

IT'S BEEN SIX WEEKS SINCE THE ANGELS OF THE APOCALYPSE  
DESTROYED THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT. ONLY POCKETS OF  
HUMANITY REMAIN.

SAVAGE STREET GANGS RULE THE DAY WHILE FEAR AND  
SUPERSTITION RULE THE NIGHT.

WHEN ANGELS FLY AWAY WITH A HELPLESS GIRL, HER  
SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD SISTER PENRYN WILL DO ANYTHING  
TO GET HER BACK.

INCLUDING MAKING A DEAL WITH THE ENEMY.

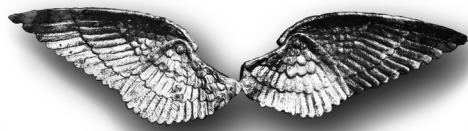
### *About the Author*

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.

*Angelfall (Penryn & the End of Days, Book One)* is her debut novel. Book Two in the series will be available in autumn 2013.

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# ANGELFALL



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# 1

Ironically, since the attacks, the sunsets have been glorious. Outside our condo window, the sky flames like a bruised mango in vivid orange, red, and purple. The clouds ignite with sunset colors, and I'm almost scared those of us caught below will catch on fire too.

With the dying warmth on my face, I try not to think about anything other than keeping my hands from trembling as I methodically zip up my backpack.

I pull on my favorite boots. They used to be my favorites because I once got a compliment from Misty Johnson about the look of the leather strips laddering down the sides. She is – was – a cheerleader and known for her fashionable taste, so I figured these boots were my token fashion statement even though they're made by a hiking boot company for serious wear. Now they're my favorites because the strips make for a perfect knife holder.

I also slip sharpened steak knives into Paige's wheelchair pocket. I hesitate before putting one into Mom's shopping cart in the living room, but I do it anyway. I slip it in between a stack of Bibles and a pile of empty soda bottles. I shift some clothes over it when she's not looking, hoping she'll never have to know it's there.

Before it gets fully dark, I roll Paige down the common hall to the stairs. She can roll on her own, thanks to her preference for a conventional chair over the electric kind. But I can tell she feels more secure when I push her. The elevator is useless now, of course, unless you're willing to risk getting stuck when the electricity goes out.

I help Paige out of the chair and carry her on my back while our mother rolls the chair down three flights of stairs. I don't like the bony feel of my sister. She's too light now, even for a seven-year-old, and it scares me more than everything else combined.

Once we reach the lobby, I put Paige back into her chair. I sweep a strand of dark hair behind her ear. With her high cheekbones and midnight eyes, we could almost be twins. Her face is more pixie-like than mine, but give her another ten years and she'd look just like me. No one would ever get us mixed up, though, even if we were both seventeen, any more than people would mix up soft and hard, warm and cold. Even now, frightened as she is, the corners of her mouth are tipped up in a ghost of a smile, more concerned for me than herself. I give her one back, trying to radiate confidence.

I run back upstairs to help Mom bring her cart down. We struggle with the ungainly thing, making all kinds of clanking noises as we wobble down the stairs. This is the first time I'm glad no one's left in the building to hear it. The cart is crammed full of empty bottles, Paige's baby blankets, stacks of magazines and Bibles, every shirt Dad left in the closet when he moved out, and of course, cartons of her precious



rotten eggs. She's also stuffed every pocket of her sweater and jacket with the eggs.

I consider abandoning the cart, but the fight I'd have with my mother would take much longer and be much louder than helping her. I just hope Paige will be all right for the length of time it takes to bring it down. I could kick myself for not bringing down the cart first so Paige could be in the relatively safer spot upstairs, rather than waiting for us in the lobby.

By the time we reach the front door of the building, I'm already sweating and my nerves are frayed.

'Remember,' I say. 'No matter what happens, just keep running down El Camino until you reach Page Mill. Then head for the hills. If we get separated, we'll meet at the top of the hills, okay?'

If we get separated there's not much hope of us ever meeting anywhere, but I need to keep up the pretense of hope because that may be all we have.

I put my ear to the front door of our condo building. I hear nothing. No wind, no birds, no cars, no voices. I pull back the heavy door just a crack and peek out.

The streets are deserted except for empty cars parked in every lane. The dying light washes the concrete and steel with graying echoes of color.

The day belongs to the refugees and raid gangs. But at night, they all clear out, leaving the streets deserted by dusk. There's a strong fear of the supernatural now. Both mortal predators and prey seem to agree on listening to their primal fears and hiding until dawn. Even the worst of the new street

gangs leave the night to whatever creatures may roam the darkness in this new world.

At least, they have so far. At some point, the most desperate will start to take advantage of the cover of night despite the risks. I'm hoping we'll be the first so that we'll be the only ones out there, if for no other reason than that I won't have to drag Paige away from helping someone in trouble.

Mom grips my arm as she stares out into the night. Her eyes are intense with fear. She's cried so much this past year since Dad left that her eyes are now permanently swollen. She has a special terror of the night, but there's nothing I can do about that. I start to tell her it'll be all right, but the lie dries up in my mouth. It's pointless to reassure her.

I take a deep breath, and yank open the door.