

Storm-Star  
By  
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Storm-Star by I.N. Morgan  
Published by Heavy Rush Media LLC  
[www.heavyrushmediallc.com](http://www.heavyrushmediallc.com)<sup>1</sup>

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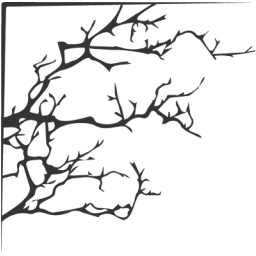
ISBN: 978-1-7328765-0-7

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1. <http://www.heavyrushmediallc.com>







## Prologue

“It’s getting chilly out here.” Jason pulled his jacket tighter around his body. His girlfriend sniggered at the comment.

“Well, duh, it’s fall.” Amy said, smirking. “It’s supposed to be cold.”

“Man, I wanna be by the bonfire.” Jason complained as the two moved deeper into the woods. “Why did you drag me out here?”

He and Amy were hanging out with their friends at the Rust Springs State Park, drinking alcohol and smoking weed at the secluded location. A lot of kids from their high school liked to use the area for different activities, usually those they did not want their parents or authorities to know about.

“Because I have something special I don’t want to share with the others.” Amy replied. Jason perked up a little.

“Like what?”

Amy pulled out a sandwich bag filled with blunts from under her sweater.

“What’s this?”

He manipulated the green buds through the plastic with his chilled hands.

“What do you think, doofus?”

“I know what it is, but where did you get it?”

“Got it from some women near the farms.” Amy took one of them out of the bag. “I spent all night rolling these. Do you have your lighter?”

“Sure.” Jason passed his shinny Zippo to her, eager to consume the stash. Amy quickly lit the blunt, taking a long drag. Relish lit up her face as she offered it to Jason.

“Have some, baby.”

Jason took it in his fingers and took a drag himself. He smiled at the sweet, earthy taste.

“Damn, that’s good.” he coughed. Amy grinned, kissing him on the cheek.

“That’s why I’m keeping these to myself. You’re the exception of course.”

Jason chuckled lightly as they continued to walk in the nighttime forest. The moon was bright and the young couple soaked up the milky rays on their journey. Jason and Amy came to a clearing where a couple of rocks were piled on top of each other. A pentagram marked the stone structure in bright red. A rainbow of melted wax candles littered the forest floor around the altar.

“What the hell?” Amy inspected the remains of a messy ritual.

“Hey, I think we found the little meeting area of those “teen witches”!” Jason laughed.

“Those dweebs? Well, I did hear something from Vanessa about them conducting rituals at night.”

Jason already climbed on the altar, sending rocks tumbling down.

“What are you doing?”

Jason struck a regal pose, joint still in his mouth, and pulled his jacket’s hood over his head.

“Lord Satan demands a sacrifice.” he growled, “Give your weed and body to me, Amy. Satan commands you!”

The girl giggled at her boyfriend’s antics. A snap of twigs caught her attention. She looked around but could not see anyone or anything beyond the clearing. Amy would normally chalk it up to a deer or some other animal making those sounds. Uncertainty snuck into her heart. Even through the mellow high, she had a strong urge to get back to the bonfire.

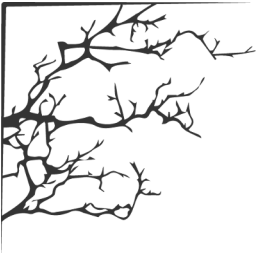
“Jason, we should go back...”

“Don’t tell me you’re scared!”

“I’m not! I-!”

Jason fell, tackled off the altar by a large shadow.

The high school junior hit the ground with such force his body gave a sickening crack. Amy gazed upon his motionless body, bloodied and clawed, for a split second. Another figure rushed at her from the side. She never had a chance to scream again as her throat was ripped out.



## Chapter 1

Cleveland, Ohio  
November 1997



ASH APPROACHED THE dead deer, nose wrinkling at the horrible stench. Cars raced past him on the busy highway leading into the city. He saw the innards spilling out of the deer's abdomen and maggots accumulating on the festering body. Ash deduced it to a standard hit-and-run. The car hit the deer so fast its internal organs ruptured.

Road-kill collection was not a glamorous or interesting job. Ash would often pass the time by investigating the bodies of carcasses; determining what did the furry creatures in. He was only a few weeks into the job, but he could already deduce the cause of death based on various signs. Ash grabbed the buck by the antlers, pulling with all his strength. The upper half of the carcass was pulled away from the rest of the body with a wet rip. The disgusting smell became even more prominent. It made him reconsider why he liked eating meat in the first place. He regretted eating that leftover hamburger from earlier this morning.

*HHHHOOONNKKK!!!*

“Hey, fuck-tard! Move your ass! We ain't got all day!”

Ash rolled his eyes at Johnny, who was yelling behind him in the truck. Usually Johnny did not work with him, but the boss assigned them together for the day. Groaning over the weight of the dead animal and



his rotten luck, Ash managed to haul both parts of the deer to the back of the truck himself.

“What took you so fuckin’ long?” Johnny questioned rudely as Ash got in the truck. Johnny, a sloppy pudgy man with blond corn-rows on his head, was the epitome of white trash and would have never gotten anywhere in life if it was not for his father. Ash ignored him, removing his orange hard-hat and gingerly removing some guts off his reflective vest. He was not in the mood for a fight with his boss’s son.

“Whatever. Fuckin’ faggot.” Johnny snorted when he did not get a response. The truck tore off down the road to the compost plant where the animals would be disposed of. Johnny pressed one of his pudgy fingers on the console and the radio came to life.

*“Last night, the body of a Rust Springs High School boy was found in Rust Springs State Park. Police said it looked like a vicious animal attack based on the wounds found on the body. At the site of the slayings, a makeshift stone altar with a pentagram was found - ”*

Ash listened passively to the gory news details, trying to block out Johnny’s one-sided conversations.

“There was this one time when I was with this chick and we were getting high...”

Ash continued to listen to the news.

*“Authorities are searching for Amy Bryant in the area surrounding the park. Friends and family remain hopeful for her safe return. Meanwhile, Rust Springs police are looking into possible suspects - ”*

Johnny turned the radio off.

“I was listening to that - ”

“Shut up, dick, unless you want me to write a report to dad.”

Ash groaned as Johnny continued with his inane “high school glory days” stories. The man found the need to brag about his exploits although no one cared to hear them.

“Man, those were the days.” Johnny concluded a tale of a hedonistic frat house party. Ash never had a great school experience, little to any

friends and lots of fights. Sometimes he won, sometimes he lost. His foster parents, whoever they were at the time, would get a call from the principal and punishments would follow afterwards. Most people were afraid of him after they saw him fight. Ash was a ball of rage in the heat of the battle. He remembered names of “psycho” and “freak” in the back of his mind. It was not a way to make connections with his peers. Not that he cared; he was fine being on his own.

A dirt road marked where the compost plant was located. Mud and rainwater kicked up on the truck, splattering the white vehicle a dark brown color. They parked and Johnny waddled next to a particularly large pile of mulch where they would dispose of the dead animals for the day. Ash would have to do all the work, but he was relieved that his shift would be over soon.

“Hurry up! I wanna go to lunch!”

Ash shot Johnny a dirty look for his outburst as he threw the dead bodies in the pile.

“Damn, you’re so slow.” Johnny groaned in frustration and hunger.

“You could help you know. I mean, it’s a lot of work carrying some of these bastards.” A hand landed on Ash’s shoulder.

“Don’t touch me, Johnny.” he warned, whirling around to face the obese jerk.

“You don’t get to tell me what to do.” Johnny pushed Ash, who lost his footing on the wet ground and fell into the mulch pile face first. Old blood and maggots covered his head. Ash tried to get up, but Johnny’s heavy elephant foot pressed on his spine like a cinderblock.

“You should know better than to mouth off to me, foster trash. Yeah, I know about your little sob story. I looked at dad’s files. You’re just a sad little shit who’s mommy left him. You comfy down there? Kiss the little raccoons for me.” Johnny ground his foot into Ash’s back.

Ash gave a pained grunt beneath him, an ember of anger glowing inside him while Johnny laughed. He was suffocating in the filthy fur,

scrambling for any purchase with his hands. Johnny could kill him if he didn't get off. The god-awful smell of the carcasses sent him back in time.

*A filthy little boy sitting in squalor. He was so hungry. The smell of blood, piss, and shit permeated the small house. He had eaten everything until only the raw meat in the fridge was left. And he ate that too. He did what he needed, to survive.*

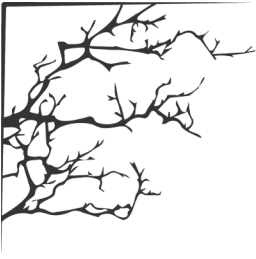
Johnny stopped laughing when he noticed Ash's muffled growling and thrashing underneath him.

"Hey, man. Be cool - " he stuttered fearfully. Ash shook as he stood up, shivering with rage. Johnny almost messed himself when he got a look of Ash's face. Lips pulled back in a snarl and eyes dark with hatred, Ash leapt onto Johnny. The two were fighting on the ground. Johnny was desperately trying to flee but Ash kept punching and clawing him like a feral beast.

"Get off me, freak!" Johnny yelled trying to push Ash back with his hand. Ash promptly bit the extended appendage and punched Johnny in his fat face. The men's loud struggle brought the attention of the plant workers. Five men were apprehending Ash and helping Johnny to his feet. Ash was still struggling wildly until a well-placed blow to his mid-section knocked the wind out of him.

"You're done, freak! You hear me!"

Ash came to his senses, not realizing what had transpired. His back and upper abdomen were sore. Johnny cursed him from a safe distance, holding his injured hand tenderly and sporting a shiner on his left eye. Ash cursed himself, realizing he blew it with this job.



## Chapter 2

The mailbox was filled with bills and junk mail. He wasn't looking forward to reviewing it all tonight. Ash opened the door to his small apartment. The sparsely furnished home was a welcome respite after the hellish day he experienced. Collapsing on the musty couch, Ash curled up in a fetal position. He considered his options. He was relieved there were no charges pressed. It was hard enough job hunting without having a criminal record attached. The grey walls of the living room seemed much smaller to Ash. He had to find something soon. The holiday season was starting; he could find a seasonal job to get by. Not like he had any plans anyway. First, he needed a shower.

He had no known family and his "friends" were hardly worth mentioning. At twenty-three, Asher Jagerhund's life was bleak with few options. Stripping off his clothes and standing under the water stream, he reflected on what happened at the plant. He did not have a lot of memories of his mother after she abandoned him. They came in brief flashes, usually if he was asleep or triggered by sensory input. Some were pleasant but most of them were terrifying and surreal. They always had a creature of sorts in them; unseen but present in the room where he hid. His caseworkers chalked it up to PTSD from the trauma of parental abandonment and being left alone to fend for himself. Out of the shower, he dried off quickly and put on a pair of sweatpants.

Ash's stomach gave a hungry gurgle. Time to eat. Ash walked into the dingy kitchen and opened the fridge. A half-gallon of milk, a carton of eggs, some moldy cheese, and some wilted salad mix. He desperately needed to go shopping, hoping his last paycheck would be enough. Something simple for now would do. After fixing a bowl of cereal, Ash

went back into the living room and looked through his mail. Rent notice, junk mail, grocery store discounts...what was this? A white envelope with blue ink written on it:

*From: Jasper Jagerhund 25 Yellow River Road, Rust Springs, OH 45426*

Ash's mind started racing. Rust Springs? Where the killings took place? Jagerhund? Was this Jasper a relative? With a quivering hand, he ripped open the envelope and pulled out the letter. Typed on a word processor, it read:



DEAR ASHER,

Let me introduce myself. I am your uncle: Jasper Jagerhund. I can't believe I have found you after all these years. Your mother, Naomi, fell out of contact with me years ago. After months spent string-pulling and researching, I am elated to have finally found you. I feel terrible for what happened to you and your mother. I wish I was there. Anyways, I wrote this letter in hope we could meet in person. Unfortunately, I am in no condition to travel. In the case you are not interested, you do not have to see me. I know it must be disorientating to know you have a blood relative suddenly contacting you out of the blue and I would not force you to do something you don't want to.

It would be nice to talk to a Jagerhund again since we are the last of our bloodline. I will leave my telephone number in case you wish to communicate further. I hope you come visit at least.

Thank you.

Best regards,

Jasper

Ash could not believe what he was reading. He had family out there? This Jasper could have the answers to the questions he had carried with him all these years. Still, he was unsure. How did Jasper find him and why

now? He was torn between hopeful curiosity and reluctant suspicion. Walking toward the kitchen phone, he considered his options. What did he have left to lose? At the worst, Jasper could be a hoax. In the best possible situation, Jasper could be family. Ash punched the numbers, anxiously determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. The ring tone clipped through the receiver.

A click and a pause.

"Hello?" A man's voice answered on the other side, clear but slightly raspy.

"Uh, Jasper Jagerhund?"

"This is him speaking."

"My name is Asher, or Ash, Jagerhund. I received your letter today—"

"Ah! Yes!" the voice was elated. "I was hoping you were going to call or respond but, how are you doing?"

"Uh, fine." Ash didn't know what to make of the situation. He was talking to a complete stranger about his background. It was best to tread lightly.

"Good, Good. Well, how is Cleveland?"

"Better yet, how did you find me?" Ash heard a sigh on the line.

"It took some research. The last time I spoke with your mother she was in the Cleveland area. At the time, she told me she was pregnant with you. After I heard of her disappearance, I launched my own investigation to see what became of you. And here we are after a month of research."

"Why not sooner?"

"I assumed your mother wanted to be left alone so I didn't bother her. Therefore, her disappearance was quite a shock. It was a while before I exhausted the resources at my disposal to find her. So I searched for you instead." Jasper explained. Silence followed, Ash not knowing how to continue with the conversation.

"So have you considered coming to Rust Springs?"

"I'll think about it."

“Well, let me know what you desire, if you wish to be in touch. Have a good evening, Ash.”

The line went dead. His sweaty hand placed the phone on its resting place. He walked into the living room, seeking to slump on the couch again. A knock at the door diverted his intentions. Opening the door, he found his landlord on the other side.

“Do you have the month’s rent?”

Ash scratched the side of his face and looked at the floor. This was not a good day. It was downright shitty.

“That was due today?”

“Ash, this is the second time you’ve done this...”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Ralston. I-I’ve run into some difficulties - ”

A yellow slip appeared before his face, interrupting him.

“You have 90 days. I’m sorry but this can’t go on.” Ralston told him, leaving his tenant in the doorway. Ash slammed the door. The day could not get any worse. Ash returned to the couch, staring at the paper. He balled it up and threw it in a dusty corner of the room. Grabbing the remote, the TV came alive to provide its escapist offerings. The news was on at this hour.

“Brutal killings send shockwaves through Ohio town. Tonight, we discuss the latest set of bizarre murders by the alleged Rust Springs Ripper - ”

Rust Springs. It was a city in southwestern Ohio, known for its namesake waters, which were a popular tourist attraction. The documentary he remembered talked about the orange waters, caused by large iron deposits in the ground. Other than that, it was another struggling post-industrial city in the Midwest. Major manufacturing had moved out, sending employment to faraway areas.

“Joining me is Pastor Calvin Clarkson, televangelist and resident of Rust Springs.” the newscaster announced. The image of a clean-cut man appeared on screen. “Pastor Clarkson, what do you take from these recent slayings? Any insight?”

“I have stated this time and time again. We are dealing with possible occult ties. Rust Springs, and America in general, are embracing these so called “post-Christian” ways of living and spirituality. It’s not a mere coincidence those kids were killed at a Satanic ritual site – ”

Jasper’s offer lingered on his mind. There was the issue of the recent killings. Occultists or not, Cleveland streets were more dangerous. It could have been a freak animal attack. He walked back into the kitchen, TV still blaring in the background. He didn’t have much choice, without a job and a place to live. Maybe Rust Springs was his ticket out of here. If not, he could always leave for another part of the world. He might as well try. He dialed the number from the letter again. After a few minutes, Jasper answered.

“Hello?”

“It’s Ash again.”

“Have you made a decision?”

“Uh, yeah, I have no place to live now. Just got the notice from my landlord.”

“Sorry to hear that. “Ya’know, I have room at my place. It’s a big farmhouse. I wouldn’t mind if you decided to crash here for a while.”

“I wouldn’t want to impose - ”

“Believe me. You’re not imposing on anyone. It’s been a long time since I’ve had any company, let alone family. It would be a welcome change.”

“Uh, okay. Thanks. I’m gonna head out soon. Maybe tomorrow.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah, I don’t have much and the furniture practically came with the place. I’m ready to move on, I guess.”

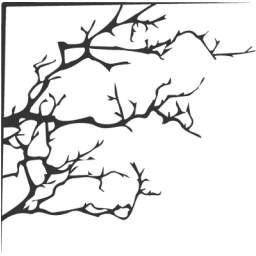
“Ok, I’ll see you soon, Ash.”

“Ok, thanks. Bye.”

Ash hung up the phone and prepared to pack up his belongings. Clothes and personal effects were packed in a large duffel bag, which had served Ash all his years in the foster system. He could pack light, hav-



ing moved so much in his young life. Exhaustion draped over him like a heavy blanket. This stressful day ended with a fresh start at least. Ready to put it behind him, he took off his clothes and got into bed. Sleep settled into his bones as his mind faded away to the dark sea of unconsciousness.



## Rupture

A fissure opens further.

**F**ar above the Midwestern sky, stars shined ever so brightly, unpolluted by the city lights. White, blue, yellow, red; if ever there was a black star. He knew it was here. He often held communion with it, not wanting to leave the abyss from which it imparted him with great wisdom.

The dark light shines brighter.

Carve the runes into the flesh of the wall. Meditate on the feeling and impose the force into this world. Separate from all distractions; do not let them get in the way of the goal. Nothing in the world motivates him more.

He couldn't remember the last time he saw another soul. Was it a week? A month? Speak the ancient songs of which know no origin. Feed it. Make it real. Let the voice be strong and bold.

A cosmic maelstrom is coming.

The dead star shines now even brighter than its brethren; the dark rays soaking into his bones. He could sense it becoming a part of him. Rejoice! A major breakthrough. He knew he came to the right place. *"It rises above Ohio."*

Traveling through the aeons.

He remembered telling someone that, or at least he thought. It did not matter.

The dead one they fear.

Their Aion was upon them now.

A black star shall rise.

When the end time draws near.



