

THE CHRONICLES OF JONATHAN STEEL: BOOK I

# The 13<sup>th</sup> DEMON

ALTAR *of the* SPIRAL EYE

BRUCE HENNIGAN

The 13th Demon: Altar of the Spiral Eye, Bruce Hennigan, Charisma Media, 2011, 1616382805, 9781616382803, 295 pages. When Jonathan Steel wakes up on a beach in a raging thunderstorm, naked, beaten, and bleeding, he has no idea who he is or how he got there. But just as he starts to make progress in his slow journey to recovery, tragedy strikes again, taking everything in his new life that he has come to love and rely on. Filled with rage and a thirst for revenge, he searches the countryside for the entity responsible—an entity called only the Thirteenth Demon. His quest brings him to Lakeside, Louisiana, and a small country church where evil is in control and strange writing on the walls, blood-soaked floors, and red-eyed spiders have appeared in the sanctuary. As he faces the final confrontation with an evil presence that has pursued him all of his life, he must choose between helping the people he loves or destroying the thirteenth demon..

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Bruce Hennigan wrote his first short story at age thirteen and knew he wanted to become a full-time writer by the time he was a senior in high school. He is the author of numerous Christian dramas and the coauthor of Conquering Depression. He has a medical degree from Louisiana State University Medical Center and lives in Shreveport, Louisiana, with his wife and daughter.

There are a lot of authors out there who come right out of the gates with the next best thing in fiction. Frank Peretti did just that, Ted DeKker did the same, and the list of names can go on forever. Some authors come out and fall flat on their face, and they are forgotten. But then you have an author or two who makes a genuinely honest effort, and while those efforts are sincere, they still come off looking cheesy. I'd say this fits the bill with Bruce Hennigan. But it wasn't the worst thing I've ever read either.

No matter what he does, people are after Jonathan Steel. Some want him for good reasons, others want to eliminate him. He really doesn't have much of a memory, but what he's discovering is that he's using what seems to work. And if he has it his way, he's doing everything he can for a greater glory. People are showing up where they don't belong. It's time for a battle.

I can't say that I'll be eagerly waiting for Hennigan's next offering. This was honestly enough for me. But if this reaches the people out there who need to be reached, then I hope they truly embrace the message found within these pages. Bruce has a message, and it'll reach who needs to be reached out to. It was a good effort. Just not among my favorites by a long shot.

The 13th Demon by Bruce Hennigan is the first book in the Chronicles of Jonathan Steel. Steel washed up on a beach two years ago with completely no memory of who he was or where he was from, but he had almost super human fighting abilities. When the woman he loved was killed by a vicious demon with a spiral eye, Steel committed his life to hunting own his nemesis. He arrives in the small town of Lakeside, Louisiana to help out a desperate pastor whose church has been taken over by demonic forces. Huge spiders and scorpions run around the sanctuary, blood pours out from the doors, and the baptistery holds a portal to another dimension. Steel calls on his mentor, Cephas, to send him to reinforcements, a linguist named Liz and a physicist named Claire who brings her troubled son, Joshua. Hennigan has an enigmatic hero in Steel, but he takes the mystery a bit too far at times. The story suffers from too much back story and introduction of characters. Hennigan obviously has plans to write a large series, but 300 pages are too few to include all of the story elements he wants to put into play. One thing that concerned me in reading is that Hennigan's descriptions of the evil forces are poetic and lengthy in nature, but the forces of good get far less detail, making them less real, more abstract for readers. The story moves so quickly, and so many characters are introduced, there is little time to grow to care for them. (SPOILER ALERT) When a major character dies at the end of the story, I had very little emotional response, because there hadn't been opportunity to grow to care. I think that Hennigan has some terrific ideas, and Jonathan Steel could be a terrific hero, but it needs some work.

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED READING THIS BOOK AND WOULD AND HAVE RECOMMENDED IT TO FRIENDS! THE STORY REALLY MAKES YOU THINK ABOUT THE "OTHER SIDE" - THE SPIRITUAL DEMENSION THAT WE CAN'T SEE, BUT KNOW IT EXISTS...THE STORY HELPS ONE UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE "FIGHT" WE CAN'T SEE THAT GOES ON FOR THE SOULS OF MEN.

Bruce delves into depths of creativity in this book, The Thirteenth Demon. It's fun to see how deep he goes for his backstory and development of his plot. I especially enjoyed the information regarding the creation and progress of the Thirteenth Demon. The character's actions, while sometimes a bit confusing, such as Emily's, lend a whiff of suspense to the story. In addition, Claire's plot line was a genuine weeper.

I'd have to say that my biggest complaint about The Thirteenth Demon is twofold. First, the dialogue is a bit wooden in places. Bruce could have done with a bit more contractions in his dialogue, making his dialogue a touch more realistic. Second, the characters, while being revealed with backstory for the most part, are reasonably cliché. The brooding loner as hero, the rebellious teenager, the pastor with a secret are all things we've seen before. Even the lead baddie, the tall skinny, old, white guy, reminded me a touch of Mr. Burns. It would have been nice to see someone different as the lead baddie, such as the deputy, who is a clumsy oaf who turns out to be the evil genius, leading a touch more mystery and suspense to the story.

I'd have to say that, in all, it was a good effort and a decent book to while away the hours. It kept me interested and turning the pages to see the end result. Plus, it left just enough mystery to warrant a series. I just hope Bruce has enough creativity up his sleeve to keep the series rolling and keep us interested in his characters.

At the same time, there are a few areas that require development including the dialogue being a little wooden and perhaps too many characters that ultimately are insufficiently developed for the reader to feel empathy. Further, my biggest stumbling block was that the action was a little too busy and messy, particularly the final conflict. I struggled to visualise what was going on as it was too busy and so I found myself skipping through it very quickly. I'm also not clear what Jonathan is: human, angel or simply blessed with special strength, reflexes and fighting skills. I think I would have liked this cleared up in this first of a series.

While it did have some rather creepy images, Jonathan, in the first half of the book, kept sounding like a Sunday school teacher saying obvious stuff to a teenager. Luckily that stops in the next half, which includes a presentation on the intertwining relationship between faith and science and more horror.

For over six weeks, no one has entered the Lakeside Community Church in Louisiana. After a deacon's gruesome death, an evil presence has taken over the church, beginning a terrifying chain of events. Strange writing on the walls, blood-soaked floors, and red-eyed spiders have all appeared in the sanctuary in a matter of days.

This shadow of evil stretches over the lives of Reverend Thomas Parker and his wife. Because of the evil permeating his church, his congregation has been lost, and his own marriage now stands in jeopardy. Seeking Jonathan Steel's help, Parker yearns to free his church and his small community from the clutches of this evil being.

Steel assembles a team to combat the demon and discovers more of his own sordid past. Was he called to Lakeside to help someone in distress, or does he seek revenge against the heinous "thirteenth" demon? As Steel races to the aid of Reverend Parker, he is the center of a final confrontation with a mysterious man from his past who serves the "thirteenth" demon.

This is probably one of the most intense supernatural thrillers of the Christian genre, I have had the opportunity to review for Christian Fiction Blog Alliance. This is not for the light-hearted. The story has to deal with a man named Jonathan Steel who was rescued from a near drowning, found naked and on a beach during a raging thunderstorm, he has no memory at all of his previous life. With the help of a psychiatrist named April, he has moments of clarity where he gains bits and pieces of his former life, but only when he is in a rage of anger.

Now all that remains of Jonathan's previous life is compiled into two years worth of memories but it involves finding and destroying the 13th demon, one more powerful than all the demons Satan has at his disposal, and this one wants to destroy everything pure and full of God's holiness. There is a brief historical look back into the human sacrifices of the Aztec civilization and thus where our story gains a bit of momentum.

I received *The 13th Demon* by Bruce Hennigan compliments of Christian Fiction Blog Alliance for my honest review and would have to rate this one a 4 out of 5 stars. The story lags a bit with so much background of not only the character but of the current evil characters so it takes awhile before the reader really understands what is going on. Since this is a genre I enjoy, I look forward to the next book in this series.

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