

Silent Wings Sample Chapters

A dark angel waited for the perfect opportunity then slipped from the blackest corner of the room. Lilith wondered if she should steal this newborn or kill it. If she killed it, the parents would think the child died of sudden infant death syndrome. It would be hard to pinpoint the exact cause of death. The mother had done everything right. The infant slept on her back without stuffed toys or fluffy blankets to smother the child. Neither parent smoked, so the lingering fumes were of no concern. The window was closed and locked on this cold November night. That would leave stealing this child a mystery, wouldn't it?

Three-month-old Eve Kathrine Webber slept peacefully in her crib for the first night, having graduated from the bassinet and into her own room. It was a cheerful room done in yellow, pink, and green. A stuffed Winnie the Pooh bear sat on a shelf above her white dresser, along with Tigger and Eeyore. These were not to play with but to look at and admire. Expensive keepsakes, bought for her by her father.

A cozy rocking chair sat by the window where Eve's mother nursed her a few hours ago. Eve had suckled greedily and filled her tummy quickly. Then her mother sang to her as she drifted off to sleep. It was past midnight. Quiet and peaceful. The infant's father snored softly from across the hall. Her mother tossed and turned restlessly.

Lilith smiled as she watched this infant, not out of love or amusement but with pure evil. She placed a hand on the infant's body and felt the quick beating of the heart and the rise and fall of the tiny female's chest. Her hand slowly closed over the throat, then slid up and covered the mouth and nose. Infants never took long to die. Lilith closed her eyes and waited for the infant's last breath. For the euphoria that spread throughout her being with the knowledge that she had taken another one.

Suddenly someone pushed her aside. She opened her eyes and glared at the spirit who dared to do this to her. "You don't know the wrath I can bestow upon you for this," she hissed.

The white light materialized. When Lilith saw who it was, she shrank back but recovered quickly. She would not show this archangel her fear. "Michael," she whispered. Never in all of creation had God's right-hand angel stopped her like this.

Michael turned toward the crib and breathed life back into the infant. Then he faced her. "You will not take this child," he said.

Lilith glared back at him. "Why did God send you?"

"God did not send me; I came of my own volition."

"Why this child?" Lilith knew she could not fight this angel. Michael was superior in all ways.

"It is my choice."

"You will regret this, Michael." Her window for killing this infant was closing fast. Once she left here tonight, she wouldn't be able to return. Lilith lifted her chin, and with false bravery, she said, "Since I cannot kill this infant, I will send Samael."

Michael stopped his advancement toward her. "I am also stronger than your mate Lilith."

She smiled wickedly. “But you will not know when he will strike.” Lilith glanced down at the infant. Two dark eyes watched them. “Look,” she pointed.

Michael turned and studied the child. Then he faced her. Seething, he said, “You have opened a channel.”

Chapter 1

The clock on the wall said they still had twenty minutes left. The kids in this class could hear the high school students out in the hall yelling and singing on their last day in London South Collegiate Institute, let out early for their summer vacation. Eve Webber had tuned Mr. Cooper out for the last half hour as he droned on about how they were role models for the students he'd be teaching next fall. And he wished them luck as they entered grade ten next year.

He had not been Eve's favorite teacher. He was the one she liked the least. He had singled her out time after time, scolding her for the littlest things when he let others get away with more serious infractions. Not that she was terrible. He just had it in for her. And even though he was in his fifties, he was a handsome man. Mr. Cooper was trim and wore expensive clothes. His mustache was gray, and he had his hair a little too long. He was a bachelor and considered fair game, at least to flirt with harmlessly. His blue eyes often scanned the room, hesitating slightly longer at the pretty girls, especially the ones who mooned over him. Eve thought he didn't like her because she refused to act so childish. Or maybe it was because she was more mature for her age than her classmates.

She came back to the present when cheers erupted in her classroom. Her fellow students came alive suddenly and were gathering their books and knapsacks. Within minutes, the room was empty except for Mr. Cooper, who shook hands as students headed for the door. And three others like Eve, who were a bit slower to leave.

"When do you start working full-time at the bookstore?" Becca Stiles asked Eve as she hefted a purse that Eve saw her dump in three books. Becca's hair was long and straight that reached down to her waist. It was blonde with white streaks that the sun created. Her light blue eyes reminded Eve of ice on a frozen pond, reflecting a hint of gray in them. Becca often wore chunky jewelry, frilly blouses, and long skirts in bold colors. She was also a bit psychic.

"Next Monday." Eve closed her desk then smiled over at her best friend. "I can't wait." In comparison, Eve's hair was so dark that it looked black sometimes. It reached to the center of her back in curly waves. Her deep-set eyes were brown and almond-shaped. Her face was round, her nose long and straight. She hated her full lips that were in a permanent pout. Her choice of clothing was usually jeans and a T-shirt.

"I wish I had a job in the bookstore," Becca gave Eve a pensive look. "Being able to read all day."

Eve laughed. "I doubt I'll have time, but Grandpa said I can borrow as many books as I like."

Becca closed her desk and stood. "My dad's going to teach me how to make cream puffs." She glanced down at her dumpy body. "That's all I need is to gain more weight." Her father owned Stiles Bakery on York Street.

Eve stood. "We better hurry. or we'll miss our bus." She followed Becca to the front of the room. Becca reached out and shook Mr. Cooper's hand. "Goodbye," she said, "I bet you're glad to get rid of this lot."

Mr. Cooper grinned. "I'm glad to let go of all of my students so they can begin the next chapter in their lives."

Becca stepped aside, and Mr. Cooper held out his hand for Eve. She thought about not accepting it. To turn and walk out the door. But then she saw the amusement in his eyes and gave it a quick shake. "Goodbye, Miss Webber," he chuckled as if he had a private joke.

"So long, Mr. Cooper."

He was watching them leave as Eve glanced back in the doorway. A dark shape hovered behind the teacher. She knew then that she would never see Mr. Cooper again.

Eve had been right. Becca called her later that evening, crying. Mr. Cooper died of a heart attack minutes after they left the classroom.

It was the second time Eve had seen that dark shape. The first time was when she was eight, and her little brother died. Trevor was four years old when he succumbed to leukemia. He had been sick all his life. Eve remembered going to the doctor's office and visiting Trevor in the hospital. She had seen the dark shape beside his bed. He died that night.

"Don't you ever tell anyone what you think you saw." her dad had yelled at her when she told him. "No one can see angels, Eve. And if you ever say you can, I'll take the switch to you, you hear me?" He stormed out of the room.

Eve glanced over at her mother through her tears. "I saw it, Mom."

"Please, Eve. Everyone will think you're a freak if you keep this up." She walked out on Eve.

Since then, Eve has not said a word about what she saw that day. But it didn't keep her from searching on her computer. She knew now that the dark shape was the angel of death, and his name was Samael.

Eve would not say anything this time either. What good would it do? It would only make her parents mad at her. She scoffed as she sat at her desk in her bedroom. Her parents were always angry. It seemed to her that Trevor's death had put a strain on their marriage. All they did was argue like they were doing now.

Eve got up and closed her bedroom door. She didn't care what they were arguing about this time. Eve just wanted them to stop. "If only I were old enough to live on my own," she mumbled as she turned on her radio.

Lydia Webber stood in the middle of the kitchen and watched Ryan storm out of the house. She refused to cry in front of him. Lydia wouldn't give him satisfaction. Now that he was gone, she didn't need to shed tears. Lydia was angrier than feeling sorry for herself. She'd get through this Lydia always did. At thirty-seven, she didn't put up with his nonsense anymore.

Minutes later, she heard his pickup truck start with its rattling tailpipe. He'd go to the office and retrieve the eighteen-wheeler for his next run. How long he would be gone this time would be anyone's guess. He wouldn't know until he picked up his papers. No doubt he'd be gone for a few days. There was more money in long-haul trips than day runs. Ryan always took the longest runs, taking him all over Ontario.

She turned to the sink and filled the kettle, then set it on the stove. As she waited for the water to heat up, she took a cup down from the cupboard and dumped a teabag into it. Their seventeenth anniversary was coming up, and Lydia wondered if Ryan would try to be home for it or if he even cared.

Her thoughts turned to when they bought this house on Orchard Street near Thames Park. Lined with mature trees, well-kept old homes, and sidewalks on both sides of the street, it was the type of community Lydia wanted to raise Eve in. Their house was a two-story red brick home with a big front porch. Lydia preferred older homes; they had character. She loved the city, but Ryan liked the slower pace of a small town. She had talked him into moving to London.

When they were first married, he'd call her and tell her where he was going and how long he'd be away. But as the years passed, he called less and didn't bother to let her know when he'd be home.

Sighing, she sat at the table, held her cup in both hands, and stared out the back window. Tall weeds grew between the oriental poppies that were starting to bloom, their bright red flowers waving in the light breeze. She should deadhead the hydrangea and weed around the pond. But not today, she told herself as she sipped her tea. That was what they were arguing about this time. Ryan didn't help her in the garden anymore. It was all she could do to get him to cut the grass. When they first put in the flowerbeds, he was just as enthusiastic about it as she was. It was supposed to be a joint effort. She didn't have time to look after the yard by herself. Between her bookkeeping job and the housework, Lydia needed a moment for herself.

As she watched a robin on the lawn, Lydia mulled an idea over in her mind. What if she took out some of the gardens and turned them back into grass? Lydia could take out that one along the back fence and plant more trees. And along the side fences, she could put in a bush or two. She'd leave the flowers growing around the small pond and on both sides of the arbor. That would make it a lot easier to look after. Eve might even have some ideas. Lydia finished her tea and set the cup in the sink. Then she headed for the stairs.

The music should have been blasting, thought Lydia as she tapped on her daughter's door. She'd have it turned up as loud as she could to drown out her parents' loud voices. Eve

didn't answer the knock, so Lydia opened the door and stepped into the room. Eve sat at her desk, drawing in her sketchbook. She wore her headphones, her head nodding to the beat of a song Lydia could barely hear.

The room wasn't frilly, nor were the walls plastered with posters of rock stars. It was painted pink when Eve was small, only to find out that Eve hated pink. Now the walls were light blue. The comforter on the bed was a patchwork of colors that Lydia's mother made before she passed away five years ago. The dresser was of light pine that matched the headboard and the desk. A pile of dirty clothes was on the floor in the corner, which reminded Lydia that she needed to buy Eve a hamper. For some reason, she kept forgetting that.

She studied her daughter for a moment. Eve was tall with long dark brown hair. Today she had it tied back into a ponytail. Eve wore gold earrings of delicate crosses in each pierced ear. Lydia remembered buying Eve her first training bra. How nervous she was at her daughter turning into a woman. An intelligent woman, Lydia told herself. Serious with poise and grace.

Lydia reached up and turned off the radio on the shelf below a stuffed Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, and Eeyore that Eve had since she was born. Eve set down her pencil and glared over at her. Taking off her headphones, she said, "Dad's gone, isn't he?"

"Yes." Lydia sat on the edge of the bed. She couldn't think of anything else to say that she hadn't already.

"How long this time?" Eve's voice wasn't as harsh this time, her face now fixed in a brooding state.

"I don't know."

Eve's brown eyes stared back at her that Lydia thought more of a topaz color. Her own eyes reminded her of dark beer. She also had Lydia's straight nose and rosy lips. The round face and the shape of her chin came from her father. And so did the stubbornness.

"I'd like your advice on something," Lydia said. "Will you come outside with me?"

Eve followed her mother out the back door and across the lawn. She squinted as the sun beat down on her. Eve looked up at the white clouds and immediately saw the shape of a whale.

"What do you think if we got rid of this garden?" Lydia pointed to the one on the right side of the arbor. "Or at least cut it back to half the size."

Eve noticed the weeds and knew how the gardens had gotten away from her mother. She helped out as much as she could, but Lydia made her do her homework right after school. More often than not, Eve finished it just as Lydia was coming in from working in the garden to get supper ready. Except most of the time, she spent texting her friends.

"I think we should cut it back to about here." Eve pointed between the daisies and ornamental grass. It would cut the garden back about two-thirds.

“Good idea. It will be the same size as the one on the other side of the arbor.” Lydia led the way to the side fence. “This garden and the one by the other fence are going too. I thought of maybe a couple of bushes here and here,” she pointed.

Eve nodded. “Or leave it all in grass. That way, Dad won’t have to go around them with the lawnmower.”

“There is that to consider,” Lydia said as they made their way toward the back fence. “Same here. I want to get rid of all this and plant more trees along the back here.”

Eve let out a puff of air. “And you want me to help dig this all up.”

Lydia grinned. “That was the plan. I figure we could do a little at a time. Like after work and on week-ends.

Between the two of us, it shouldn’t take that long.”

Eve strutted over and sat on the two-seater swing. Lydia sat beside her. As they swayed gently back and forth, Eve said, “Dad should be helping you out here.”

“But he doesn’t anymore, and I can’t keep up.”

Eve set her hands on her lap and gazed up at the arbor. A path with small stepping-stones led from it to the swing. Her grandfather built the swing and the arbor. He had lived in his old house at the time and had a workshop. But after her grandmother died, he sold the house and moved into the apartment above the bookshop.

“Maybe Grandpa will help too,” Eve said hopefully.

“I’m sure he will.” Lydia put her arm around Eve. “Why don’t we go in for some ice cream?”

The next day was Saturday, a day Lydia usually slept late. But today, she was anxious to start on the garden. Lydia had coffee and toast, then went outside while the grass was still wet with morning dew. Shovel in hand, Lydia dug up the plants by the arbor, setting aside the ones she wanted to keep. Those would take the place of the plants she could do without near the pond.

Eve came out of the house an hour later wearing old jeans and scuffed running shoes. She yawned as she stopped beside her mother. “You up with the birds this morning?”

“Almost.” Lydia leaned her shovel on the arbor. “Here’s what I would like you to do.” She pointed to the small pile of plants. “I want you to put these in here.” She indicated where a clump of phlox was growing. “And dig this all out.”

“Sure,” Eve said as she headed toward the shed.

Lydia smiled as she watched her daughter. She dug up the last of the plants then filled in the holes. By that time, Eve was back wearing gloves and dragging a shovel behind her. As she dug up the phlox, Lydia smoothed out her holes with a rake. When she was satisfied that all the clumps were gone, she spread grass seed over it.

Eve stepped back after planting the last plant and looked over at her mother. "It's getting too hot to work out here."

Lydia wiped the beads of sweat off her forehead with the back of her hand. "It sure warmed up in a hurry, didn't it?" She handed the rake to Eve. "Why don't you put the tools away while I water everything."

Eve made grilled cheese sandwiches for lunch while Lydia put a load of laundry in the washing machine. She was glad that the designer of this house put the laundry room upstairs. It made more sense than to have it in the basement as most older homes had. She never saw the logic in lugging laundry baskets down two flights of stairs to wash clothes. This way, she just went down the hall from her bedroom, between the bathroom and spare bedroom.

As they were finishing cleaning up the kitchen Eve's cellphone jangled. She picked it up and began texting. Then she looked over at her mother. "Can I spend the night at Becca's?"

Lydia glanced out the window. The meteorologist predicted a thunderstorm for some time during the night. There would be no way they could work in the garden tomorrow. "Sure," she said.

After Eve left, Lydia poured herself a generous glass of red wine then trudged upstairs. She opened the door to Trevor's old room and sipped her wine as she walked in. Gone was his single bed, his dresser, and all his clothes. None of his toys had stayed behind either. She remembered her and Ryan packing everything, loading his truck with bags and boxes, taking it all down to the Goodwill store. The only thing that remained was the rocking chair in the corner, where she breastfed and rocked both of her kids.

She sat in that rocking chair now and glanced around the room. It was mostly empty except for a few boxes along one wall. They contained bedding for Trevor's old bed. Lydia didn't know why she hadn't taken those down to Goodwill. None of that stuff fits on any of the beds in the house. Eve slept in a double bed. Hers and Ryan's was a queen.

She wasn't nostalgic about the bedding. It didn't mean anything to her except the boxes were taking up space. Not that she needed that space for anything. If she wanted nostalgia, all she had to do was look at Trevor's photos around the house. Like the one on the mantle above the fireplace in the living room. Lydia had also filled two photo albums of him. Often, she'd get them out and go through them, remembering his laugh, hearing his sweet voice. She missed his energy when he was in remission. The smell of his hair after a bath. He called her mummy to get her attention. How she longed to hold him, to take in his scent, hear his voice. No longer would she be able to watch him play with his toys on the living room rug. Or see him sitting at the table with a messy face as he ate supper. She can't sit in this rocking chair and watch him sleep anymore like she still did with Eve once in a while. When panic set in and she was afraid of losing her daughter like she lost her son.

Lydia lifted her glass and took a generous gulp. She should have brought the whole bottle up here today. What she didn't miss were the many visits to the doctor's office, the long hours in the hospital. His death. The funeral and the emptiness his passing made in her heart, her soul. She didn't miss feeling numb and walking around in a daze, weeks, maybe months after Trevor died, more likely years.

Ryan had been attentive to her and Eve, making sure they made it to the church on time for the funeral, driving them to the gravesite. He'd been gentle and caring. Ryan's face was full of anguish.

Lydia finished her wine and sat there holding the glass on her lap. When did he stop caring? When did the passion die in their marriage? It must have happened when she wasn't looking. She should have paid more attention to their relationship. It was only in this last year that she had started to feel whole again. And at the same time became aware that her marriage was in trouble. Lydia didn't know how to fix it, nor did she have the energy to try.

Did Ryan miss her? What had he been feeling these last few years after he lost his son? Did he somehow blame her for his death? Was there anything else they could have done to prevent Trevor from dying? They'd never talked about it, not the deep-down gut-feeling discussion they should have had a long time ago. Instead, they tiptoed around the subject as if talking about Trevor was taboo.

Lydia swayed when she stood and wiped the tears from her face with the back of her hand. "I'm losing Ryan too," she said as she stumbled toward the door.