

DANNY DEMON HUNTER

So, where should I even begin this story? I could walk us all the way back to my early childhood, but that would be too much. Plus, it wouldn't be pertinent or very exciting. Honestly, it would be more embarrassing than anything else. But I also can't just start with last year, that wouldn't give any context whatsoever. I guess that leaves me with the day I got in my accident in chemistry. No, this isn't another iteration of Barry Allen becoming the Flash, this is much slower and far stranger. You see, when I got into my accident in chemistry during my tenth-grade year in high school, I didn't expect to be on the path I am on today.

My name is Daniel Ryker, and I am a demon hunter. That isn't the way that I typically introduce myself, but hey, you wanted to know my story. But again, I don't want to linger too long on that just yet, believe me; you will get your fair share of demon stories, I promise. I want you to join me in Ms. Johnson's tenth-grade Chemistry class at Coopersville High School, home of the Golden Eagles (can you feel my eyes roll?) Coopersville High was a scene directly out of a high school teen/romance movie. We had so many high-level athletes at CHS that division I college recruits and scouts basically had their own lounge. You are probably wondering "Hey Danny," you can call me Danny if you like, we are pretty tight now. I mean with you knowing I'm a demon hunter and all. "Hey, Danny, what sport did you play in? Does your athleticism help you in your demon slaying ways?"

Well, friend let me answer that for you. I was NOT an athlete of any kind. To put it realistically, I was a self-proclaimed nerd, a dork even. I had the reaction time of a sloth and the dexterity of a rhinoceros, with none of the size and strength. That probably explains why I was in Ms. Johnson's Advanced Placement Chemistry, ground zero of my whole ordeal. I wish there was an amazing story I could tell you about how I created some advanced lifeform that attached itself to me and made me stronger, faster, and whatever else you would need to hunt demons. But the truth is, I was being kind of

DANNY DEMON HUNTER

dumb. I breathed in a toxic mixture of chemicals and promptly died. Yup, I leaned over to grab my notebook, took in a full dosage of death mist, and fell to the floor, clutching my throat.

It was, without a doubt, the most humiliating way to die. I wasn't a "popular" guy or anything, but the last thing going through my mind as my world grew dark and cold was how preventable this whole thing was. Here I was, the "smartest guy in school," and I was killed by a science fair project that, by the way, wouldn't have landed me a Nobel Prize. Nope, I would have, AT BEST, received a blue ribbon and my picture in the back of the yearbook. So yeah, as a guy that lived his life a little dorky, I hoped that if I died in a tragic chemical accident that it would be trying to end world hunger or something. Not make a chemical compound that kept floors cleaner.

I can already feel your next question coming, "Daniel," I expect you are hesitant to call me a friend now, "How are you talking to us right now? Are you a...ghost?!" I assure you that I am not a ghost! I am alive, and well, actually I am a little beaten up from my last battle, but we will discuss that momentarily, thanks to the wonderful staff at Coopersville Regional Medical Center. When I died from the death cloud (that's what I call the vapors I inhaled), Ms. Johnson called the paramedics who were able to breathe for me until the Doctors at Coopersville Reginal could resuscitate me. It was a long process, and I was in a coma for about eighteen months, but all in all, I am alive, and the procedures were a success.

I woke up from that eighteen-month coma three and a half years ago. There wasn't much that happened during the first two years, a lot of recovery and learning basic functions like how to walk again. But just one day after the second anniversary of my waking up, I had an encounter with my first demon. You may be thinking that would have been a terrifying experience, but strangely, it wasn't. As a matter of fact, I thought my mind was just making stuff up. This wasn't some scene out of a horror movie. It was an actual demon just walking down the street as if it was on its way to work. I decided I

DANNY DEMON HUNTER

wasn't going to tell anyone what I had seen, for fear they would send me back into rehab or something. I even tried to convince myself that it wasn't real, but from that day on, I saw a lot of demons.

I did a really good job of ignoring them and bringing no attention to myself. I acted as if I couldn't just see into this spirit world and see the demons that walked among us. It was pretty easy, considering again that they weren't just devouring people on sidewalks and stuff. Most of the time, they would play pranks on the people hurrying up and down the sidewalks. I watched one demon, his name was, are you ready for this, Patrick, possess a stressed looking businessman just so he could make him spill his coffee all over himself. When Patrick reemerged from the business man's body, he was laughing hysterically. Again, I just ignored the entire scene in front of me and nodded to the businessman as he walked by muttering a slew of curse words.

I got really accustomed to seeing the demons around, but my whole life changed one year ago today when I was visited by an Angel named...Angel (crazy right!) What Angel told me has changed the course of my life forever and has led me down this path I am on. He told me of the hunters that have come before me, of the tradition that must be kept or else the demons will run wild and destroy humanity. I fought this insane notion that I was a chosen one left to carry on this tradition. But night after night, and eventually, all day every day, Angel was there explaining to me my destiny.

Still, I fought him, but in the end, he convinced me. So here I was a twenty-one-year-old, non-athletic, pudgy, just finished recovery from an eighteen-month coma, self-proclaimed nerd and I had just agreed to demon hunting training. I was trained for months in the way of the preceding hunters before it was my turn to hunt. I took to the magic portion of my training with ease. I was, after all, a wizard at making deadly chemical mist already. The weapons training was a point of difficulty for me. The demon hunters use two specific weapons, a short sword that was quenched in holy water, and a hand axe said to be forged from Death's own scythe.

DANNY DEMON HUNTER

Once I mastered the techniques, I was ready to hunt my first demon. As it turns out, I knew of a particularly annoying demon that would hang out by the coffee shop I frequented. Hey, you all know him too. That's right; my first demon would be Patrick, the coffee spilling practical joker that he was.

It turned out that I was quite the natural. I was able to send Patrick right back to the netherworld with relative ease. I have spent the last ten months tracking down and eliminating demons pretty regularly. That was until I encountered Belashkazar. I should have known that a demon with the name Belashkazar would be far more difficult to destroy than one named Patrick, but once again just like in chemistry class, I had grown a little too cocky. Once I had tracked down Belashkazar, I immediately went in for the kill, but my demon nemesis was not having that. He tossed me around like a ragdoll, and he even tried to possess me. I was able to land a few clean strikes, earning me a guttural roar that quite literally came from the pits of Hell. I was too slow and underprepared for the behemoth Belashkazar and he vanished before either of us could land a killing blow.

I am in the process of tracking down Belashkazar again, but I couldn't pass on the opportunity to share my story with someone. I really hope you learned something here today, even if that something is be careful in chemistry class! Anyway, I am back on the hunt trying my best not to die again because of underestimation of my foe and overestimation of my abilities. I'm not entirely clear on whether or not a demon can kill me, so I should probably clear that up with Angel.

But, I am glad you read my story, and if I make it through this next battle, I will share more. But for now, this is Daniel Ryker, demon hunter, and your new best friend, signing off.