

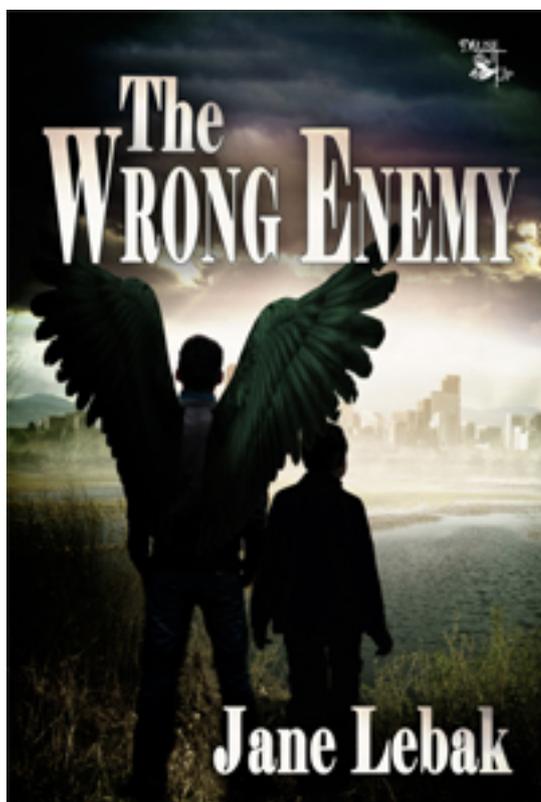
# MUSEITUP PUBLISHING

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## **The Wrong Enemy**

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## The Wrong Enemy

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### Back Cover:

No one knows why Tabris, a guardian angel, killed the child he vowed to protect. The boy Sebastian got into Heaven, but the angels don't understand why Tabris isn't in Hell. Instead God's given him a second chance. Another assignment. Another guardianship.

Although he struggles to help this new child, a ten-year-old girl named Elizabeth, Tabris can't escape what he did with Sebastian. Elizabeth's co-guardian doesn't trust him at all, which makes sense because even Tabris doesn't trust himself. Everywhere he goes, the angels all know what he's done, and the only angel who seems to want him is a friend from long ago, now a demon.

Shame and guilt follow Tabris like a shadow, but it's only the memory of the dead boy, and even though Sebastian still needs him, Tabris cannot face him. After what he's done, there's no way he can make it right. But his bright spirit is growing darker, and the other angels have realized that if Tabris can't accept the mercy he's been given, then he's going to fall forever.

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### Excerpt:

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Tabris came on guard instantly, his sword in his hand and ears straining after the sound he'd just heard. Out. He needed to get out. He needed to get Elizabeth out of here.

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"Tabris," came the hiss again.

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He couldn't find the source. "Show yourself, demon!"

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Wake up Elizabeth. Get her away from the danger. Something wanted her dead.

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Tabris tried to reach out with his mind to find Rachmiel or Miriael, but the room was Guardedâ€”Guarded to keep him inside, and for a moment he panicked that he was under house arrest. But no, that Guard was evil. And keeping him here. Trapped. He needed to get out.

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The voice came from everywhere. "I have a new name now. You can call meâ€”"

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"I'll call you damned!" he shouted, slashing his sword around the room. "Leave!"

Â

"Please." The voice shifted around the room: at one moment the walls or the carpet could be speaking, and again Tabris pushed against the Guard, but he couldn't get out. "Come with me," said the ceiling. But then the bookcase added, "What use is this little anchor? She has another angel to take care of her, one capable of loving her. Come with me."

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Go with him. Get out of here. Get out. Just go with him and he could leave...

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Tabris sent his awareness through the room, but the presence was too dissociated. "I belong here."

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"You belonged with Sebastian," said the desk, but the carpet responded, "even though Sebastian hates you."

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"I belong here now."

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"Sebastian wants you in Hell. I was at the trial."

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"I was there too." Tabris focused on the corners, the shadows, but in the preternatural dark he couldn't nail down the demon's hiding place. "He made no such request."

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"It was internal."

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Tabris said, "Then there's no way you'd know."

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"The boy told me himself when I visited."

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Tabris screamed, flinging himself into a corner and slicing with his sword until the tip met with resistance, and he dragged the demon into the open.

Â

"You leave him alone!" Tabris grabbed the demon by the neck. "Just leave both of them alone! He's not yours!"

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"Soon she won't be, either! Rachmiel's with Sebastian right now, gathering evidence, looking for patternsâ€œ"

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"Shut up!"

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"Could that angel really keep a secret if he didn't want to?" The demon gasped, and Tabris loosened a bit more. "Your Tyrant wanted to arrange a sticky-sweet forgiveness scene, but Sebastian's mad, and he made Rachmiel mad too. Sebastian demands every day that you be retried. That's why your bond to Elizabeth is looser. When they sever the bond, Rachmiel doesn't want there to be a shock to the girl."

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Tabris forced his voice low. "You're lying."

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"I'll go on. Raguel came here after you knocked Elizabeth off her bicycle."

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"That was you." But even as he spoke, Tabris extended his mind and detected traces of Raguel's

signature in the room. Not very long ago.

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The demon opened his hands. "All Rachmiel told him was how she got hurt because of you, and he insisted it's stupid to keep you with a brat so close in age to Sebastian because eventually you'll punish her with one hug too many. Raguel's waiting for you to mess up just once more, and then he's going to reassign you to shoveling brimstone into the fiery furnaces."

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Tabris rolled his eyes. He hoped it looked disinterested.

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"You're not listening to me! I'm warning you because I'm the only one you have left." The demon became plaintive. "I can't stand to see you dog-piled. When it all goes down, you're going to look like creation's biggest idiot because you trusted them when it was obvious they wanted you gone."

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"You're lying. You're only friends with yourself, and I have God." Tabris released the demon and folded his arms. "No one can take away that consolation."

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The demon looked him in the eye, then smothered a laugh. "That's rich. You don't believe it any more than I do. If you did, you'd send me away. When two liars know they're lying to each other, it's an awful lot like truth, and I'll play that game if it's easier for you to talk that way. But you're covering all the bases, and God doesn't share. I would know." The demon stepped closer. "He'll settle for nothing less than all of you. Rachmiel's a lot happier not having to think, but youâ€™you'd never be happy that way. It would be untrue to your nameâ€™Free Will."

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Tabris tried to steady himself.

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"I'm not lying," the demon said. "Rachmiel was furious. Sebastian can't forgive you. Raguel investigated this afternoon. And Rachmiel is trying to get you transferred because he can't guard you and Elizabeth."

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Tabris glanced at the girl. Elizabeth had grown restive, and Tabris said, "Go back to sleep, little lady. It's midnight."

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"You know enough of what I'm saying is true that you can trust me for the rest. Come with me. I was Unbridled,â€• the demon said. "Now my name is Windswept. You can truly be Free Will, but you have to come with me."

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Tabris trembled. "No."

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"But, Free Willâ€"

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"I'm exercising it now. A refusal is a choice, and I chose once. You're not God to me. You're not omnipotent or all-knowing, and you didn't create me."

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The demon shook his head. "If you're only staying with God for what He gives you, then give up. He's insatiable, and He's not going to let you keep refusing to pray. He'll want you to be with Him for who He is, not just what He does."

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Tabris leaned closer. "The way He loves me?"

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The demon snorted. "He claims He loves the essence of His slaves and not what they do, but I know better. I was condemned for what I did." The demon looked up. "And what about what you did? You killed a child."

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"But you wanted separation. I wantedâ€"

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The room went silent. Tabris looked back at Elizabeth.

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The demon sounded puzzled. "What did you want?"

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Tabris's eyes narrowed.

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"Did you get it?" The demon chuckled. "I doubt you did. But I think I have it for you. You just need to grasp it in your blood-covered hands, and I'll give you everything."

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"Out." Tabris pointed his sword at the demon. "Go. Now."

Before he was finished, Tabris's voice echoed in the spiritual emptiness of a room minus one demon, and the Guard came down.

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### **About the Author:**

Jane Lebak has published over fifty short works of fiction and humor, including "Arrows" in Catfantastic IV, pieces in Mindflights, Dragons Knights and Angels, Bella, The Wittenburg Door, Mothering Magazine, Liguorian, and several others. Her novels are The Guardian (Thomas Nelson, 1994) and Seven Archangels: Annihilation (Double Edged Publishing, 2008) as well as The Boys Upstairs, a novella with MuseltUp in 2010. She is one of the bloggers for QueryTracker.net, a resource to help beginning writers find an agent or small press.

### **Author's Other Works:**

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