

The Tomorrow Paradox
By Keith B. Darrell
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The Tomorrow Paradox / Keith B. Darrell

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Chapter Two:

Meet the Clone

THE GIRL QUICKLY CLOSED THE door behind her. She braced her back against it, trembling as her hazel eyes scanned Mackenzie's hospital room. Her light brown hair was disheveled and she gasped several times, attempting to regain her breath. She wore a pink nightgown that stopped above her knees. *Property of Simulacrum Institute* was stenciled in small black letters beneath her right breast. The 15-year-old pleaded with the startled boy. "Please, let me hide here. I'm not ready to go back. I want to be free, even if it's only for a few more minutes."

"Who are you?" Mackenzie asked.

"I'm Gemma. Who are you?"

"I'm..." Mackenzie recalled his father's admonition about creating a new identity for himself while in the future so as

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not to be confused with his adult counterpart. He remembered his previous trip through time, to the past, where he had met Gramps and gone by the name 'Kenzie'. He smiled at the nervous girl. "I'm Kenzie. I'm not from around here. Just visiting my cousins for a few days."

The girl tilted her head. "What are... cousins?"

Mackenzie shrugged. "Cousins. You know, family. Your aunts' and uncles' kids."

"I don't have any," Gemma replied.

"You don't have any aunts or uncles?"

"I don't have any family."

"Gee, I'm sorry. How long ago did your parents die?"

Gemma laughed. "I never had any."

"That's ridiculous. Everyone has parents, even if you never met them."

"Not me. I'm a clone. I came from a DNA scraping on a glass microscope slide. The closest I got to having a mother was a cotton swab."

Mackenzie gulped. "You're a clone," he uttered in disbelief. "I've read science fiction stories about clones, but you look so real."

"I *am* real. My flesh is as warm as yours, and my heart beats between seventy and one hundred beats per minute. I look exactly like my donor, since I came from her DNA. See?" She unclasped her nightgown and it slid to her ankles, covering her bare feet.

Mackenzie's jaw dropped. "You're naked! Don't they have underwear in this era?"

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He turned his head away. "Aren't you embarrassed?"

Gemma looked puzzled. "What is embarrassed?"

Mackenzie fumbled for the right response. "You know, ashamed? Shy? Cold, even?"

"Oh, societal customs and mores of advanced cultures. I've read about that on the neural net." She paused. "Then, you must never have seen a naked girl before."

"Of course I have." Mackenzie turned to face her, and his eyes perused her from head to toe, before swiftly refocusing his gaze at the distant wall. "Just not this close... I mean, in the same room... Instead of on a screen." He blushed. "Just put your clothes back on."

"I can't wear that, anyway. It's a clone outfit with the institute's name on it. I can't hide dressed in that. I'll stand out a mile away."

"You'll stand out even more in your birthday suit. If my dad walked in now and caught me with you like that... let's see, if I'm sixty-three now... I'd be grounded until I'm a hundred and twenty! Wait, my dad left a bunch of weird shirts and pants for me in the closet. Pick out whatever you want to wear. I won't need any of those future togs, anyway."

Gemma chose an outfit from the closet. "These are all boys' clothes. They'll make a good disguise. I'll look like a boy."

Mackenzie gazed back at the unclothed girl, admiring her features. "Nothing will make you look like a boy. But put them on, anyway." As Gemma dressed, he asked, "Who are you hiding from?"

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"The hospital orderlies. I overheard a nurse say they were processing my paperwork. I'm being sent back to the institute."

"What institute?"

"The Simulacrum Institute. It's where they keep me and the other clones until we're needed. I've spent my whole life there. My room is a bit smaller than this one. I'm fed three times a day and I can plug into the neural net whenever I want." Gemma raised her arm and displayed what Mackenzie mistook for a wristwatch. "As long as my bio-monitor shows I'm healthy, they leave me alone. All alone."

"I don't understand," Mackenzie said. "You have no family, no friends? You don't go to school?"

Gemma shook her head. "I told you, I'm a clone. They grew me for only one purpose."

Mackenzie frowned. "Who grew you? For what purpose?"

"The same as any clone: organ harvesting. Some rich woman paid the institute a lot of money to clone her infant granddaughter fifteen years ago. The girl was born with serious health issues and it was merely a matter of time before she would need spare parts."

Mackenzie's mouth dropped. "They bred you like cattle... so they could cut you open and take out your body parts?"

"Now you see why I'm not embarrassed about my body; it's a commodity, like me."

"But... but you're a person."

Gemma shook her head. "I'm the spare. The girl I was cloned from, she's the original. I'm not entitled to personhood

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or individuality. Since she seems to be recovering, the authorities will return me to the institute, where I'll continue to live until the next time I'm summoned to be prepared to donate my organs to her."

"Are all clones raised for body parts? Do none of them get to live as people?"

Gemma shrugged. "As long as my organs might be needed, I have no future. But if my original were to die before they could retrieve me, then my reason for being would cease to exist. I'd serve no purpose and the donor's family certainly wouldn't continue to pay the institute for my upkeep. I'd be free to petition for emancipation, and gain citizenship. Of course, I'd still be a clone, and I wouldn't have equal rights, but I'd never again be dragged out in the middle of the night for possible dissection."

Mackenzie was horrified and sympathetic to her plight. "That's horrible! It's barbaric. They can't buy and sell people for spare parts. It's worse than slavery."

"They're probably searching the hospital for me now. It's only a matter of time before they find me. But every minute I spend among real people like you provides me with memories to hold onto when they lock me up again."

"It's not right. You need to escape."

"We're on the ninth floor. I'd never make it out of the hospital. I'm surprised I've eluded their surveillance, so far."

Mackenzie detached the scrambler from the bottom of the hover pod. "It's a scrambler. I don't know how it works, but it interferes with the surveillance equipment in the room."

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"Then, you'll be safe. No one will know we've spoken. I should go. Now that I have these clothes, maybe I can blend in well enough to make it to the stairs."

"But if they catch you..."

"Don't worry. If they catch me, I'll say I stole your clothes while you were sleeping."

"That's not what I'm worried about. If they take you back, the next time they bring you here, it might be to end your life."

Gemma nodded, sadly. She leaned over and kissed Mackenzie. "Goodbye, Kenzie. You're sweet. I wish I were a person, and not a clone."

"Damn it, you *are* a person. This whole thing sucks." Mackenzie tightened his fist in anger and felt the wristwatch Alex had given him constricting his flesh.

"Yeah, I know it sucks," Gemma replied. "But there's nothing you can do about it."

Mackenzie stared at his wristwatch. He recalled his Spider-Man comic book motto: *With great power comes great responsibility*. Moments earlier, he had been prepared to use the watch to return to his own time, but now he wasn't ready to leave the future, fearful he would be abandoning Gemma to her doom. "Yes, there is. I'm helping you break out of this hospital. There's a whole city outside these walls and a bigger world beyond it, with plenty of places to hide."

Gemma pointed to the boy's T-shirt and blue jeans. "It'll be hard to hide in that retro outfit. No one dresses like that." She pulled a futuristic shirt and pair of pants from the

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closet and tossed them to Mackenzie. “We have to blend in, remember? If you’re coming with me, put these on.”

Mackenzie pulled his shirt over his head. “Turn around,” the bare-chested boy said.

Gemma smirked. “Seriously?”

The shy boy turned his back to the clone, as he changed into the modern outfit. *My father warned me there was no such thing as privacy in the future*, he thought, pulling up his pants. He transferred the contents of his jeans’ pockets into his new pants, and slipped the scrambler into his pants’ pocket. Mackenzie tucked Gramps’ diary into the larger pocket of the lightweight windbreaker. He took a final look around the hospital room. “Let’s go.”

Mackenzie pushed the door ajar and peered through the crack. “The elevator’s between here and the nurses’ station. They might not even see us.”

Gemma shook her head. “The elevators have cameras. Your scrambler may prevent them from recording us, but they’d still know we were inside from the sensors detecting our heat signatures. Hospital security would cut power to the elevator and trap us between floors. We’ll have to take the stairs.”

“That means walking past the nurses’ station. They’re bound to notice us.”

“Unless you distract them. The orderlies are looking for a girl. If you attract the nurses’ attention, I can sneak past the desk, into the stairwell.”

“Okay,” Mackenzie replied. “You’ll have to walk down nine flights by yourself, but then you’ll be free. You can

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disappear into a sea of faces on the streets outside. Good luck, Gemma.”

“Thanks, Kenzie. If this works, I’ll never forget you.”

Mackenzie walked into the corridor and approached the nurses’ station. “Have you got any video games?” he asked the two nurses at the desk. “There’s no TV in my room and I’m so bored...” He dropped to the floor, contorting in convulsions, like a fish out of water.

The nurses rushed around the desk to the flailing boy. “What’s wrong with you?” one asked.

“It looks like a seizure,” her companion replied. “I’ll ping the doctor on call.”

Gemma slipped out from Mackenzie’s room and dashed toward the stairwell. She tripped a sensor beam, and a camera whirled as it turned in her direction. Seconds later, three metallic spheres floated by. “Damn it!” she exclaimed. “Anti-gravity security bots.”

“DNA sequencing matches that of missing clone,” a voice emanated from one of the spheres. “Surrender or be electro-stunned.”

Gemma dropped to her knees and placed her hands behind her head. “I surrender.”

Mackenzie stopped his convulsions and looked up at the floating sentries. “So much for Plan A.” His gaze fell on an exoskeletal leg brace leaning against the wall. He grabbed it and swung it at a sphere. “He hits, he scores!” The sphere smashed into the wall before dropping helplessly to the floor.

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“Activating electro-stun rays,” one of the remaining spheres announced.

Mackenzie dodged a ray that shot from the sphere. He whacked the hovering device with the brace, disabling it.

“Are you crazy?” Gemma asked. “You can’t fight security bots.”

“This is no different from stickball... except here, the balls talk. After I knock this last one out of the park, we’re out of here.”

The final sphere shot an electro-stun ray at Mackenzie, but the scrambler caused it to miss the dodging boy. “Alert!” the sphere said. “Reinforcements to these coordinates immediately. Unidentifiable attacker utilizing cloaking device. Use whatever force necessary to subdue.”

“Missed me.” Mackenzie smacked the third sphere out of the air and raced to Gemma. “Come on, let’s get to the stairs.”

“It’s too late.” Gemma gestured at the dozen anti-gravity security bots flying down the hall toward them.

“Hold my arm.” Mackenzie turned the stems on the wristwatch. “If this works like my old pocket watch, I’ve just extended the chronal energy field around my body while slipping into Q-Time.”

Gemma shot him a quizzical glance. “What’s that mean in English?”

“I’ve frozen time around us. Or more technically, slowed it to a crawl.”

Gemma gazed about the hospital corridor. The nurses appeared frozen, like living statues, while the dozen security bots hung motionless in the air.

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“Now, we can go down the stairs unimpeded. When I unfreeze time, it’ll look to them as if we disappeared but we’ll have climbed down nine flights.”

“Your wristwatch can do that? Does it tell time, too?”

“Just stick to me like glue. If you move outside the chronal energy field, you’ll be sucked into real time.”

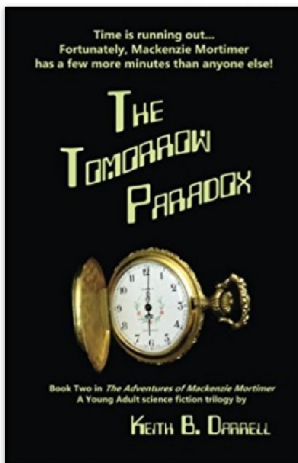
Gemma hugged him as they descended the stairwell. “No reboot, no worries!” She squeezed his backside. “Nice butt, by the way.”

Mackenzie blushed. “Are all clones like you?”

Raymond Mortimer poured himself a drink. He gazed out the window of his penthouse office, admiring the bright city lights that illuminated the night sky. “I realize you’re frightened, Alex. But you have to understand that I’m doing the right thing. Young Mackenzie cannot be allowed to go back to his time period. He already knows enough about his future to change our past.”

“But Grandfather, I’ve already changed the past by bringing him here. If we don’t return him, our timeline will be changed and I’ll cease to exist.”

“You’re still here, Alex. You haven’t altered the past; you’ve created a time paradox. It’s true that by bringing Mackenzie into the future while he was still a teenager, you prevented him from meeting and marrying your mother. But if you had truly changed the past, you wouldn’t exist for us to have this conversation. The fact that you are here, in this room, with me, right now, means you were born. That’s the nature of a temporal paradox.”



The Tomorrow Paradox (The Adventures of Mackenzie Mortimer, Book 2)

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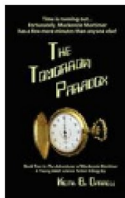
by Keith B. Darrell

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In *The 25th Hour*, we met Mackenzie Mortimer, a typical junior high geek. He's shy, awkward, a bit clumsy, late with his homework, and always late for class. There's never enough time to do everything he needs to do; after all, there are only 24 hours in a day. But when Mac finds his grandfather's pocket watch buried deep inside a trunk, he discovers his days have an extra hour. According to the eccentric inventor's journal, the pocket watch can add up to 60 minutes to a single day by freezing time around whomever holds the watch and presses its button. Now, in this sequel, Mackenzie's troubles are just beginning! With his pocket watch destroyed, Mac finds himself a stranger in a strange land, surrounded by familiar people he doesn't really know, with only Gemma, a 15-year-old clone, to guide him through the labyrinth of the future. Will the mysterious black, Iron key unlock the secrets to returning him home, or is it a harbinger of his impending doom?

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

KEITH B. DARRELL is a cross-genre author of short stories, novels, epics, and nonfiction. His work is available in softcover and hardcover from Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com; in e-book format from Amazon.com and Payhip.com; in audiobook format from Audible.com, as a digital download from VitalSource, and on his blog at KeithBDarrell.com.

Darrell studied journalism at Broward Community College, during which time he was awarded First Place for Best In-depth Reporting from the 28-school Florida Community College Press Association. He wrote numerous hard news stories for the BCC newspaper *The Phoenix*, and articles for *Silver Sands*, the BCC feature news magazine. He was later selected as editor of *Silver Sands* and the BCC *Orientations* magazine which afforded him experience in magazine layout. He earned his Bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Florida with a concentration in News-Editorial (news writing, editing, and photojournalism). He had newspaper internships with the *Gainesville Sun*, *High Springs Herald*, and *Alachua Herald*. He was also a freelance writer and photographer for the *Gainesville Sun*, and a writer for the *Emory Law Times* and the Georgia State University *Signal*. He has interviewed dozens of celebrities and politicians.

By age 24, Darrell had earned his A.A. from Broward Community College, his B.S. in Journalism from the University of Florida, his M.B.A. from Emory University, and his J.D. from the Emory University School of Law. He went on to become a member of the State Bar of Georgia and the Florida Bar. Darrell has held many positions as a reporter, advertising representative, entrepreneur, retail business owner, insurance agent, stockbroker, real estate

Author Biography

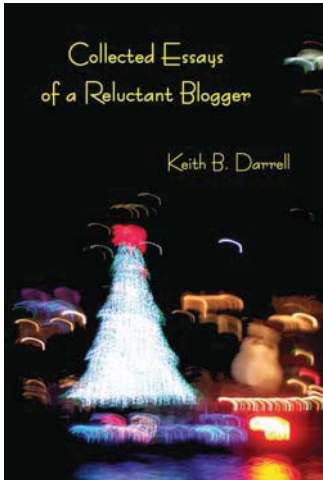
agent, Web designer, attorney, and author. In 2005, Darrell founded Amber Book Company and wrote its flagship title, *Issues in Internet Law: Society, Technology, and the Law*, which is now in its 10th edition and has been adapted as a textbook by colleges and universities worldwide. Darrell's legal articles have been published in **Securities Regulation Law Journal** and **JD/MBA Journal**.

Darrell's nonfiction books include: *Collected Essays of a Reluctant Blogger* (a collection of humorous anecdotes, philosophical musings, and insightful commentary on today's societal concerns derived from his blog at KeithBDarrell.com); *More Essays of a Reluctant Blogger*; *Putting Your Business on the Internet*; and *The Web Designer's Client Handbook*.

He has also written more than 70 short stories contained in four collections, *Randoms* (NIE Awards Finalist, 2009), *Careywood*, *Shards* (NIE Awards Finalist, 2013), and *Shards: The Omnibus Edition*; the *Halos & Horns* fantasy saga: *Paved with Good Intentions* (Book 1), *And a Child Shall Lead Them* (Book 2), *To Hell in a Handbasket* (Book 3), and *The Witches' Cauldron* (Book 4); and *The Halos & Horns Omnibus Edition* (a 904-page book consisting of the four-book series with 61 color illustrations, commentary, and the novelette, *The Pandora Chronicles*); the *Fangs & Fur* fantasy series (the spin-off series from *Halos & Horns* for vampire and werewolf fans) consisting of *Flashbacks* (Book 1), *Nightstalkers* (Book 2), and *Nosferatu, Inc.* (Book 3); *Cops and Robbers*; and the Young Adult science fiction trilogy, *The Adventures of Mackenzie Mortimer: The 25th Hour* (Book 1), *The Tomorrow Paradox* (Book 2), and *All the Time in the World* (Book 3).

Darrell's interests include his pets, photography, genealogy, art, literature, theater, old comic books, travel, and learning about different cultures and languages.

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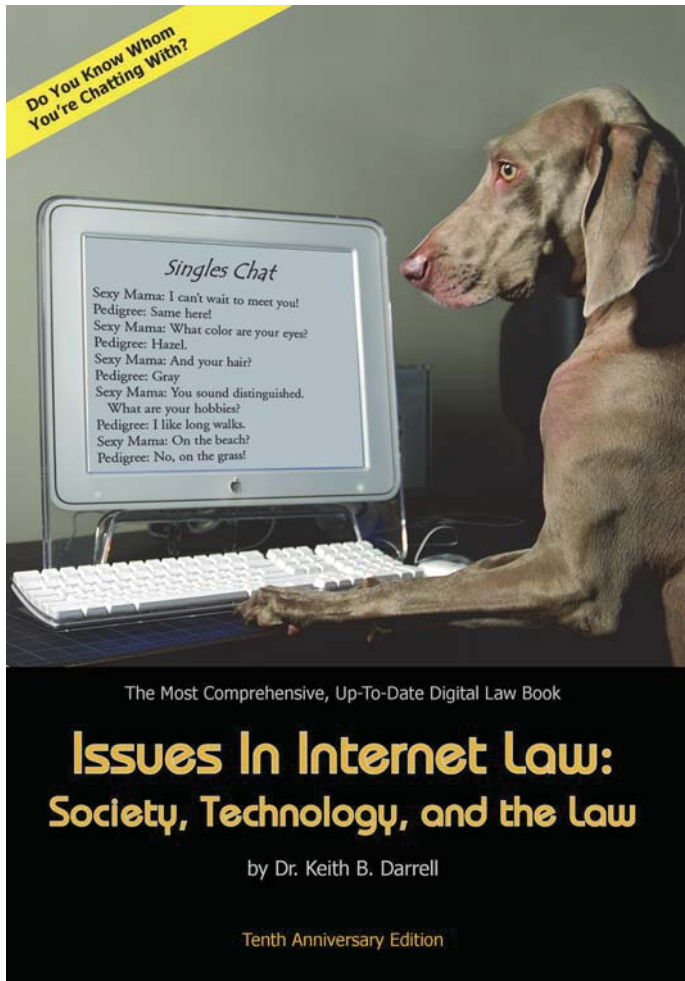
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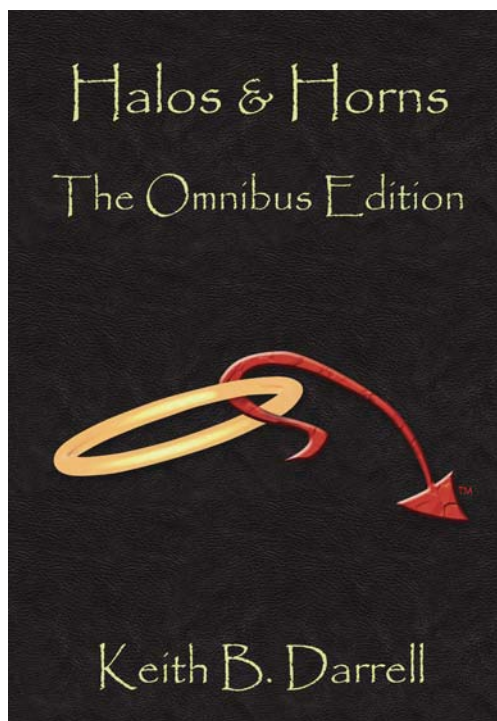
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The Halos & Horns Fantasy Saga

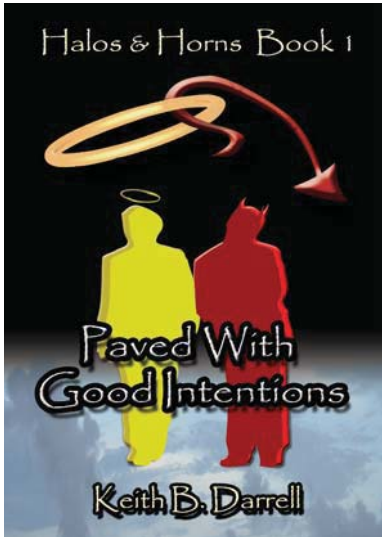
Exiled on Earth, naive angel Gabriel and amoral demon Lucifer, in the human guise of “Gabe Horn” and “Lou Cypher”, form an unlikely partnership as private investigators in Las Vegas. Their adventures take them across the seven heavenly realms, into the nine levels of Hell, through the dream realm of the Dreamscape, and even through time to Camelot. They encounter an assortment of the most imaginative characters in contemporary fantasy: dreamwalkers, golems, shapeshifters, vampires, werewolves, witches, and other supernatural creatures. Some of the vampires include Sharon — she’s Jewish, crosses don’t bother her; Pandora — trouble follows her like a shadow; Claude — he’s too claustrophobic to use a coffin; and Artemus — a 10-year-old boy who’s been a vampire for nearly 457 years; the corporate vampires of Nosferatu, Inc.; and the Skid Row “trampires”.

In Book 2, Gabe and Lou face the Dark Gods in their bid for domination of the multiverse. Ditzzy vampire Pandora is dating a werewolf, while speculation abounds over whether Lou or the warlock Mordred is the father of resident witch Samantha's baby. But now that the ancient, child-devouring succubus Lilith walks the Earth once more, how long can Samantha's infant or the other supernatural children — Emma the Cockney witchling; Siofra, the Irish changeling; Asabi, the African emere; Kaya, the Japanese hypnalis; and Artemus, the boy vampire — survive?

In Book 3, the angel Gabe Horn and demon Lou Cypher question their roles, as each embarks on a personal journey to discover his humanity, leading Gabriel to search for answers in the most unlikely of places. As Samantha ponders his proposal, Lucifer finds himself a reluctant ruler. Irish changeling Siofra adjusts to life hiding from Alaric in Japan with the ingénue Kaya, unaware of the girl's deadly secret. A familiar figure rises from obscurity to seize the reins of power at Nosferatu, Inc., while Morgana le Fay seeks vengeance for the fate of her son, Mordred.

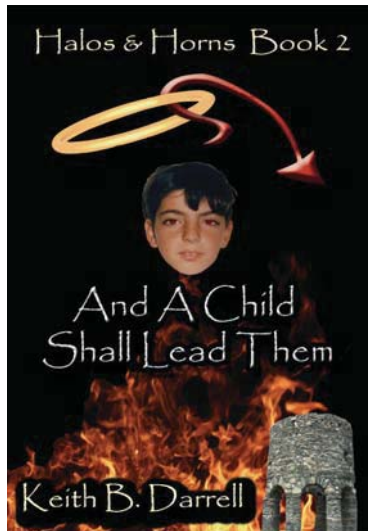
In Book 4, the angel Gabriel and the demon Asmodeus fight for their lives against usurper Baphomet and his demonic horde in his bid to take dominion of Hell; Lucifer faces judgment before the Eternals for murder; and Samantha Twitch joins forces with her sisters, witches Drusilla and Calliope, against the sorceress supreme Morgana le Fay and her Dark Fae minions. An attack on Nosferatu, Inc.'s Japanese headquarters by the Empusae, ancient vampiric demons, not only threatens Lady Chiyoko's territory, but will change the young hypnalis Kaya's life forever. Meanwhile, one character must journey back in time to 17th century Salem in search of the secret to defeating Morgana le Fay. But what other secrets does the Salem coven hold? No one is safe. As the *Halos & Horns* saga draws to its conclusion, who will survive?

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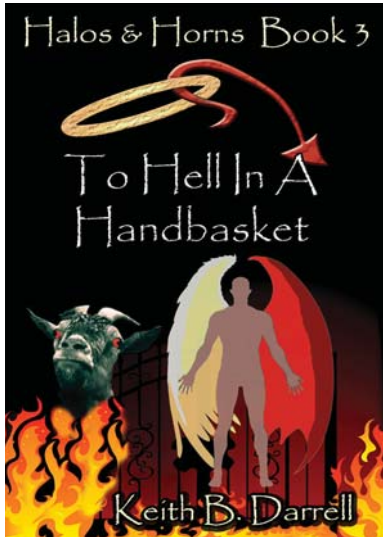
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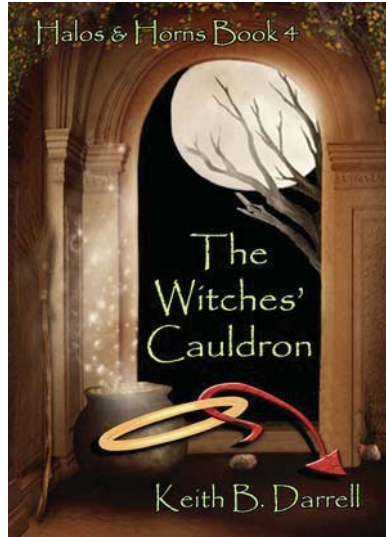
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THE FANGS & FUR FANTASY SAGA



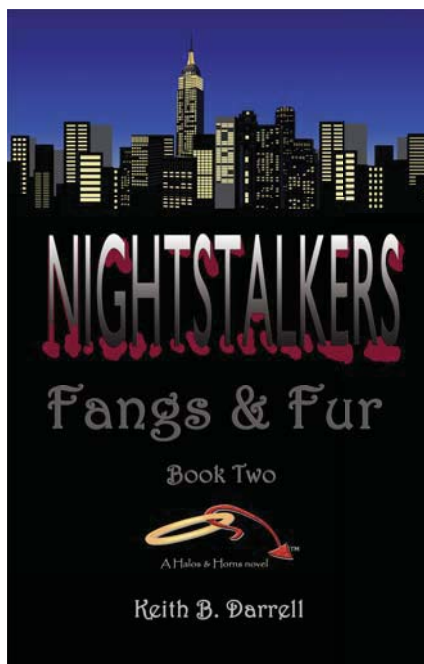
Pandora's a carefree party girl who just happens to be a vampire. With her best friend Sharon Mordecai, a hybrid vampire; her boyfriend Cody Fenris, a werewolf; and Cody's sister Lupe, who transforms into a wolf, they run Nightstalkers, Inc., a private detective agency. Pandora and Sharon also belong to Nosferatu, Inc., a worldwide corporation set up to provide relocation services for vampires, who cannot remain

in one place indefinitely, lest the "breathers" question why they never age. Other Nosferatu members include 10-year-old Artemus, the boy vampire; ex-KGB operative Valentina Petrovna; the maladroit, claustrophobic vampire Claude Gauthier; the vagrant "trampire" Seamus Callaghan; and the corporation's international board of directors: Lady Chiyoko in Japan, Callum in Australia, Isra in Dubai, Amadi in Africa, Magda in Hungary, and its CEO, the mysterious human known only as Remick.

First introduced in the *Halos & Horns* fantasy saga, these vampires and lycanthropes have their own stories to tell. These tales in *Flashbacks* shed light on their dark pasts while sowing the seeds for the next two books in the *Fangs & Fur* trilogy. They can be enjoyed as individual vampire and werewolf stories, or read by *Halos & Horns* fans to learn more about the characters populating that saga, or viewed as the prologue to the story about to unfold in the *Fangs & Fur* trilogy.

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THE FANGS & FUR FANTASY SAGA



When a Grigori unwittingly entrusts trouble-prone vampire Pandora with an ancient leather-bound box containing primordial evil, what could possibly go wrong? At least Pandora doesn't know her best friend slept with her boyfriend. Or that her werewolf beau has been targeted for revenge by one of his victims. Her BFF Sharon — the hybrid vampire infused with an angelic life force — has enough to worry

about now that a deranged scientist/occultist is creating his own Frankenstein monster and requires an angelic life force to animate it. He's resurrected the spirit of Jack the Ripper to supply the body parts he needs from Las Vegas prostitutes. Should Kennedy be worried to walk the city streets?

After a Valkyrie whisks the Nightstalkers, Inc. team of private eyes — vampires Sharon and Pandora, and lycanthrope siblings Cody and Lupe Fenris — off to the Otherworld dimension of the Fae to recover Thor's golden gauntlets from the Dark Fae's leader, the Morrigan, the team will be forever changed. And how does that tie in with their new landlord Kitty Bast, an Egyptian cat goddess?

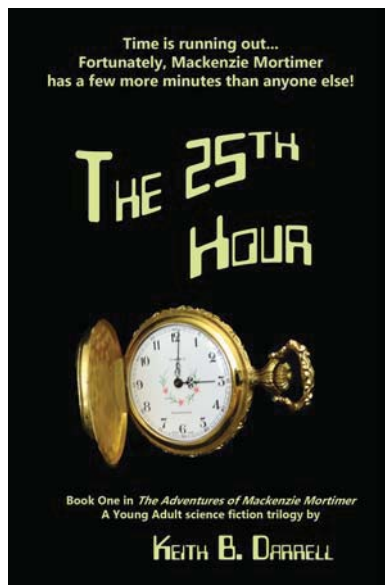
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THE ADVENTURES OF MACKENZIE MORTIMER

BOOK ONE

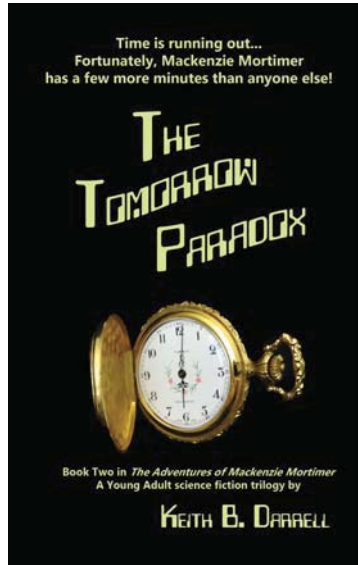


Mackenzie Mortimer is a typical junior high geek: shy, awkward, late with his homework, and always late for class. He's never got enough time to do everything he needs; after all, there are only 24 hours in a day. But when Mac finds his grandfather's pocket watch, he discovers his days have an extra hour. The eccentric inventor's journal reveals the watch can add up to 60 minutes to a single day by freezing time around whomever controls it. Marlene Prentice is Mac's best friend, but he's clueless the tomboy has a crush on him. Mac only has eyes for foxy Vanessa Carlyle, daughter of the town's richest man. When a crisis looms for Mac and his friends, time is running out... but fortunately, Mackenzie Mortimer has a few more minutes than anyone else.

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THE ADVENTURES OF MACKENZIE MORTIMER
Book Two



Time is running out... fortunately, Mackenzie Mortimer has a few more minutes than anyone else.

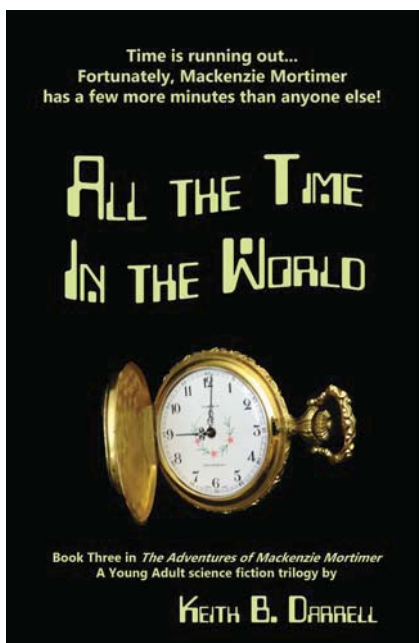
Mackenzie Mortimer's troubles are just beginning! With his pocket watch destroyed, Mackenzie finds himself a stranger in a strange land, surrounded by familiar people he doesn't really know, with only Gemma, a 15-year-old clone, to guide him through the labyrinth of the future. Will the mysterious black, iron key unlock the secrets to returning him home, or is it a harbinger of his impending doom?

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THE ADVENTURES OF MACKENZIE MORTIMER

BOOK THREE



Mac has left Gramps' diary behind in the future and Victoria Carmichael's ex-husband, Jeremy Bentaine, has stolen it along with Gramps' journals. Now, Bentaine Industries seeks to be the sole possessor of time travel technology... and that means eliminating Mackenzie Mortimer before he discovers the pocket watch! But Mac has followed Gramps' trail to WWII Nazi-occupied Belgium, where he must use his future technology to stay alive, locate Gramps, and unite a pair of star-crossed lovers. The horrors of WWII that Mac encounters will change him forever, but if the Bentaine family has its way, forever will be a very short time for Mackenzie Mortimer!

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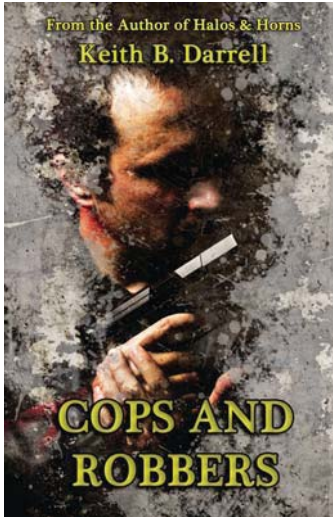
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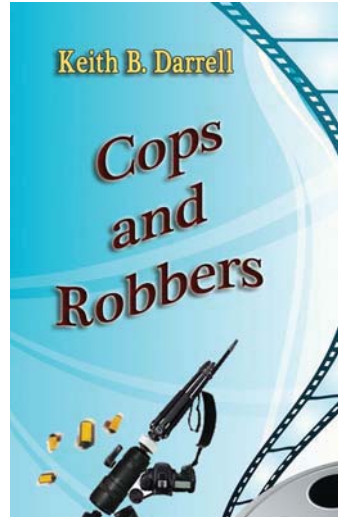
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COPS AND ROBBERS



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A pair of FBI agents set up a bogus movie production as part of an unlikely sting operation to snare a mob kingpin. They buy the worst script in Hollywood and hire a failed movie producer whose career is on the skids; a third-rate aging actress whose claim to fame is having performed Shakespeare... on a cruise ship; an amphetamine-enhanced screenwriter; a hooker; a Yiddish-speaking accountant; a black, flaming gay actor; and a Native American actor who insists on dressing like an Old West dime store Indian.

However, throughout the course of the film, the mobsters and one of the FBI agents become so enamored by the glitter and glamour of Hollywood that they actually end up working together to try to make the movie a success. Our hero is a hitman in search of the redemption he doesn't believe he deserves. He realizes the fake film was never meant to be produced and develops a conscience believing it's wrong to allow the innocent actors and film crew to spend months of their lives working on a movie no one will ever see, despite the delusions of everyone else involved. Knowing their hopes and dreams will be dashed, our hero sets about trying to do the right thing.