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Susan Ee has eaten mezze in the old city of Jerusalem, surfed the warm waters of Costa Rica, and played her short film at a major festival. She has a life-long love of science fiction, fantasy and horror, especially if there's a touch of romance. She used to be a lawyer but loves being a writer because it allows her souped-up imagination to bust out and go feral.

Visit Susan's website at [www.susanee.com](http://www.susanee.com), find her books on Facebook at [facebook.com/AngelfallOfficial](https://facebook.com/AngelfallOfficial) and follow Susan on Twitter @Susan\_Ee

By Susan Ee

*Angelfall*  
*World After*

# WORLD AFTER

SUSAN EE

  
HODDER &  
STOUGHTON

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*Dedicated to the early readers of Angelfall.  
Thanks for falling first.*



# 1

Everyone thinks I'm dead.

I lie with my head on my mother's lap in the open bed of a large truck. The dawn light etches the grief lines on my mom's face while the rumble of the engines vibrates through my limp body. We're part of the Resistance caravan. Half a dozen military trucks, vans and SUVs weave through dead cars away from San Francisco. On the horizon behind us, the angels' aerie still smolders in flames after the Resistance strike.

Newspapers cover shop windows along the road, making a corridor of reminders of the Great Attack. I don't need to read the papers to know what they say. Everyone was plastered to the news during the early days when reporters were still reporting.

PARIS IN FLAMES, NEW YORK FLOODED,  
MOSCOW DESTROYED  
WHO SHOT GABRIEL, THE MESSENGER OF  
GOD?  
ANGELS TOO AGILE FOR MISSILES  
NATIONAL LEADERS SCATTERED AND LOST  
THE END OF DAYS

We drive by three bald people wrapped in gray sheets. They're taping up the stained and crumpled fliers of one of the apocalypse cults. Between the street gangs, the cults and the Resistance, I wonder how long it will be before everyone is part of one group or another. Even the end of the world can't keep us from wanting to belong, I guess.

The cult members pause on the sidewalk to watch us pass in our crowded truck.

As a family, we must look tiny – just a scared mom, a dark-haired teenager and a seven-year-old girl sitting in a truck bed full of armed men. At any other time, we would have been sheep in the company of wolves. But now, we have what people might call 'presence'.

Some of the men in our caravan wear camouflage and hold rifles. Some man machine guns still aimed at the sky. Some are fresh off the streets with homemade



gang tattoos made of self-inflicted burns that mark their kills.

Yet these men huddle away from us to keep a safe distance.

My mom continues to rock back and forth as she has for the last hour since we left the exploding aerie, chanting in her own version of speaking in tongues. Her voice rises and falls as if she's having a fierce argument with God. Or maybe the devil.

A tear drops off her chin and lands on my forehead, and I know her heart is breaking. It's breaking for me, her seventeen-year-old daughter, whose job was to look out for the family.

As far as she knows, I'm just a lifeless body brought to her by the devil. She'll probably never be able to blot out the image of me lying limp in Raffe's arms with his demon wings backlit by flames.

I wonder what she'd think if someone told her that Raffe was actually an angel who's been tricked into having demon wings. Would that be any stranger than being told that I'm not actually dead but just stung into a weird paralysis by a scorpion-angel monster? She'd probably think that person was as crazy as she is.

My baby sister sits at my feet seemingly frozen. Her eyes stare blankly and her back is perfectly straight

despite the weaving of the truck. It's as if Paige has shut herself off.

The tough men in the truck keep stealing glances at her like little boys peeking over their blankets. She looks like a bruised, stitched-up doll from a nightmare. I hate to think about what might have happened to her to make her like this. A part of me wishes I knew more but a part of me is glad I don't.

I take a big breath. I'll have to get up sooner or later. I don't have a choice but to face the world. I'm fully thawed now. I doubt if I could fight or anything, but as far as I can tell, I should be able to move.

I sit up.

I guess if I'd really thought things through, I would have been prepared for the screams.

Chief among the screamers is my mother. Her muscles stiffen in sheer terror, her eyes impossibly wide.

'It's okay,' I say. 'It's all right.' My words are slurred, but I'm grateful I don't sound like a zombie.

It would be funny except for a sobering thought that pops into my head: we now live in a world where someone like me could be killed for being a freak.

I put my hands out in a calming gesture. I say something to try to reassure them, but it gets lost in the screams. Panic in a small area like a truck bed is contagious, apparently.

The other refugees crush against each other as they press toward the rear of the truck. Some of them look prepared to jump out of the moving vehicle.

A soldier with greasy pimples aims his rifle at me, gripping it like he's about to make his first, horrifying kill.

I totally underestimated the level of primal fear swirling around us. They've lost everything: their families, their security, their God.

And now, a reanimated corpse is reaching for them.

'I am okay,' I say slowly with as much clarity as I can. I hold the soldier's gaze, intent on convincing him there's nothing supernatural going on. 'I'm alive.'

There's a moment when I'm not sure if they'll relax or toss me out of the truck with a blaze of gunfire. I still have Raffe's sword strapped to my back, mostly hidden under my jacket. That gives me some comfort, even though it obviously can't stop bullets.

'Come on.' I keep my voice gentle and my movements very slow. 'I was just knocked out. That's all.'

'You were dead,' says the pale soldier, who doesn't look a day older than me.

Someone bangs on the truck's roof.

We all jump, and I'm lucky the soldier doesn't accidentally pull his trigger.

The rear window slides open and Dee's head sticks through. He'd look stern except that it's hard to take

him too seriously with his red hair and little-boy freckles. 'Hey! Back off from the dead girl. She's Resistance property.'

'Yeah,' says his twin brother Dum from inside the cab. 'We need her for autopsies and stuff. You think girls killed by demon princes are easy to find?' As usual, I can't tell the twins apart, so I randomly assign Dee for one and Dum for the other.

'No killing the dead girl,' says Dee. 'I'm talking to you, Soldier.' He points to the guy with the rifle and glares at him. You'd think that looking like a set of strung-out Ronald McDonalds with nicknames like Tweedledee and Tweedledum would strip them of all authority. But somehow, these guys seem to have a talent for going from joking to deadly in a heartbeat.

At least, I hope they're joking about the autopsy.

The truck stops in a parking lot. That takes the attention off me as we all look around.

The adobe-style building in front of us is familiar. It's not my school but it is a school that I've seen lots of times. It's Palo Alto's high school, affectionately known as Paly High.

Half a dozen trucks and SUVs stop in the parking lot. The soldier still keeps an eye on me, but he lowers his rifle to a 45-degree angle.

A lot of people stare at us as the rest of the small caravan stops in the parking lot. They all saw me in the arms of the demon-winged creature that was actually Raffe, and they all thought I was dead. I feel self-conscious so I sit down on the bench beside my sister.

One of the men reaches to touch my arm. Maybe he wants to see if I'm warm like the living or cold like the dead.

My sister's face changes instantly from a blank slate to a growling animal as she snaps at the man. Her razor-grafted teeth flash as she moves, emphasizing the threat.

As soon as the man backs off, she goes back to her blank expression and doll-like stance.

The man stares, looking back and forth between us for clues to questions I can't answer. Everyone in the parking lot saw what just happened, and they all stare at us too.

Welcome to the freak show.