

HIDDEN PRESSURE

Some may not think they're out there – but they are.

by Paula Leanues

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Synopsis:

Slandermonger is a pesky little demon on a mission to ruin the life of a young woman named Janet and see that she never turns her heart over to the Lord.

Told on two levels - the spiritual and the natural - this is a story about what goes on behind the scenes of our daily trials.

We have enemies out there set on harming us, but if we trust in Jesus, we can overcome.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Ephesians 6:12

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The creature stares at himself in his subject's mirror. "Since when did I get that goiter?" he asks himself. "Oh well. I'm all the more handsome, actually." He does a double back flip in the air and shrieks, flying about near the ceiling. He looks somewhat like a giant insect with wings and six long legs. He has green scales over much of his body, and various rashes over other parts - and now, a tennis-ball sized goiter on his neck.

Janet, his subject, a 22-year-old, enters her bedroom and sits at her dressing table. She puts her hair up for bed and then stares down at the Bible tract that her co-worker Cindy gave her last week when Janet asked about Cindy's relationship with God.

"I stopped believing in God when I was fourteen," she told Cindy. "There are too many problems in the world to believe that a caring God exists."

Cindy said, "Did you ever think that perhaps it's an evil force, and not God, that is responsible for all the suffering in the world? God is our Father, Creator of all things. Would your father - your dad - want terrible things to happen to you?"

"No," Janet replied. Her father was a good man. He supported his family well for years, and he even accepted the responsibility of a second job once her mother became ill, and bills started piling up.

"Neither does God," Cindy said. "He's the Father of everyone. He wants what's best for us."

Janet recalled her four-month bout with mononucleosis, during which time she had been bedridden and missing classes. This long illness made her prolong college for another semester due to incomplete work. She cried almost daily as she cursed this "God-if-you're-up-there."

"Have you ever given God any of your problems?" Cindy asked.

"Given Him my problems?" Janet repeated.

"The Bible says, and I quote Jesus, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It also says in 1 Peter 5:7 that we're to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us. He wants our problems. He wants us to give Him the opportunity to fix the things in our lives that cause us harm or have caused us harm in the past. The reason this world is in chaos is because we haven't been going to Him with our problems. The state of the world gets progressively worse when we keep thinking, as humans, we have all the power to correct everything. It hasn't worked yet, has it?"

Janet nodded, knowing that many people she came in contact with were living a life apart from any kind of Christian association. "Most people I

know either make fun of God or don't think of Him at all. Or maybe they go to Him only when things really get bad. Or they're like me, and they've been angry with Him."

"He wants your anger too." Cindy smiled and handed Janet the tract. "Read this. It's about salvation. It's about the one way to get to God. You get to God through Jesus, who is the Son of God."

Janet took it, assuming she wouldn't read it. It was just another fanatic give-your-life-to-God tract. She'd seen them before.

The creature senses that Janet is considering reading the tract, not merely reading it, but giving it a thought or two. He senses also that she's reminiscing about the conversation with Cindy, which he oversaw, so he leaps onto her.

He grips his claws into her shoulders, and she cannot see him, nor feel him. He peers with his bulging bloodshot eyes at the tract, and then at her.

He can't read her thoughts fully, but he can spiritually sense them. With dread, he sees the possibility of her becoming a Christian as very real.

Quickly, he speaks. "Please...A God who cares? Look at your mother who struggles with cancer. Your father who can hardly pay the hospital bills. Look at yourself with a college degree and no decent job prospects. You're working at a grocery store. And you're mad. Mad as you can be, aren't you?"

She can't hear him audibly, but in some spiritual way, these creatures have the ability to influence.

"God wants my anger too," she says in hopeful disbelief. "He's got to care about me if He hears me out when I'm angry."

"No, no, no!" the creature spits. "He will curse you for your anger! Slip up like you did when you had mono, open your mouth against God, and you can bet He'll curse you. Worse. Look at yourself now. Your parents are struggling with health and bills because you dared to question God. You don't know what God is all about, and that is why He doesn't bother with people like you. He throws down hurt upon people like you!"

Tears come to Janet's eyes. "God, did You send these evil things into our house, or is it true, You have enemies out there working against You? Can You fix these things? Did I commit such a horrible sin that You can never forgive me?"

"Of course!" the creature gleefully retorts. "Never, never, never can you be forgiven! Besides, the Bible speaks of forgiveness and other kinds of nonsense... It's just one lie after the other. How could so many books, written over so many years, add up to anything but lies?"

She opens up the tract, after wondering if the Bible is really the Word of God, and if Jesus is really the Son of God.

The tract begins, “Do you believe that the Word of God still stands today? Do you believe that the God of the Bible is the same today, yesterday, and forever? Most importantly, that He cared for you yesterday, because He knew you before you were born, He cares for you today, and He cares so much for your future that He designed a plan of salvation for you?”

Janet’s attention is caught because the tract is addressing concerns she had just a moment before. Is this coincidence?

She continues reading. “It is true. You can have eternal life in heaven, the true paradise, where sickness and sadness are not heard of, and where - and this is the best part! - you dwell with Jesus, the Son of God, forever...”

She goes on to read the plan of salvation, that Jesus died to take away the sin of man, and that she could be free if she were to give her life to Him. It isn’t sinking in completely, but she is intrigued for the first time in her life. “After this evil, chaotic world passes away, there is a paradise,” she says. “I’d like to believe that.”

“Rubbish,” the creature tells her. “Total rubbish. Who are these people anyway who write these tracts? What kind of credentials do they have?”

“All I have to do is accept that Jesus died for me and ask Him to take my sins away and become Lord of my life?” she wonders. “There will be a new life for me, because of Jesus’ work on the cross? I don’t have to struggle to find answers? I’ll be able to trust that Jesus has the answers? Jesus has the answers... He’s the Answer?”

“Don’t say that name!” The creature shudders, for he and those like him cannot stand the name of Jesus. “Eeyew...Don’t even imagine for a second that this is factual. Yuck! You really want to live forever with Him anyway? Not that there is a forever. Give me a break...When you die, you die. That’s all. There’s nothing after death. That’s simply all. Nothingness. Black nothingness.”

Janet sighs. “There isn’t really a paradise after death, is there? Could there be?”

The creature dances on top of her head. “If there is, you wouldn’t make it.” He hops off her onto her bed, and he throws something like a child’s temper tantrum. “You are rotten, you are spoiled, you are unworthy of God’s love!” He shudders again at the mere phrase “God’s love.”

Janet now ponders thoughtfully as to whether or not she’s worthy of God’s love. She sighs heavily, turns out the lights and crawls into bed.

The creature whispers in her ear. “Rotten, selfish, unworthy pitiful girl...Rotten, selfish, unworthy pitiful girl...”

Tearfully, Janet turns over, and eventually falls asleep.

“Mission accomplished,” says the creature. “It was certainly close for a minute. I think I’ll go for a fly.” He starts to fly out the window and stops, looking back at the tract. “If only I could make it disappear. She may be tempted to read it again in the morning. But I’ll be back in the morning to tempt her with all kinds of good sin.” He laughs wickedly and flies out the window through the town.

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Tonight is the night of the weekly Demon Dance. The creature finds a table close to the stage and soaks up the activities with his usual excitement.

There are belching contests, singing-off-key contests, and everyone’s favorite event, the trophy prize for the Catastrophe of the Week.

First runner up is Illfound, a demon who knows how to spread diseases of all kinds, with the ultimate outcome, causing death. Christians call him a “spirit of infirmity.” He accepts his trophy with pride for invading a record number of homes with the HIV virus over the past week. “I will continue to destroy as many as I can. This is my oath. I thank you all for the recognition. I especially thank His Royal Ghoulishness for teaching me all that I know.”

The room fills with exploding cheer from all demons as Illfound flies back to his table.

The grand prize for Catastrophe of the Week goes to Hurricanium, a frail-looking lump of scales and bones with bright red eyes. He never ceases to amaze the other demons with his powers of destruction. “I thank you, fellow demons,” he says, accepting his award. “I couldn’t have manipulated the thunderstorms in middle America without your encouragement. With your support, I manipulated them to the point that they spawned over one-hundred tornadoes. Oh, the devastation and ruin is lovely. Homeless people, churches destroyed - of course, that is a main goal - and places of business ruined beyond recognition. Realize, eight out of ten of those were reputable businesses! I proudly accept this award, and I will continue to uphold my vow to DESTROY through the forces of nature.”

Slandermonger, whose subject is Janet, grows envious as the audience once again explodes with applause. He wants a Catastrophe of the Week trophy for himself. He wonders, what could he do that would top the tornadoes? What could possibly bring him a Catastrophe of the Year award?

“I will inhabit the girl,” he thinks. “I will turn her against friends and relatives.” But that isn’t good enough for him. Nor would it be good enough for His Royal Ghoulishness. If he’s going to indwell, he wants the

indwelling to have a great purpose. He can't just make her an angry, unlikable person. "I could do a first," he says to himself. "I could make her the first female leader, and founder, of a religious cult. A cult so like Christianity that people will be fooled to think it is Christianity, and they will be sucked in - like homes are sucked up by tornadoes! They will think they are following the true One who created, and they will fall." He looks across the room at Goober, the one who inhabited many cultists who led people to suicide. What catastrophes! He is inspired.

He leaves the social and heads back to Janet's house. He is elated. His plan will take time, he knows, but soon he will have her leading thousands - millions? - astray. He has to prove he can be as good of a demon as the rest of them.

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Once back at the house, he flies into the window and lands on Janet's dresser. She is sleeping with a faint smile on her lips. He rubs his claws together and prepares to inhabit her. He plans to enter with great force. He decides to go head first, and he leaps with all his might.

Upon nearly reaching her, he bounces back with such a force, he is thrown through the wall behind him and into her parents' bedroom, where they are discussing the results of some latest blood test.

"What?" he asks, in shock. He slips back through the wall and again throws himself at the girl using as much strength as he has within him. He again cannot enter her, and he bounces off her and across her bedroom.

It is while sitting on the floor and looking around, he realizes that Janet became born again, born of the Spirit, while he was off at the Demon Dance. There are traces of the Holy Spirit in the room. He now sees the river of Life which flows through the room, and he runs about, trying desperately not to come in contact with it. For a human, the Spirit feels peaceful and loving. For a demon, the Spirit burns, and it is too much pain to bear.

"She is under the protection of God!" he screams "It may take weeks before I can tempt her with sin enough that I can enter her. What if she doesn't give in to the sin? What if I can never enter her?"

"She was sleeping!" he screams. "Sleeping! How did she become - oh, I can't even say it! - how did she become it? How could I lose this rotten little creation? I had her believing Christianity was all a hoax. How did I lose her?" Exiting her room, he pouts. God has protected her with a hedge. He cannot enter her as long as that hedge is there.

He knows well how he lost her, but can't admit it to himself. A demon's mistakes and shortcomings are irritants they like to ignore. Fear comes to him as he considers the Law of His Royal Ghouliness. The law says that when a demon's subject is lost to the Lord, the demon must report to His Royal Ghouliness to be assigned to a heavier work load.

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The devil's right hand demon enters his chamber. "Sir...Slandermonger is here."

Sitting on his paper maché throne, the devil says, "Send him in." He knows why Slandermonger is there. He knows of the works of all his troops. He only wishes he could better control them, so that he wouldn't have to spend so much time reprimanding them. Every time Jesus enters the heart of a subject, there is sorrow and punishment in the chamber of His Royal Ghouliness.

Slandermonger enters, and the two large stone doors slam behind him. He takes a deep breath. As attractive as the dungeon is, he wishes not to be here.

"My pet," the devil chides him. "Slandermonger, my pet. I take the news is not good."

"Not completely lost, sir."

"Not completely?" The devil leans forward and raises a long fingernail towards Slandermonger. He motions him to come closer.

Slandermonger advances, and he swallows hard. His Royal Ghouliness is huge, it seems. "If I may, Oh Musty One, you're looking greener and redder and browner and more foul than ever."

"Yes." The devil leans back on his throne. "Well. I was once beautiful, you know, according to the One" - and he winces - "who created."

"Oh, Your Ghouliness, but you are, you still are!"

"My WHAT?"

"Your Royal Ghouliness, sir. Royal."

The devil snaps his fingers, which beckons his right hand demon flying near him. "The screen."

The right hand demon points to the air, and a large screen appears.

"Watch," says the devil. "This is what happened at three a.m., while you were..." and he waits.

"...at the Demon Dance, sir," Slandermonger finishes, his head down.

The devil grumbles, and there is a momentary chamberquake.

Slandermonger watches the screen on which Janet lies awake in bed. "I'm sorry for whatever sins I'm guilty of," she is saying, staring at the ceiling. "I

know I've messed up like everyone messes up - but I ask You to come in, Jesus, and take over."

The devil pauses the video with a shout. He turns to Slandermonger, and he is sarcastic. "Rather sincere, wouldn't you say? Rather childlike in her approach to the" - he winces again - "One who created."

"I suppose, Sweet Lord Below." Slandermonger sighs. "I suppose."

"What are you to do when a risky subject sleeps?" the devil demands. "When a subject is this close to letting our enemy in?" He places his long thumbnail an eighth of an inch from his forefinger nail.

"Invade their dreams, Your Royal Ghoulishness. I should have invaded her dreams."

The devil snaps his fingers and the video continues.

"I'm asking You, Jesus, to come into my heart and make me new again. I know Your death and resurrection were God's plan to take our sins away. You have this free gift for me that You suffered for. Please live Your life in me and take over all the areas where I've failed. Thank You for making me new, and for caring so much where I spend eternity. I want to spend eternity with You."

"Oh, look," the devil sings. "Is that the Holy Spirit entering the room? I can hardly contain my excitement..."

"This is unfortunate, Master."

"Unfortunate indeed."

They continue to watch as Janet says a prayer for her mother's cancer. "I feel that You're listening, God. I guess You always listened, but I prayed and wasn't sure. Now I know that You heard. And I know You can make my mother well again. If the doctors can't, then You can, because You're God."

"You're God," the devil mocks. "Turn this disgusting display of weakness off."

His right hand demon turns off the screen.

"And she fell peaceably asleep soon after this," the devil tells Slandermonger.

"My duties are to increase, I presume," Slandermonger says.

"What did you expect? A vacation a Demonsneyland? You will see to it that troubles come to this girl day and night. You will work on her friends, for no doubt she'll want to tell them about this experience. Make her ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. See to it that they call her crazy and want little to do with her. Work on her family, especially her mother, because as you know, her mother is sick, and she has taken to praying often. Although her mother is not born again, do not underestimate her yearning for answers. You are aware that those who seek our enemy with an honest heart will

eventually find Him. How horrific! You will be working much side by side with Medicafall, whose subject is the girl's mother."

"I've seen him often in the house."

"Well, you will be working together with him to spread that cancer. And I should let you know that you are suspended from the next century of Demon Dances, or until your subject has backslid and turned from the One who created for a period of not less than two years, or until you and Medicafall see to it that her mother dies a slow, horrible death without having committed herself to You-Know-Whom. AM I CLEAR?"

"Superbly clear, sir."

"Well, get out there and work!"

"Thank you, Your Royal Ghoulishness."

Slandermonger flies out of the chamber as quickly as he can and heads in the direction of Janet's house.

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Once back at the house, Slandermonger meets up with Medicafall, who looks forlorn. They sit on a shelf in Janet's parents' bedroom, and they look on as her parents sleep.

"You just got your extra duties, didn't you?" Medicafall asks.

"Yes. I shouldn't have gone to the Demon Dance."

Medicafall puts his wing over Slandermonger. "You had all the right bad intentions. Don't worry - I used to lose subjects all the time. The harder work to get them to backslide makes you a better demon."

"Then why do you look so unhappy?" Slandermonger asks.

"Because your subject, Janet, was in here while you were in the Master's chamber. She woke up her mother and told her all about Jesus and how He's going to heal her, and how she's got to repent and be saved."

The two demons shudder at the mention of Jesus' name.

"But not only that," Medicafall reports. "They're going in for test results today. I visited the hospital earlier and discovered her tumors are actually shrinking. Can you imagine what that's going to do to this family's faith? It's going to increase horribly."

"We've got a long, hard road ahead of us," Slandermonger says.

"But not as hard as theirs."

The two chuckle, and Slandermonger continues. "My subject has a crush on this guy she works with." "See to it that he finds a very attractive girlfriend. Let's break your subject's heart."

“Better yet, I’m going to have him fall for Janet likewise and then dump her for a very attractive girl.”

“Excellent. Make her think all is well and they will be together - then bring on the other girl. I myself have been working hard on computer operators in charge of the family bills. I’m going to get a number of their slightly overdue bills prematurely put into collection. You and I should work together on the mother’s diet, see that she craves things that are not good for her, that are not nutritious at all.”

“I think the man of the house is about ready for his mid-life crisis.”

“How about a mistress?”

“If he’ll go for that.”

“Well, sometimes they do, sometimes they don’t. We’re here to influence. I should consult with Adultoria, who just lost his subject to deliverance, and he may be seeking a new body to inhabit.”

Slandermonger smiles. “I think we’re going to work fine together.”

“I think so too. And I think Janet should be finding some health problems of her own soon.”

“Most definitely. And perhaps I’ll have her fired from her job somehow, make her feel she is quite the failure.”

“How terribly terrible of you.”

“The more she prays, the more I’m going to work.”

Medicafall sighs. “Unfortunately, the more she prays, the better off she is to receive her answers to those prayers. The One who created does answer petitions.”

“This vicious cycle of demonhood.”

“I wouldn’t want to be anyone else.”

“Nor would I.”

They laugh wickedly as they watch the family awaken for their day ahead.

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Faith On The Earth Publishing is a literary venture for God and His people, to encourage Christianity, teach the truths of Christianity, and to encourage an increase of FAITH as desired by God. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)