye- those had shown signs of a different person. If that tone had been pity, Lael might have hated him; but it had been understanding instead. Who was his new roommate, behind the mask of toughness he put up?

He suddenly found that he was staring at Adin . . . and wondering if his silvered skin felt any different than his own. A blush spread over his face and he lay down on the bed, covering his burning face with the blankets. *Stop that!* he told himself sternly. *Just because he's pretty like a girl doesn't mean he is one.*

But for some reason he couldn't get the guy's face out of his head, and when he finally fell asleep he found himself dreaming of an angel with Adin's face and outstretched arms before he fell into a dangerous, chaotic darkness filled with remnants of past he'd wished to forget.

## 2 - Getting Acquainted

I'm so very, very sorry that I haven't updated in months. School really sucks. T\_T But I'll try to get more chapters of everything, including "Magik? Reincarnated" and "Harbringers of Change" up sometime soon. :3 Don't worry, I'll do my best. I'm kind of disappointed in myself, though; half of this chapter has been written for a long time, and I've only just barely managed to finish it tonight. Night really is when I do my best work- it's almost 2:30 now, and it's easier for me to write now than in the day. O.O;; Oh, well.

In any case. Yeah, I know this is slow getting started. There'll be more fluff and angst later, I promise! XD For now, please try to deal with me building things up. I'm sorry; this chapter's a little boring. I'm gonna try to keep them the same length, which is about 11-12 pages on Microsoft World. Sorry if that's too long for some of you. \*sweat\*

Since my other stories are usually from one character's point of view, I'm going to try to vary/switch characters between every chapter. Last time was Lael; can you guess who it is this time? XD And yes, there'll be more hints at pasts and shtuff. Don't worry, you'll understand eventually. :3 For now, try to be patient, darlings. This isn't all that great as I, for the matter, am not all that great. Please forgive me. T\_T

I do hope you'll like this chapter, or at least put up with it, and check out the sample manga page of this story I did in my gallery. If people really like it, I'll consider actually doing it. (Of course, it seems like 'Tima's gonna force me to do it anyhow. O.O;; Scary.) In any case, comments are definately appreciated and will grant you many thanks. And possible glomps if I like you. :3

(P.S. Since some people don't seem to have the ability to recognize what the yaoi/shounen-ai symbol means, it's this: this story is gonna contain malexmale relationships. Don't flame me for it. The last person who did that got harassed for months. XDDD So seriously, don't make me hate you, darlings. You won't like me- or any of the many people living in my head- when I'm angry. Enjoy, dears! :3 )

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### **Chapter 2:** *Getting Acquainted*

An unfamiliar ceiling was the first thing Adin saw upon waking up. Unlike the stained wood of his last home, this one looked like swirled white plaster. Not nearly as attractive. All memories of the previous day came back in a rush, and he sat up with an annoyed groan. He'd hoped it was all some sort of nightmare. Unfortunately, it wasn't; here he was still, in this school so clean that it fairly squeaked and stuck with a roommate the same way.

Speaking of which . . . Adin looked over at Lael, who was sprawled on the bed, sleeping on his stomach with his head turned to the wall. *Huh*, he mentally snorted. *He even rejects me in his sleep.*

But for some reason, a large part of his animosity toward his roommate was gone. For one thing, they were going to have to be in the same room together for a long time; he might as well **try** to get along with the guy. Another was that he didn't seem all that bad; he **had**, after all, helped him carry his bags yesterday. There were plenty of people who'd just have stood there and watched while he struggled to carry all that. In fact, he'd been one of those people not too long ago until he'd smartened up a bit.

And there had been that whole thing last night, when Adin had found out about his left eye . . . He'd seemed so used to people asking about it, but he hid it so well that he wouldn't have found out about it otherwise. (Well, apart from the spazzing in the elevator.) Adin wondered if everyone else had gotten pushed away, too. There had to be some reason he didn't want to talk about it. But he wouldn't push; Adin, after all, knew what it was like to have bad memories of the past.

He looked over at the other teen for a few moments. Most of the blankets had come off his bed until only his sheet was wrapped around his lower half; not surprising, seeing how hot it'd been last night. The guy had apparently let down his hair at some point in the night, and it was spread out everywhere on his pillow, almost like someone had spilled blue ink everywhere. It looked . . . really soft. His own was often rough from its repeated dye treatments. Adin's hair was naturally dark, but he hadn't been satisfied with brown. Black and red were better. He'd also considered several different colors, but his last girlfriend had insisted on black. Now **there** was a wack job. He didn't consider himself all that normal, but that chick was totally over the edge. *Sorry, but if you're cutting yourself for fun instead of because of actual, physical depression, then that's just masochistic. No thanks.* He thought, dismissing her again in his thoughts. He always had the worst luck with women- they always ended up being a) psycho, or b) druggies. Thanks much, but he'd steer clear of them. He'd had a few stoner friends; they stopped being fun real quick.

Eh. Enough 'bout that. Thinking about his old girlfriends wasn't at all conducive to anything going on at the moment. He was basically isolated from everything up here anyways. But if there was one thing Adin knew, it was how to search out others like him, and he was quite sure he'd find others of his ilk around somewhere in the school. You couldn't have too many people together in one place without certain cliques forming up.

Without anything better to do until he was forced to get out of bed, Adin kept looking over at the other bed. If there was one thing he envied Lael, it was his height. He'd spent his entire life being mocked by others for his body; everything from his slimness and shortness to his rather effeminate face had been remarked upon at some point or another. Of course, people expecting him to be weak found it to be an entirely different story if they took him on. Adin hadn't gone to karate until he was twelve for nothing, and the wiry muscles he'd gained were there for a reason. Not to mention the several weapons he carried on his person. Boy, would Lael yelp if he knew about those . . . Just thinking about his reaction made Adin grin. With someone so easy to tease as Lael around, maybe the time he'd spend in this school wouldn't be so bad after all!

As he contemplated several acts of mischief that were easily doable in the period between this moment and the one where Lael might possibly wake up, Adin's gaze drifted back over to the other teen. He had

to also be involved in some sort of sport- guys today just didn't stay skinny like him if they weren't active (or like in Adin's case, they had an extremely fast metabolism.) From what he could see, the muscles in his upper body and arms were lightly toned. All in all, he was a pretty sturdy guy. He hadn't had any problem carrying up Adin's bags, after all, and they were moderately heavy. Adin had a fleeting thought, wondering if that light toning was the same throughout his body. If Lael had muscles, what would he look like with his shirt off? For that matter, what would he look like with-

*Gah!* he screamed silently, shaking his head violently and smacking his suddenly burning face. *Stoppit stoppit stoppit! It's just curiosity, normal male curiosity about other bodies. He's a **guy**, for Christ's sakes!* And that was another reason he shouldn't be thinking about him like that. Lael was a Christian, right? Meaning fire and brimstone for anyone who broke one of their God's precious laws. And we all know what the Bible-thumpers interpret that part of the Bible as. (And Bush for that matter, but let's not get into that.)

*Well, not like it makes a difference in anything I do or think.* Adin thought, sighing. *I'm going to Hell one way or another.* But he didn't really want to think about it right now- the sight of Lael's cross hanging on his bedpost sobered him immediately, and the bad memories associated with it rose to the surface. Images flickered across his mind- a hospital room, the monotonous beeping of a heart monitors, a bracelet of prayer beads. But he forced them away, staring again at Lael's back. There, he'd found a good reason to stare at the guy. Good for him.

One way or another, however, it did the trick, forcing his thoughts away from the past and to the present. And, speaking of the present . . . he craned his head to read the numbers on Lael's digital clock. 6: 32 a.m. Wow, he'd gotten up **early!** Then again, he'd gone to bed early too. No matter, that would be remedied as soon as he contacted a few people in the school about a certain hobby of his.

The clock apparently didn't think it was too early, because it went off three minutes later, right about when Adin had lain back down and was debating whether or not to get up for real. It kept beeping and buzzing until Lael, growling into his pillow, reached out a hand and shut it off.

"Finally awake, huh?" Adin teased, swinging his legs to the floor. He rested his elbows on his knees and put his chin in his hands, fixing an amethyst stare on the other youth and smirking slightly. "Do you usually sleep in this late?" he asked sarcastically.

"I had trouble getting to sleep last night, alright?" Lael grumbled, rubbing his eyes with one hand and reaching for his glasses with the other.

"Oh." He hadn't thought of that. Well, hopefully he wasn't an insomniac; that would put a damper on his plans. He did look a little tired, so maybe this was just a one-day thing. Then something occurred to him. "Um, what do we do first thing in the morning, anyway?" Man, it would **suck** if classes started this early.

"We don't have to be at classes until the bell at eight; until then, we can get ready and then go to the cafeteria for breakfast." He finally found his glasses and jammed them on his nose. As his gaze went around the room, he looked at Adin and did a double take. "Adin!" he exclaimed.

"Hmm?"

"What the heck are you **wearing**?" Lael spluttered. "You weren't wearing that when we went to bed last night!"

Adin blinked and looked down at his clothes. Oh, yeah, he remembered now. He'd changed at some point last night; it had been really hot, so he'd taken off the baggy shorts and tank top he'd worn to bed and switched them with some black boxers. "What, this? It got hot, so I changed." he replied, shrugging nonchalantly.

But he could see the guy's point; between the lack of shirt and relative shortness of his boxers, a lot of Adin's skin was being exposed. Normally this wouldn't bother him, but for some reason a light blush was spreading across his face. What was wrong with him today? Other guys saw others naked all the time in showers and stuff like that, so what was the problem with it? His hormones were going way out of whack. Wait . . . he was having his period! No, he was a guy, so that was out. Damn. It would've explained so much if he was PMSing.

Still, this was an opportunity for a little fun. "Got a problem with it, Lael?" he asked, lowering the pitch of his voice so it rumbled slightly- not easy to do, since his voice was light by nature, but it was much more seductive that way. Then came the evil glare with the crooked smile and cocked eyebrow. He was expecting to be ignored or to have a sharp retort thrown in his face.

But, to his eternal amazement, Lael's face went red. He immediately got up and, getting some clothes from the dresser on his side of the room, headed to the bathroom. "I'm taking a shower; you should take one after me, too." he called back over his shoulder. "And **get dressed!**" The bathroom door slammed shut, and the pattering sound of the water from the shower came a few minutes later.

Adin stared after him, then fell back onto the bed, utterly perplexed. Why were they both so embarrassed? It wasn't like they hadn't seen other half-naked guys before; they did every time they went swimming. *There's no way he's gay- I saw him talking to that girl on the net last night.* he reasoned. *And I know I'm not gay. I've had girlfriends. So what the hell's wrong with us?*

In any case, he'd better get dressed; there was no telling what Lael'd do to him if he came out of the shower and found him still lying on the bed in his boxers. He rolled his eyes, went over to his dresser, and debated on what to get. Let's see . . . black, black, and more black. Oh wait, look, there was a red shirt. Decisions, decisions.

And now he'd have to wait for Lael to get out of the bathroom for him to take a shower. He wished the other teen had let him go first; it was going to take him a bit longer to put on his eyeliner and everything else than it would for Lael to put his hair up and pull on one of those dumb bright-colored shirts of his. *Tan shirts and green trim. Yuck. Not to mention the . . . dare I say it . . . **white** paint on the walls.*

All these colors were completely unnecessary; if everyone just wore red or black, it would be so much easier. Black goes with everything, red goes with black, and it's all good. And maybe the occasional hot pink article of clothing for girls. But that was for the experimental goths. Adin preferred to stay with the basics: black, red, silver, and piercings. Again, yay for him.

And now there was another dilemma- where to change, since Lael was in the bathroom? He didn't exactly want to go all the way down the hall to the main bathroom. So he'd just have to change in the



room. Too bad Lael was in the shower- this would **really** give him something to be embarrassed about. He stripped off the boxers and got changed as quickly as possible, pulling on a pair of flame-emblazoned, heavily-chained black pants and a black t-shirt. Not that it would do any good- he'd just have to get undressed again when he took his shower. Having two people in the same room with only one bathroom really was inconvenient.

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Somehow the two managed to coordinate things so that they were both bathed, dressed, and ready to go by 7:20. This left plenty of time for them to go to the cafeteria and grab a bite to eat- which they did. (Growing teenage boys are always hungry, after all.) Today happened to be bacon and eggs, which gave Adin a good second impression of the food.

"Don't expect stuff like this ever day." Lael warned as they sat down at one of the tables, put their books to the side, and dug in. "They usually serve pancakes or waffles- and those are gross. They look and taste like sponges."

Adin just shrugged. "Food's food. But thanks for the warning."

As he ate, his gaze moved around the room. Unlike many of the boarding schools he'd seen, this one didn't seem to have uniforms; this was fortunate for him, not that he'd have actually worn them if there were any. The kids here were no different from those in public schools, except that their gear and clothes seemed better. And, of course, the fact that they were here at all. Tuition for Gatesfield was pretty expensive, after all.

Just when he was about to get up and dump his tray, he spotted a girl walking toward their table. And not just any girl. This one had the complete package: great body, good taste in clothes, and a very attractive face. A real looker in general, and she was coming right this way. What good luck for him! Strange that he wasn't salivating over her the way he usually did, but still . . . a hot girl was a hot girl. And she sure beat the crap out of half the ones he saw elsewhere in the caf.

She smiled at Lael, putting the books she'd carried under one arm on the table and sliding her tray on it with the other. "Good morning, Lael!" she said brightly, then looked over at Adin. Her smile faltered for a second and her eyes widened as she took in his appearance; then she smiled at him. "Oh, you must be Lael's new roommate. Nice to meet ya!"

She stuck out her hand and he shook it, shrugging. "The name's Adin." he replied. Then something occurred to him and he raised his eyebrows, a crooked smile of his own curving his lips. "Let me guess . . . you must be BumbleBee15, right?"

"Wha- how'd you know **that**?" she exclaimed, dropping his hand like it was a snake.

Damn, he'd gone too quickly; time to repair the damage. You had to be careful with these sort of things; just like with reeling in a fish, you had to be careful that the line didn't snap. And this one was quite a catch.

Lael, however, got there before him. "Relax, Deb. He saw us talking on Yahoo last night." His voice was laughing, but he was shooting Adin a death glare all the while. If looks could kill, Adin would be dead and buried already. He shrugged in apology. Yup, this guy was really touchy.

"Oh, I see." Deb rubbed the back of her neck sheepishly and sat down. "It's just that whole thing with the internet nowadays, you know? You can never be too careful. It kinda freaked me out that you knew my sn. You told him my name, Lael?" she asked, picking up her fork.

"Actually, no." Lael narrowed his eyes at Adin again. "He must've figured it out on his own. Pretty smart guy."

Translation: '*Mess with her and I will **kill** you.*'

*Christ, this guy's like a mother hen.* Adin thought, disgusted. He wasn't getting the boyfriend-girlfriend vibe from them, so that had to be it; Lael was just protective of her. Which was odd; any guy in his right mind who was friends with this chick would want to be going out with her. But that, as he reminded himself, wasn't his business.

"Sorry about that." He apologized, trying to act as though he actually **was**. "Oh, will you guys excuse me a second? Gotta dump my tray." He got up from his seat and walked over to the trash can, looking around the room again as he did so.

Ah, there- a group of people in all black, with necklaces like his own around their necks. He'd have to see if they were in any of classes . . . especially ones that he didn't have with blue boy over there. He had a feeling his little Christian roommate would disapprove if he found out Adin was making friends with those sort of people.

Then again, who did Lael expect him to pal up with? The jocks? Hell no, he hated most sports, and the people who played them. The preppy and popular crowd? Like they'd even let him in their right little group even if he didn't regard them with utmost contempt. The group of in-betweens (not very popular, but still liked) was more promising, but it was doubtful he'd make many friends there. Nope, goths like himself were his best bet.

He walked back to the table and found that Deb had pulled out a sheet of what looked like math problems and was deep in conversation with Lael about them. *Damn, she's one of **those** chicks.* He groaned inwardly. *Not the smart kind! Unlike the popular girls, they actually have brains!* With another mental sigh, he sat down again.

"What are you guys working on?" he asked, craning his head around. It looked like Algebra; one of the worst types of math there is. He couldn't make heads or tails of what was on her paper; it was just a mindless jumble of numbers, letters, and words. "Uh, tell me I don't have that right off!" he said hopefully, horrified at the prospecting of dealing with the convoluted problems.

"Oh, no, you're in General Algebra. You won't have this sort of thing until next year." Lael said without looking up. "This is one of the classes you're not in with me."

“Oh, fine then.” That was good; General Algebra was what he’d had in his old school. Apparently, his grades from that one had been transferred to this one, and he was being enrolled in the same classes. Lucky him. Hopefully his teachers were better.

Adin thought they would stop there and do something else; instead he watched incredulously as they **continued** talking about the problems on the papers as if they were normal people talking about last night’s episode of some show on TV.

“See, the only mistake you made was here. You have to subtract this from both sides, see?”

“Oh, yeah, I get it now! Thanks!”

“Now, about this next one . . . “

Adin just stared at them, dumbfounded, until the bell rang a couple minutes later. Deb looked at her watch, then shoved the paper into a red folder and put it on top of the stack of books. “Time to go to class, guys.” She said, standing up and pushing in her chair.

“Right.” Lael got up, pushing his glasses onto his nose with one finger, then looked at the other youth. “Adin, you remember where the room is, right?” he asked, tucking his science book and notebook under his own arm.

“Um . . . Depends. What class is first?”

“Math.”

“Riiiiight . . . Meaning . . . ?”

His roommate sighed and headed toward one of the cafeteria’s many doors. “This way. It’s right across from ours.”

Deborah fell back a few steps to walk alongside Adin. “Don’t worry about it. I’ll help you around if you need help later.” She said brightly.

“I look forward to it. I’m sure that anyone with a guide as smart as you would learn how to get around in no time flat.” he said smoothly, smiling charmingly.

Deb flushed a little so that her cheeks went a becoming pink. “You really think so?” she said, fiddling with the clip in her reddish-brown hair nervously. “I really don’t think I’m all that smart . . .”

“Oh, much smarter than Adin. I gave him the grand tour yesterday, and he seems to have already forgotten it.” Lael said lightly, turning around partly as they passed through the doors.

Deb blinked, then looked at the boy beside her. “Is that true? Did he already show you around?” Her voice was a little reproachful.

“Damn, I forgot.” He said, rolling his eyes and sighing in feigned self-irritation. “I’m always forgetting

important stuff like that. It's so stupid. I guess you won't want to show me around, then?" Inwardly, though, he was just a little ticked at Lael. Why couldn't he have kept his mouth shut? Way to kill the mood. Oh, no, there was death-glare again.

"Oh, no, I'd love to help." Deb said shaking her head. "I forget things a lot too. I'm sure you've got a good reason for forgetting." She smiled at him sweetly.

*Man, is she naïve or what?* Adin thought, inwardly shaking his head. *So gullible, in a ditzzy sort of way. It's kinda . . . cute.* But from the corner of his eye he could see more of the subtle glances that Lael was giving him. He was in for trouble later, but he didn't really care. Making his roomie angry was fun.

They finally came to the classrooms. "I'll see you later!" Deb said brightly, waving to Adin as she entered the room. As Adin went to walk into his own room, something tugged on the bottom of his shirt. He spun around to see Lael staring down at him with an expression he didn't entirely like.

"What? I'll be late for my first day." He said in exasperation. Not that he didn't already know what he was going to say.

And, on cue: "We need to talk." This said with a deathly seriousness that made Adin want to laugh.

"Later. Class is now, remember?" Adin tugged the fabric of his shirt from Lael's hands and turned to go in. Then something else occurred to him. "Um, Earth Science is after this, right?"

"Yes. You'd better not be late." And without another word Lael spun around and disappeared behind the door of his classroom.

Man, that guy needs to chill. Adin thought, shrugging as he went into his room. Only one desk, near the back, was free and he slid into it immediately. That suited him just fine.

The next desk directly over was occupied by a very tall and bulky guy, who was partially hunched over the surface. His legs went so far as to stretch under the next person's chair. Not someone Adin wanted to pick a fight with. Then again . . . by the looks of his outfit and the number of piercings (not to mention the half-healed, badly-done tattoo on his upper arm) he wouldn't have to.

He was considering whether or not to lean over and say something when the teacher walked in the room. Oh joy- it was a moderately young female, wearing an ankle-length skirt and modest blouse with an equally-modest bun hairstyle. Obviously not someone who was going to be any fun. "Good morning, class." She said, laying a packet onto her desk. "Before we start lessons today, I'd like to welcome our new student, Adin Duanson. Adin, would you mind standing up for the class?"

**Christ.** *Lady, it's not like they didn't notice me the moment I stepped into the room.* He thought irritably, but shoved back his chair and stood up. He gave a flick of his wrist that could be counted as a wave, mumbled something that could be a greeting, and sat down quickly. A few sets of eyes lingered on him from the front, but they quickly turned back to the teacher. This was, after all, General Algebra. All of the uptight jock-type people were with Lael and Deb in their classroom. These were just the leftovers that the teachers had decided needed a little preparation first. Lucky them.

“My name is Ms. Rowe, and you can come to me if you need any help in anything, Adin.” The woman said politely, then turned back to her lessons. “Now, if you’ll remember, we began this lesson yesterday, but I’ve put notes in all your folders just in case some of you weren’t here . . .”

Adin studied the board and idly flipped through his folder as she continued. Yeah, he remembered this from some of his last lessons at his old school. It was easy enough, though nothing compared to what had been on Lael and Deb’s papers.

His attention abruptly shifted when something small, square, and white landed on his desk. He blinked down at it, realizing that it was one of the folded note-football things people were so fond of tossing these days. He unfolded it carefully, covering his actions by taking a paper from the math folder.

**“New kid,”** the note read, **“r u just dresing tht way or r u into the reel thing?”**

Judging from the bad writing and direction of the toss, this was coming from muscleman over there. Adin raised an eyebrow at him and was ignored. He shrugged and wrote back, pretending to take notes.

**“Name’s Adin. I dress this way because I don’t want to look like the rest of them. And yeah, I’m into the real thing. Are any of you?”** He pushed his reply across his desk, then flicked it into the guy’s lap.

He was, to Adin’s surprise, more subtle than he’d expected. The other teen unfolded it, read it by revealing bits at a time from beneath his folder, then frowned and scribbled back before tossing it back over.

**“Im Dane. Yes we r. We meet evry nite. U wanna come?”**

Adin hid a grin. Looks like he’d been right- there was always a few, no matter where you went.

**“Yeah. Where, what time, and how many of you guys are there?”**

Adin had given up on paying attention at this point and spent the rest of the class exchanging and giving information to his new ally. He left class feeling very satisfied, and was looking forward to the night ahead. From the looks of things this group was a very disorganized lot, more interested in looking the part than actually acting it. Well, that’d change in a hurry once he was in charge. He’d been leading groups like this since he was thirteen. That wasn’t going to change now, not even with muscleman Dane around.

He pushed it to the back of his mind as he left the classroom, however. A certain bespectacled bluenette had stern eyes on him, pointing the way to his next classroom. Adin shrugged, as if to say ‘what, don’t you trust me?’ and continued on his way. To his delight, he found a few members of his new clique sat in the back of this classroom as well, including one completely-decked out girl who, he was happy to note, decided that fishnet was a fitting replacement for a good part of her clothing. Fishnet was always a good thing in his book.

*This is gonna be a good day.* He thought, standing up and waving again to greet this class and grinning inwardly. *Let’s hope it stays that way.*

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Of course, it couldn't all go to plan. A few hours later lunch arrived and Adin, before going to sit with his new friends, decided to hang around and irritate Lael a bit. Surprisingly the lunch table was half-full- Deb, apparently, was pretty popular. She and Lael sat a few seats away from the others, engrossed in a conversation that apparently included Homecoming and some other topics Adin most definitely didn't care about. The lunch line would take a while to shorten, so he slid into place next to Deb. "Hey, Deb." He said with a smile. "What've you been up to all day?"

Completely oblivious to the stare Lael was giving, Deb immediately began a new and lively conversation with his room mate about her day and courses. Adin listened, making sure to appear as though he understood everything. He smiled and nodded in the right places, then brushed her shoulder with his as if on accident. "Y'know, sounds like you have a lot on your plate. It's pretty cool that you can handle it all in one day." He replied. "I've only been her half a day and it's difficult to keep up."

"Don't worry, I'm sure you'll be fine." Deb said briskly, smiling over at him. "Oh, did you make any friends? There are plenty of people in your classes that are nice."

"Oh, yeah, they're over there." He thumbed at the table in the back of the cafeteria. True enough, the majority of the clique were gathered there, glowering at the rest of the world. "They're cool. Promised to show me around, but . . ." and here he gave her his best charming smile, ". . . I don't think they could do as good a job as you. After all, you're in all the A classes. I barely made it into the B's." he said self-consciously.

"Oh, don't worry about that! It'll be okay if you just apply yourself!" she said brightly. "That's all I ever do. I'm glad you're making friends already."

"Thanks. Well, speaking of friends, I'd better go sit with 'em before they think I've forgotten altogether." He made to get up, then went back down as if he'd forgotten something. "Oh, and if that offer to show me about still stands . . ."

"Excuse me Adin, but could you come with me for a second?" Adin wasn't able to open his mouth to respond before Lael hauled him up from his seat and dragged him to the side of the cafeteria. A few tables on this side were empty, and it was near one of these that Lael finally let go.

"Hey, easy on the merchandise, pal!" Adin said, rubbing his arm. Damn, but that guy had a strong grip! "What's your problem? I was leaving anyway, so you didn't have to worry about your precious Deborah-"

Lael slammed a hand down on the table, and Adin realized that he was completely and totally serious. His mocking tone faltered and he folded his arms, waiting for something to follow the blow. He didn't have to wait long. "Listen to me, and listen good." The bespectacled teen said sternly, meeting the goth's eyes squarely. It was weird how intimidating that look was, even minus one eye. "I've known Deb for years, ever since we were kids. And I will not allow someone like you to step in and harm her, or

confuse her in any way. Got that?" When the other didn't reply, Lael took a step forward. "**Got it?**"

Adin took a step back and flung his hands up. "Jeez, calm down. I was just flirting. Have you ever even done that in your entire *life*?" Noticing that the glare didn't die down a bit, he sighed. "Look, I'm not going to do anything to her. I have more respect for girls than that. I don't get in a relationship with anyone unless the feeling's consensual anyway. Now would you stop it with the Hulk thing already?"

Realizing that he was looming over Adin in a decidedly threatening way, Lael took a step back and sighed. "I'll take your word for it, but try anything and both I and her ex will teach you a lesson. And believe me, you don't want to make her ex mad." He said, turning to head back to the table.

Adin followed him. "Woah, the little Christian boy is *threatening* me! Amazing! What're you gonna do next, declare yourself an atheist?" he teased.

As expected, he got another glare on cue. "Don't push me, pal." Lael said quietly as they neared the table. Adin shrugged, waved to Deb, and headed over to the other table. Yup, his room mate sure was touchy. He'd have to teach him to lighten up a bit.

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Much later, Adin shifted again to try to remain awake. It was after eleven, and he was supposed to meet his new group soon. Problem was that Lael couldn't seem to sleep. He kept tossing and turning, occasionally mumbling something that Adin took for sleep nonsense. The rest of that day had been boring, but he'd kept occupied by hatching plans to escape their room that night. Students weren't normally allowed out of their rooms at night, but Dane and the others had outlined a route he could take that would be safe from patrolling teachers. He'd even changed into bed clothes so Lael wouldn't be suspicious, but now it was looking like he'd ruin everything anyways.

A few minutes before Adin decided to give up, Lael appeared to go to sleep. His breathing slowed, and though he occasionally moved restlessly it looked like he was asleep. Seizing the chance, he leapt from the bed and changed as quickly as possible into his clothes. He crept to the doorway, looking back at the other bed. He had a sudden pang of guilt- surely he shouldn't be doing this sort of thing when he had a Christian room mate?- but shook his head and continued out. He'd left his heavy boots behind, preferring ones of soft brown leather that made little noise on the linoleum as he raced down the stairs (the elevator was far too noisy at this time of night.)

After a few more minutes of stealthy creeping and dodging flashlights, Adin made his way to the back door. From there it was a moment's run to the crumbling building nearby. According to Sylvia (the goth girl he'd noticed in Earth Science), the school was debating on whether or not to rebuild or demolish it, but for the moment it provided an ideal meeting place. They'd already started a fire in the center of a chalk circle and were seated around it when he arrived. Dane looked up, frowning. "You're almost too late. Why?" he growled.

"My roommate wouldn't get to sleep." He said, shrugging, stepping through the open space in the circle to claim the empty space. Sylvia reached over and closed the circle quickly. Once they stood up,

introductions were done quickly. In the brief silence following, Adin looked over his surroundings with an experienced and critical eye. “Now, what’s going on here? This all looks pretty tame to me. What are you trying to be, Wiccans?”

More silence, and a few embarrassed looks and shrugs from various faces around the circle. Adin shook his head, smiling grimly. “Oh, no, this will never do.” He said, wagging a finger. “We never did this back where I came from.”

“Is it true that you’re in this school because you burned down your last one?” one of the girls said in a hushed voice. Adin noticed with approval that the fashionable black shirt she wore cut off only a few inches below the chest area. Some of the other girls wore similarly daring outfits. It was a wonder that they hadn’t been confiscated by now by conscientious roommates or sharp-eyed parents and teachers. Obviously, this group could keep a few secrets.

“Only the gym. The main building proved to be a little more fireproof.” He said, grinning. “Now, if you guys don’t mind . . . I think we need to make some changes around here.” A cunning and frightening smile, the completely opposite of the one he’d given Deb earlier, crossed his face. “Oh, yes. So mote it be.” He said, mocking the religion some of the group was clinging to. A few flushed red, but the rest stared in awe, wondering what else he could have done in the past. It was obvious that it wouldn’t take much to become the leader of this lot.

He’d been right. This **was** going to be fun after all.