THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUPERNATURAL



BRYNNE LARSON

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I would like to dedicate this book to my family:

Dad, Mom, Brooke, Brielle and Mimi.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight.

—from the Preface to *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis

Acknowledgments

This book wouldn't have been possible without my father and mother. Also, I would like to give a big thank-you to Destiny Image Publishers for giving me the chance to share my story as a first-time author. It was an honor to work with all of you.

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Foreword

By Tess and Savannah Scherkenback

Today's millennial generation lacks an authentically biblical understanding of the consequences that befall those who dabble in the occult. The result of not having healthy spiritual boundaries has been detrimental to many, culminating in shattered lives and lost souls. As the eldest daughter of the world's foremost exorcist, Rev. Bob Larson, Brynne Larson has witnessed first-hand the treacherous snares of the devil. Her mission in this book is to reveal the evil strongholds present in pop culture and to educate youth to be wary of the paranormal. This book also provides an understanding of spiritual warfare and the hidden dangers of the dark side of the supernatural.

As two of Brynne Larson's closest friends and companions, with a mutual interest in spiritual warfare, we have battled demonic forces alongside Brynne. In all of our experiences together we have recognized that the commitment and compassion demonstrated by Brynne is extraordinary for a young woman. Her faith has impacted thousands of lives and inspired young people around the world to take up the cause of spiritual freedom. As a powerful warrior for the Lord, Brynne takes a stand for her generation by constantly battling for the truths of God's kingdom.

Tess and Savannah Scherkenback, also known with Brynne as the internationally recognized "Teenage Exorcists."

Introduction

A cold chill came over the room, as if an evil presence had arrived.

Across from me sat Allie, a sweet eighteen-year-old girl from Indiana, who had been crying a few minutes ago. Now she sat glaring, her eyes full of hate. A deep, angry voice growled from her throat, "You can't have her, she's mine." Sitting at my side, my two best friends Tess and Savannah exchanged troubled glances. What had started out as a simple prayer session with Allie had suddenly taken a more sinister turn. We realized that there was more going on than simple boyfriend troubles.

Thankfully, Tess, Savannah, and I had run into this type of thing before. We were determined to find out who the voice belonged to and what it was doing inside of Allie. We asked some questions and discovered that a year earlier, Allie had gone to a witch doctor to put a curse on her cheating boyfriend. It seemed at the time that the curse had worked, because just a couple of days after, Allie's ex-boyfriend broke up with the girl with whom he had betrayed Allie's trust. Allie had thought that everything would go back to normal, but (no surprise to us), it had not.

Allie had dabbled with the supernatural. She had gone outside of the natural world to try to fix her problem. But with that kind of experimentation, there is always a cost. Ever since she went to the witch doctor, Allie had been tormented by malevolent thoughts. She suffered vicious nightmares, and her friends noticed that her behavior had changed drastically. She had gone to psychics, had her palm read, and tried using an Ouija Board, longing for some relief, but things only got worse. Now she was struggling with depression and thoughts of suicide.

Desperate, she came to us in a last-ditch effort to get help from the personal hell that she had landed in. Tess, Savannah, and I have a special skill set certainly not normally associated with teenagers. We know how to cast out demons. In fact, we have trained since the age of sixteen in the spiritual art of fighting the forces of darkness. When I say casting out demons, I don't mean that we do Hollywood-esque horror-movie-style exorcisms with spinning heads and levitating bodies. I'm talking about downin-the-trenches spiritual warfare, facing real demons who are in real people.

The three of us have looked into the face of true evil. We've battled Satan and his minions, and we've learned a thing or two about the dark side of the real supernatural world out there.

As Allie's story developed, it became clear what Satan's plan was. When she had gone to that witch doctor to put a curse on her ex, she had unknowingly opened up a spiritual door. There is a real supernatural world—we can't see it, but it's real. The supernatural realm is a world of angels and demons, God and Satan. Once someone decides to delve into it and opens a door into that world, they find that the door is extraordinarily hard to close. And, worst of all, it can allow demons to come into the person's life.

Allie had opened up that door by seeking a solution from the occult side of the supernatural realm. She didn't realize that she had gone to Satan for help. Just because Allie didn't realize her error did not mean that she got a free pass; she suffered serious repercussions from her actions. Unintentionally, she had allowed Satan into her life, and he was tormenting her. That's one of Satan's biggest weapons: a lack of knowledge. He counts on people mistakenly stumbling to him for help then falling into his seemingly benign spiritual traps, all because they "didn't know." The Old Testament prophet Hosea proclaimed, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you...Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4:6). God doesn't allow us to simply do whatever we want just because we don't "know" that it's wrong. He has made his precepts clear, and we don't have an excuse for ignorance when it comes to spiritual matters. Playing around with the supernatural is no game or laughing matter. It's serious and can have lifelong consequences.

People like Allie are the reason I do what I do. In order to bring spiritual healing and freedom, I have learned about the supernatural, about angels and demons, and how to cast out demons. I have learned that when you sin against God by going to a witch doctor, hating or vengefully injuring another person, or dabbling in the occult, it opens a spiritual door to the supernatural side and allows all kinds of unwanted junk into your life. The best way to prevent that from happening is to educate yourself about the realities of the supernatural world. You need to learn how easy it is to fall prey to one of Satan's traps.

As we worked with Allie, she began to understand just what her actions had actually wrought. It took a while, but we were able to discover how the demons had gotten into her, then we broke the curses that she had inadvertently put on herself. This time, we broke the curse of witchcraft, because Allie had dabbled in sorcery. We also broke the curse of unforgiveness toward her boyfriend.

When we tried to break those curses all hell broke loose. The witchcraft turned out to be the demonic stronghold. The chief demon, called Witchcraft, wasn't going to sit idly by while his stronghold was broken. Screaming and thrashing about, the demons in Allie tried to keep her from breaking the curse. It was a long fight and it took hours, but finally the demons surrendered. The curse of witchcraft was broken on Allie's life. Since that time, she has grown stronger in the Lord and avoided every kind of occult activity.

People like Allie don't usually decide on a whim to visit a witch doctor to cast a potent spell. There is hardly ever an isolated supernatural incident in a person's life. People usually develop an interest or fascination with the supernatural, and this curiosity is both encouraged and cultivated by the times we live in. There is a strong pull to the supernatural; it represents seemingly endless possibilities, power, and an entrée to the vast unknown. The true cost of such explorations is not always seen. As darker supernatural ideas become more "mainstream," people like Tess, Savannah, and me are becoming more concerned.

If we are not for God, then we are against Him (see Matthew 12:30). Satan is looking to entice people away from God and His goodness. He wants to lure them away with the promise of something supernatural. But his version of supernaturalism is only a dark shadow of what God created the supernatural world to be.

We are all on one side or the other; there is no in between when it comes to spiritual matters. A battle is underway, a fight for the hearts and minds of humanity. The battle between good and evil, heaven and hell, God and Satan, has been raging ever since Creation. This battle is not one of fairy tales or fanciful imagination, but a real battle, with casualties on both sides.

And that's why I do what I do. It's why I keep training to learn how to fight spiritual warfare. Playing around with the supernatural is like playing with fire, and those of us who do this work can help the victims who have gotten too close to its bright flame. The paranormal, occult world is real, the supernatural war is real, and the misery and pain are real. The good news is that God is greater than anything, and His healing and freedom are real, too.

I invite you to catch a glimpse of my world, a world of good vs. evil, epic spiritual battles, and a real God and a real Satan. Turn the following pages to explore with me. Let's get rid of our whitewashed misconceptions as we unmask the dark side.

CHAPTER 1



The Demon That Opened the Door

None of us does this kind of work alone. I'm part of a team. Tess and Savannah are my best friends. They are also sisters, although they are as different as night and day, and the three of us work very well together, balancing each other out. They love classic movies and singing, while I can barely screech out a Happy Birthday song and prefer reading. We met at my local martial arts *dojo*, where the three of us were training for our black belts in tae kwon do. We became friends, and one day I invited them to witness what my family has been doing for more than thirty years.

My father, the Reverend Bob Larson, has been in the public eye for decades. I've traveled with dad all over the world, from China and Africa to Australia and England. I always sat in the front row as I watched Dad work with people who were struggling with demons. I grew up seeing him cast out demons and from a very early age I knew that there was a spiritual realm we couldn't see, but it was nevertheless very real.

Still, while I thought that doing exorcisms and deliverance was really cool, I didn't see how it applied to me. I thought, "Sure, this stuff is real and amazing, but hey, I'm just a kid, why should I worry about all of that?" That outlook drastically changed on my sixteenth birthday.

You see, before there was Allie, there was Katie. My sweet sixteen birthday started off in a pretty normal way. We had cake, presents, games, and swimming—just the average teenage birthday party. One of my best friends, Katie, who had moved a couple states away, flew in to attend my party. We've been best friends for as long as I can remember. We grew up together, and she had become a godly young woman. But somehow in the year that we had been apart, she'd changed. As we chatted late that night, I found out that that she had turned her back on God and had gotten involved with the wrong crowd. As a result, she had done some pretty bad things. I prayed with her and led her back to God, and she repented and recommitted her life to Him.

Satan didn't like that, and immediately Katie started acting really strange. Because of the things she had done and the doors she had opened, the devil had been given a right to come into her life. Throughout the next day, Katie was not the Katie that I knew. She was vague, distant, and uncomprehending. Her eyes had a glassy look, and I could barely talk with her. She complained about a killer headache. There was something dark going on. You could sense the evil and spiritual turmoil. Tess and I decided to pray with her, and that's when it—the demon—spoke to us. As we sat quietly praying with her, she looked up at me, and I didn't see Katie in her eyes. *I saw evil*. And then it whispered through her, "You can't have her, she belongs to me." Tess and I were startled—a demon in my best friend was not what we were expecting.

I quickly called Dad on my cell (he was ministering in another city), and he walked us through how to cast out the demon inside Katie. She got back on a plane that day and headed home. Providentially, my dad happened to be in the very city where Katie and her family lived. He met with them immediately and proceeded to clean up the entire family spiritually. As it turned out, they had been suffering from a generational curse that had affected them and their ancestors for hundreds of years.

Freedom came to Katie and her family, and now she is planning to go to China as a missionary. Meanwhile, Tess and I developed a plan. We now saw with stunning clarity how applicable deliverance is in everyone's life. My best friend had a demon. Quite likely others that I knew were suffering in the same way, and I hadn't noticed it before. I realized that I would be running into situations like this all of my life, and that I had a choice: I could either learn all that I could about spiritual warfare, or I could ignore what had happened with Katie and go on with my life. For me, the decision was pretty clear, and Tess and Savannah shared my inclination. So we asked someone experienced in deliverance if he would start training us on how to do exorcisms.

The Teenage Exorcists

He was reluctant at first. We were, after all, only teenagers. And exorcisms can be dangerous. But we persisted and eventually he agreed to start training us. For the next year, we met every week and soaked up all that we could on world religions, the occult, the supernatural, curses, and demons. We trained hard and committed ourselves to learning all that we could. If we came across another demon, we would be ready. Fortunately, we had a great teacher.

The man who taught us everything we know is my dad, Bob Larson, pastor, author, TV and radio host who has cast out thousands of demons during more than three decades of ministry. He has become one of the world's foremost experts on the occult, supernatural sphere. He has poured hours of one-on-one training into us. As far back as I can remember, Dad has always been in the public eye, with reporters and journalists contacting him for information about what he does and the evil that pervades our society today. Now, my father, who has spent more time learning and teaching spiritual warfare than perhaps anyone alive, was our very own, personal instructor. It doesn't get any better than that and we relished every moment he spent with us.

One day, my father was talking to a reporter from *Fabulous Magazine* (a huge online magazine in London, England), and he was asked who else did exorcisms. "Well" Dad said, "My daughter and her friends do!" Of course the journalist was shocked. How could three teenage girls be casting out demons? He asked to talk with us and to write a story for *Fabulous Magazine*. We agreed and were happy to share with the reporter about our training and what God was doing in our lives.

When the story came out, it made waves. News website after news website picked up the story, and before we knew it, we were an internet sensation. Journalists and reporters contacted us from all over the world. I was shocked at the reaction. When I googled my name, I got pages and pages of articles, blogs, photos, and videos of myself, whereas before I would have gotten nothing. I was completely unprepared for the interest that had been generated. I would never have imagined how fascinated the world would be by what we do. We were teenagers, we were female, and we were exorcists. That was a lot more than some could handle, especially some very unkind Christians. Then our world made another lurch. World-famous journalist and television personality Anderson Cooper contacted us. He had just launched a new daytime talk show and wanted to feature us on nationwide TV before millions of people! This invitation proved to be a defining moment in my life, a moment when I had to face a make-or-break decision that would forever alter my life.

Anderson wanted the three of us girls and my dad to come on the show to talk about what we do. The production company flew us up to New York and put us up in a nice hotel, where we had several celebrity sightings. They had a hair and make-up crew waiting for us when we got to the studio. We were over the moon; things couldn't get any cooler than being in New York, about to go on the Anderson show and having our hair and make-up done by professionals. However, the stars in our eyes quickly dimmed when we got onstage.

We walked out in front of a live audience and made our way up to the couches. Right before Anderson came out, another group of people joined us onstage. We didn't know who they were, but we shortly found out, as the show developed into an attack piece. We were grossly misrepresented and ridiculed. We were told that instead of helping people with real problems we should go volunteer at a dog shelter or something. We were not given any time to talk except to answer a few questions that were designed to put a negative spin on the interview. Then we were attacked by a strange no-name preacher who got up and started acting like a lunatic. The audience was even cued to start applauding whenever something nasty was said about us.

When the director finally said "Cut!" and we walked off the stage in a daze, we didn't know quite what to make of what had just happened. Of course we knew that people would have questions, and we knew that not everyone would believe what we said. But we hadn't expected the mockery and questioning of our brains, faith, and faculties. We hadn't expected the low blows and cynicism. We were told to stop what we were doing, to not challenge the status quo by doing something bold for Christ. Anderson Cooper basically told us to play nice, and to go back to whatever crazy hole we had crawled out of because we were fakes and frauds. All of this happened, of course, on national television.

Backstage, the producer of the show apologized, saying she had no clue what was going to happen. We were more than a little stunned. This was the first real hit, and it hurt. We packed up and headed home.

On the plane we all had some serious thinking to do. We were taking a controversial and uncomfortable stand, and part of me wanted to stop. All of my friends would see this report on TV. Maybe we should do something less controversial. But another part of me wanted to keep going. There are so many misconceptions about spiritual warfare, and for some reason, people listen to us. Anderson had called us fakes and frauds, but I knew better. I knew that this was something God wanted me to do. I knew in my gut that I had to keep going, to keep training. It wasn't the most popular choice, and I knew that I would lose friends and be mocked, but if God was calling me to do it, how could I say no? How could I turn my back on all the people who need help? How could I ignore God's calling just because of a few critics?

One thing that I have learned already is that if I'm not facing opposition, if the devil is not trying to stop me, then I must be doing something wrong. We agreed together on that plane that we would be stronger, train harder, and ignore the voices of critics who would try to tear us down. Even though Anderson Cooper's show was a difficult situation, remarkable good came out of it. Looking back, I wouldn't change a thing. Yes, we were challenged; it was ugly and mean, but I came out stronger than ever. I became more determined to share the truth of what God can do through an ordinary young woman like me.

Even though we didn't see it right away, great things came out of the actual show, too. Afterwards, we had been asked to share our thoughts on a backstage cam. Through those four uninterrupted minutes, we were able to tell the viewers the things that we weren't able to say on the show. We shared our hearts and defended ourselves to tens of thousands of people. And, more importantly, people came to us to get help specifically because they had seen us on Anderson's show. Being able to help even one person out of the misery of years of spiritual oppression is worth all of the sarcastic comments in the world.

Back home, as we sat down to watch the show, which had been taped, some of my friends showed up at the house unexpectedly. They watched the show with us, and then they got up and left without a word. I was surprised and a little hurt. We had just taken a beating on national television, and I expected my Christian friends to support me. There was no support...and that's OK. It took a while to come to this point, but the truth is, I don't need the world's approval, I need only God's. That's not to say that I'm some sort of iron wall. When people are nasty and say awful things about me and to me, it hurts. When I lose friends because they don't like what I do, it hurts; but I believe that is a very small price to pay for the freedom of thousands of people. If what I do is easy, then everyone would want to do it.

Anderson Cooper was the first big bump in the road, but he helped Tess, Savannah, and I make our decision. We were in it for the long haul. We were now officially the Teenage Exorcists!

None of us magically started at the point of being able to face demons fearlessly. It took hours of hard work and studying and practice. As our public profile grew, in large part due to media interest (*Good Morning America, Nightline, Inside Edition*, and others) more and more people started hearing about what we were doing and many of them came to us for help. We met so many wonderful people with breathtaking stories.

Lights, Camera, Action

In the midst of all of this, we got an interesting offer. A TV production company contacted us, because they wanted to film a reality TV show that featured Tess, Savannah, and me. After talking it over, we agreed. I had always thought that filming would be fun and exciting. I didn't count on the hours of waiting around in the killer Arizona heat. I also didn't count on the difficulty of balancing friends, activities, two jobs, and school. Not only did the crews want to film the most important part of what we do, the exorcisms, but they also wanted to film us doing normal, everyday stuff. They shot us hanging out at the mall, doing karate, and horseback riding. We filmed for several weeks to create a pilot for the project, and I have never been so exhausted. Being on camera is grueling work. And then doing exorcisms on top of that was even more taxing physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

A typical day's schedule had me getting up early, putting on camera make-up and doing my hair (which I hate doing) and then running off to a filming location. Our cars were packed full of changes of clothing and enough beauty products to put Dolly Parton to shame. We would film for a couple of hours, and then I would run off to work a shift at my job or attend class, and then we would reconvene to shoot some more. We did have fun filming; we usually got rewarded with food and gelato which, of course, was consumed in front of the camera. We also had to do things over and over again in order to get different camera shots. One time the production company took us to our favorite mall to film us shopping, and they made us go up and down the escalator about fifteen times. Then, we had to do the same thing in the glass elevator. By the time we were done a small crowd had gathered to watch and we hurried off to the next location before we could catch a breath.

Another time we had to put on heels and walk back and forth on a dusty, unpaved road until they could get the shot in the right lighting. Then we would head over to a church to do exorcisms, working until the wee hours of the night, ministering to anyone who had demons and needed help. People flew in from all over the world to receive ministry, and we saw some spectacular things.

One of the most common questions that the girls and I ran into was: "You're so young, are you really mature enough psychologically and spiritually for this kind of work?" I think the people who ask these questions have these images in their heads of the three of us girls sitting in a room with a crazy person as we try to sort out mental issues. This is hardly the case. It's true, the girls and I are not health professionals with a Ph.D. in psychology. But since when do you need to have a doctorate to reach out to someone who is hurting and offer hope and comfort?

Tess, Savannah, and I are trained to deal with demons and inner healing, not mental health issues. And we don't attempt to do so. We never interfere with the treatment of a patient and we don't try to fix mental health problems. However, if there is a demon, the girls and I know what to do with that. Casting out demons is spiritual warfare. You don't have to be a psychologist to face down a demon and send it packing to hell. And the girls and I never cast out demons alone, we always have knowledgeable help nearby in the form of my dad and other experienced adults. It is also insulting to insinuate that someone who has demons automatically is mentally incompetent. We have worked with doctors, lawyers, psychologists, teachers and pastors. These are highly intelligent and educated people who are by no means crazy or mentally ill. Demons do not equal mental illness.

I believe that allowing an exorcism to be filmed accomplishes several things. First, it is a witness to those who don't know God, a testament to the power of God. Second, it is three young women being an example to others. Third, it lets people know that hope and help are available (while showing the dangers of messing around with the supernatural), and it reaches people who could never be reached otherwise. By this time, my friends and I were getting to be pretty proficient at conducting exorcisms. We started doing more media appearances, both in the United States and overseas. Top international news stations picked up our story. We did stories with *National Geographic*, *Globo Brazil, 60 Minutes Australia, Good Morning America,* German and French television, and numerous print articles. We faced down the toughest, most cynical journalists. We had to have an answer ready for all challenges to our beliefs and actions. To be sure, it was not easy, but it proved to be very important to be forced to think through everything that we believed to make sure that it lined up with Scripture.

Through it all, I tried to keep my head. I had my Bible studies every day. I stayed in touch with friends and family, and I tried my hardest to lead a normal life. I would escape to ride my horse or head to a bookstore for a little bit, just to get some quiet time. While all of the exorcism training and media appearances were important, I also had to keep up with my schoolwork and activities. But it was worth it all.

I was becoming, whether I had planned it or not, a spiritual culture warrior. I realized I had been called by God to stand out from the crowd and openly battle the evil that was harming so many of my peers. I started to understand more deeply the serious spiritual problems that saturate the society I live in. Today's culture has been inundated with witchcraft and occult spirituality which has helped to open the door to exploring the supernatural. The media and entertainment industry have been flooded with supernatural-themed books, TV shows, and movies. Witchcraft, occultism, vampirism, and Satanism are more popular than ever. People have always been curious about the supernatural realm, but now the door to the supernatural world has been thrown wide open. Too many people are walking through that door without a clue of what could be waiting on the other side.

People need to know and understand the truth about the unseen spiritual domain. They need to know that there are real consequences for messing around with the dark side of the supernatural. So, along with Tess and Savannah, I am spreading the word. This is why I take on the forces of darkness. I do it for God and for the thousands out there who are lost, who don't even know what they are doing is wrong. I want to stop the heartbreak and pain before it starts, before the enemy has a foothold in their lives.



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