

Angels Lost

By Ryan Southwick

Synopsis

ANNE is starting to adjust to her new life as a vampire. She's back to work at Hal's Diner, her relationships with ZIMA and CHARLIE are going well, her hunger is under control, and although there are signs that WILLIAM is building his forces, he has thus far left them alone. Things take a downturn when Charlie's weakening life force hits a critical low, and the crew fears the worst. CAPP takes him to China to visit the estranged master who taught him to project his chi in the hopes that they can bolster his spirit, which has steadily waned since being trapped in his cyborg body, leaving Anne, her friend DORIS, MARK, and his girlfriend DELA worrying in San Francisco.

TIM, an engineering graduate and inventor looking for his big break, is determined to sell Charlie his breakthrough invention and waits for him to appear at Hal's Diner. He gets more than he bargained for when he follows Anne out back and is caught in the crossfire between her and a new adversary, and he accidentally swallows her blood in the process. He escapes, but Anne is captured by CALUM, who unexpectedly incapacitates her with a single bullet that causes unbearable agony.

While Mark and Doris look for clues to Anne's disappearance, Zima takes Dela with her to a brutal interrogation of a local vampire in the hopes of learning Anne's location. Their only discovery is that the new adversary may be a cyborg sent by the organization who created ZIMA.

Anne awakes shackled to the wall of a prison cell, where her mystery shooter is revealed as ZANE, who Anne suspects is an android, and among her captors is ALMOS, the sire to William and master of all vampires. Calum isn't the enemy, she discovers, rather the leader of a society dedicated to the eradication of vampires to prevent what he and Almos fear could be the end of the world through the will of the ENTITY, a mysterious being who drives the master vampire to expand his brood to accomplish its ultimate goal, which may involve the eradication of humanity. The Entity can't influence him when he's far underground, however, but thanks to Anne's implant and its defensive program, neither can the master vampire influence her without suffering agonizing pain.

Unaware of what's happening to him, Tim suffers through the transformation into a vampire by drinking his friend's blood while he discovers during an unexpected lovemaking session that she likes him more than their best friend, whom she is currently dating. The three of them meet, and instead of panicking at his appearance, his friends rally a plan to take advantage of his new abilities.

Anne's captivity turns surreal. Her captors bombard her with secret requests for her venom to help heal sick loved ones, which Anne does in exchange for blood to keep her strong. Even her small victory is robbed when she discovers that they will soon move her to another location.

Through Zima's vampire informant, they discover Tim's existence, and that William is also looking for him. They have also discovered that the primary suspect behind the cyborg involved in Anne's attack, ALVIN ORWING, who was also responsible for Zima's creation and enslavement, will be at a dangerous party of global powers, and may know of Anne's whereabouts. The team splits up: Mark and Dela attend the party, while Zima searches for Tim, who may have a mental link with Anne and be able to lead them right to her.

The party returns Dela to the role of secret agent, where she attempts to woo Alvin's son, NICK, in the hopes of gleaning information from him, while Mark goes for Alvin himself. They're shocked to learn that not only has Alvin obtained Anne's blood, but has used it to create an army of vampires who are unconditionally loyal to him, and intends to lease them to the highest bidder. Things spiral even further out of control when Dela leaves with Nick for his hotel. She's furious when Mark proposes to her in the parking lot, and she leaves without a word to go with Nick.

Meanwhile, Zima tracks Tim and his friends down at their new house, where they have set up a successful business biting rich clients with Tim's heroin-like venom. Zima attempts to talk them into helping her find Anne, but William's goons force them to flee for their lives. They discover that Zima is an android and are fascinated, at the same time that Zima discovers the city where Anne is being held. Anne's defensive program kicks in when they get close, and while Zima leaves to mount a rescue, Tim's friends escape to lessen his agony.

Zima rushes to rescue her love but is severely injured in an explosive trap on the way in, leaving her only partially functioning. She shoots her way to Anne, and realizes too late that her captors were helping Anne escape from Zane, who had gone berserk and was killing everyone in the complex. After an intense battle, Zima defeats him by using her nanites to shut him down from within, then detonates his power core to ensure that her secret never makes it back to Orwing, causing a massive underground explosion.

Mark learns that Dela is now Nick's hostage and mounts a daring rescue from her hotel, only to discover that the two of them were collaborating to stop his father from unleashing a vampire plague on the world. They learn not only where the vampire army is staying, but that Nick has arranged for their keystone vampire to come aboveground so that Anne can take control and destroy the army, which Anne reluctantly agrees to.

Zima is too injured to accompany them, so Anne and Mark go straight to the agreed upon place. After a struggle of conscience, Anne determines that the mercenary vampires indeed deserve to die, but William takes control of her during the brief period that her defensive program is down. She attacks Mark, and they're both critically burned in an explosion that incinerates the mercenary army. Only Zima, who defied Anne's wishes to remain at the factory, is able to keep Anne from killing Mark by shooting her with a silver bullet.

Time passes. Anne and Zima are both healing. Anne's implant was damaged in the struggle, so she stays with Almos in the shielded underground reactor room at Z-Tech. Mark helps alleviate Cappa's factory self's isolation by giving her a significant portion of their production nano robots, which she uses to form a pixie-like version of herself. Around that time, one of Anne's former captors visits with the little girl she helped save during her imprisonment, which for Anne, is a life-changing experience. They replace her damaged implant, and Zima is finally able to have the reunion with Anne that she had so desperately wanted.

Tim finally meets up with Anne. She temporarily severs her link with him to eliminate the effects of her defensive program. Mark and Zima agree to purchase his invention, and they part ways, though everyone is certain that Tim and his friends are hiding something, which they are.

Zima meets Anne, who is training with a rifle to prepare for whatever might come, wondering how Charlie is doing in China.

Six weeks ago, in China, Cappa is distraught to find that Charlie's old master doesn't seem to want to help him at all.