

A full-page background image featuring a man dressed as a gladiator. He wears a black, pointed helmet with a flame-like pattern, a brown leather cape, and a brown loincloth. He is holding a large, blood-stained sword. The background is dark with faint, glowing eyes and a large, bright flame behind the man's head.

Guy S. Stanton III

# The Way

*Book 1*  
*Fire Prophets*

# THE WAY

Book 1

of

Fire Prophets

Guy S. Stanton, III

# Words of Action

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Book 1: *The Way*

Book 2: *The Truth, Coming Soon*

Book 2: *The Life, Coming Soon*

## **Non-series Books**

*The Kingdom*

*Fallen Ambitions*

# Table of Contents

[End of an Era](#)

[The Will To Live](#)

[To War!!!](#)

[Ancient Hatred](#)

[A Divine Calling](#)

[Whispering Leaves](#)

[Male's End](#)

[Dominion](#)

[On the Mountain](#)

[Winged Savagery](#)

[A Father's Blessing](#)



# The Way of Eloah

—

*Dedicated to my Fans. You're the  
best and  
I appreciate every last one of you!*

*Here's a special shout out to my  
friend Tony. There are those  
moments in life when one job just  
doesn't pay the bills and so it was  
that I found myself remodeling a  
dairy milking parlor after regular  
working hours with my best friend.  
It was there in that milking parlor  
somewhere between the hours of  
7pm and 12am over a series of  
nights that saw much laughter,  
serious conversation and honest*

*hard work that the idea for Fire  
Prophets was first conceived.  
Thanks Tony!*

## Chapter One

# End of an Era

“Tell me Sayul do you think your son will remember you?”

The flames crackled with intensity as the searing heat rose along with the lust of the rapacious need of the fire to consume more of the wood stacked against the stake that Sayul was bound to. He no longer twisted to be free of his bonds, but with a stony expression he stood still as the flames rose higher even as the skin of his legs felt the burn of the rising heat.

Begrudgingly he spoke, “It matters not Ryntal. My son is in Jehovah’s keeping. I worry not for his future, but you should! What has been foretold will come to be again!”

“You speak of old fables, fool. The time of the prophets has long since come and gone. You, a warrior of the Fire Spirit, should know this and yet here you are aflame!” Ryntal threw back his head and laughed as with a combusting woof of intensity flames soared into the night sky completely engulfing the stake that Sayul was bound to.

Sayul was not the only one set ablaze in the night. Many other stakes had long since been set ablaze and yet, his would not be the last as there was nothing to stop the rule of the Dolerian Auranto now that the last army of the resistance

lay decimated upon the field of a once prosperous stretch of farmland, now forever stained by the blood of martyrs united against a collaboration of tyranny that stretched the length of all the seven lands of the world of Walenthyana.

The Roalain Plains, once known as the Land of the Light, had now become a byword for darkness as the last hopes of a people holding on to the old ways were extinguished one by one like torches in the night. Ryntal looked out over a wasteland of burnt crosses and felt deep satisfaction. No more would the Dolerian High Council have their plans held in check because of the meddling of the warriors of Roalain as even now, the last one of any noteworthiness was nothing but a fiery halo in the gathering darkness of night.

Ryntal turned about euphorically as the eminence of the moment of success swept through him. A sense of giddiness at the reward promised to him by the masters of his fate swept through him so strongly that it was with dismay that he heard the sharply exclaimed warnings issuing forth from the gathered throng of killers that stood about the grisly scene of a brave man's death.

Hand on his sword he turned only to be knocked over by a mass of flame. The figure wreathed in flames spoke, with a will that would not die, smoke peeled away at his words as a hand bathed in the pressed upon flames of his enemies clutched Ryntal's throat savagely even as the words of a father rang out in foreknowledge beyond the knowing of the sorcerers of the High Council, "My

son has a story! Mark it well and tell the others! You will never see the last of our kind, son of hell!”

With a pained cry of fright and intense agony Ryntal shoved forcefully and the body of the last fire warrior catapulted away and then slipped over the edge to tumble down the slopes of the Gorge of Aratana. In anxiousness of fear Ryntal crawled forward to peer over the edge and watched as the man aflame tumbled downward bouncing off boulder and tree alike even as his passage set the hill on fire.

As Ryntal watched a breeze caught the dry grass of the slope fully alight and with a vengeful crackle it roared upwards and shot over the edge of the plateau. Men and their half human counterparts fell back with exclamations



of concern even as Ryntal rolled about on the ground in an effort to put out his clothes that had caught on fire.

Coughing on breathed in smoke he touched at his flame scalded throat in fearful dismay. The skin of his neck lay melted into the handprint of his greatest nemesis. A token of him that he would always bear and with savage anguish over his lost vanity Ryntal cried out, "Help me up you cowards!"

Members of his command rushed forward and once more on his feet Ryntal limped to the edge of the slope that now lay charred black. No sign of Sayul remained, but no man could survive lit on fire as he had been.

That said, warriors of the Fire Spirit were not like other men and fire prophets were entirely worse yet. A man

the caliber of a prophet could defeat an army by himself and a good thing it was that no such man yet lived within all the seven lands of Walenthyana.

That had always been the fear for the Dolerian High Council, but now conquered, these people of the Roalain Plains would never again be motivated by a man that bore the fire of the old God. It had been a long time since such a man had lived and now there would not be another.

Soon every last vestige of this land of soaring meadows and green gabled hills would hear the cries of alm singing to the fallen Dogerians, whom every Dolerian witch and warlock paid homage to as it was them that had freed them from the old ways and opened to them the forbidden powers of Eloah, the

old God. The world of Walenthyana no longer bore the old God's temples and soon the belief in Him would cease altogether.

Truly He was for the most part already forgotten throughout the five known lands. Now that the sixth land had fallen, all that remained was the most mysterious of all the lands combined. Angarta, a land of forests that breathed and spoke with a mind of its own. A land shrouded in mist and the terror of unknown powers not seen so prevalent anywhere else in the world. It was that land that now stretched out before him beyond the base of the slopes of the Gorge of Aratana. No doubt some of the Rolainians had fled into it, but they would soon become lost and those who lingered on would never dare show

themselves again in any of the six lands beyond the last land of Angarta.

Ryntal turned his gaze away from the forest of myth and legend to Vorlock his second-in-command and croaked out, "The boy, do we have him yet?"

"No, but we have his mother, my Liege." Vorlock added at the last with pleasure.

Ryntal smiled, but winced as it caused his melted skin to pull painfully, "Good!" He said savagely.

"I'm going to keep her warm in Sayul's absence. She'll experience what Dolerian might and unity is all about. Come my brothers! I'll let you all have a turn with her after I'm done."

In glee the massed ranks of his officers cobbled together from all the lands of Dolerian unity followed in his

wake with eagerness. The wolfmen of Orzanzan howled, even as the trolls of Tanerin beat at their chests. Ryntal's voice rumbled deeply with laughter at the cacophony of lustful eagerness.

The purification of the Rolainians would be completed this night as every last woman of their birth line was seeded with the mixed creeds of man, demon, and animal alike. Truly the offspring resulting from this night's encounter would be quite the sons of Sartan, or as the Rolainians called them, the Sons of Damnation.

Fitting justice would be served this night and an end to the tyranny of belief in the Fire Spirit would be completed. Truly, it was cause for celebration as the fifth age of Walenthyana had only just begun.

It would be the last age, even as tonight was the last night for any hope of deliverance for the people now scattered to the four winds and devoid of the strength to regroup and create what had falsely been prophesied to occur in the latter days. No, the Dolerian Auranto conspiracy had conquered all and now ruled the day in uncontested unity across the breadth of the six lands.

Angarta alone remained, but it was inhabited by no man and few if any of any other kind. You had to be a beast of savagery to survive there and such beasts had a way of devouring the easy prey that an escaped slave represented to them. Still, like all the other lands, Angarta must fall too and there were plans as to how that would be accomplished even now.

Tonight however, was to be a night of revelry and songs sung to the might of the fallen Dogerians, even as the shadows danced from the burning embers of a thousand stakes now all but burnt to the ground as silent witnesses to the plight of the survivors of the last battle of the Rolainians. A battle that had been hundreds of years in the making but had culminated tonight in a defeat that would never be undone.

\*\*\*\*\*

Uma twisted at her chain in the fire lit darkness as she breathed out prayer after prayer to Eloah. Finally the wood that she pried against broke.

The chain fell to the ground and gave her the leeway that she needed to reach

the metal piece of broken Rolainian sword steel that lay upon the ground in silent witness to the last shattering of Rolainian pride that had occurred this awful day. Twisting the shard of steel into the lock she felt it pop open even as blood coursed from her fingers that gripped the still sharp piece of a sword forever broken.

The chain slipped through the link fastened about her wrists and in exclamation of triumph the chain soon snaked through the links of all the others. Uma bent down and picked up a battle ax that lay upon the bloodsoaked ground of their once beautiful land.

Raising up to her full height she gestured to the other women who had come to stand before her equally armed with the dropped remnants of a war from



foe and relative alike. “Go those of you who are able! Go now into Angarta! Shame be upon you if you ever forget as to who you are! Those of you who, like me, cannot face another day in the wake of what has occurred this night come with me!”

Uma turned and strode forward over the field of lost causes that had once heralded a farmer’s simple existence and nothing else more spectacular, but that now featured the last act of defiance by a people who simply refused to change with the times. Hated they were the world wide, but freedom was a concept few grasped, but to them they had known it all their lives.

Charging forward now with a savage cry Uma jumped upward to bury the ax she wielded into the head of a troll to

slow to swing his club. Black blood spurting Uma spun away to chop into a Hergalian Elfman and growled into his face with intensity even as she herself was held transfixed on his rapier styled sword blade that had passed completely on through her.

The elfman's eyes glazed over and he fell backward taking his rapier styled blade with him. Uma remained on her feet tottering with the weakness of her blood loss that only compounded the loss that she already felt in her heart for all that had once been, but would never be again. With her last manageable effort of will she drew the axe back and let it fly. The action drove her to her knees and falling forward her forehead hit the ground.

Each breath coming hard to her she

blinked as the sounds of war diminished all around her. As if seeing into another place she breathed out, “Run into the forest my son! Run until you grow tired of it. Then return. Return and avenge what has befallen us this day!”

Uma blinked, as tears fell from her face to kiss the ground, “No my son! Forget what I say! Live apart from this madness. Be happy and learn the ways of the forests of Angarta, until it too is taken away as a sanctuary for our children to hide in. Oh Eloah forgive us our sins and spare our children!” Uma cried out emotionally into the dust of the ground.

*“Mother?”*

Uma’s eyes opened in alarm, only to relax as she sensed the voice that she’d heard came from her spirit and not from

close by. Brokenly she responded, “I love you, Tarik! Run! Never return here! You must do as I say!”

“*Mother I need you!!!*” But Uma had already drifted away into a realm past the ability to hear let alone feel any more pain. The chiefest of all known pains though had just manifested to full life within the heart of a boy lost within the forest he had always been forbidden to enter.

The loss of the connection in spirit with his mother was the last straw and dissolving into tears a son of a prideful people dropped to his knees and bawled out his grief in wracking sobs that caused the trees of Angarta to crack and grumble with discomfort.

He was alone! Truly alone.

A branch wiped across his face with a

touch as soft as a passing feather and in startlement Tarik drew back as grief was forgotten for the moment. The branch retreated to form a come-hither motion even as a breeze that bore the fragrance of early summer's flowers whispered, "Come little warrior. Don't forget your father's sword. You will have need of it I'm afraid. Where we're going is not so friendly at all anymore and yet I still remember a time when it was, but that was a very very long time ago."

Tarik rose up to his feet as what he'd taken to be a small flowering tree began to move away through the forest leaving a trail of spent blooms in its wake to mark its trail. Dragging the tip of a sword taller than he was himself Tarik moved forward and followed the path of

petals that led deeper and deeper into the heart of Angarta. A new era of his life had begun and it was terrifying, but at least he was not as alone as he had thought he was.

## Chapter Two

# The Will To Live

With a shivery start my eyes sprang open. My father's sword was being tugged upon!

Scrambling back in the loose leaf litter I clutched the sword tighter as I beheld a small creature with excessively large claws rear up to its full diminutive height and hiss at me aggressively. My heart stopped as I watched its mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth open as it prepared to spring upon me.

In the next instant though it was gone.

Flinching from the expected impact of its claws and teeth into me I instead watched as it was tossed through the air to thud heavily against a mossy boulder.

Completely shaken I let my eyes drift upward to the short flowering tree that I had followed for hours and hours yesterday before it had finally stopped and rooted into the soil near the small brook of water that ran close by. The resemblance of a face made out of knots and hollows of age worn wood winced down at me from its lofty height of about 20 feet or so above my head. Then by way of apology it shrugged its branches as if in replication of shoulders and said, "I'm afraid, as of late, I sleep more deeply these days. I am quite old, but that is no excuse. I do apologize Tarik for not waking up sooner."



“You don’t need to apologize.” I mumbled out.

“What was that dear?” The old tree asked.

“You don’t owe me anything.”

She, for it seemed somehow as that she was female, huffed and a cloud of petals fell to lay down upon the dewy forest floor, “Oh little man, it is true. I owe you nothing, but kindness. Kindness, for all those who have lost their parents and are but children, trying to find their own way in a world most unfriendly to them. As much as I am able to do it is my responsibility to help you and all others like you, Tarik. Please call me Asmantha.”

I nodded in greeting as I was beyond words to express how I felt. In some ways I wanted to stay and dwell in

sorrow and yet a forest of more vivid intensity, such as I had never perceived before, was coming alive all around me.

A forest full of danger and I had but one tree out of many taking any interest in me. Indeed it seemed like the other trees were opposed to my presence here and the feeling I felt of their consensus of thought made me feel even more desolate than I already did in spirit.

I had no one and no hope, but the kindness of one tree alone, in a sea of trees that would sooner see me turned into dirt to be of some use for their roots. A tear streaked down my face and not being able to stop I buried my face against my drawn up knees and did my best to shut out everything, but it did no good as when I closed my eyes my mind was filled with the imagery of

everything that had been lost.

“Oh dear! What to do?” Asmantha said, as she stiffly leaned a branch down to brush consolingly upon my back.

The oddness of everything and the extremeness of my vulnerability in this place that didn't want me only made everything worse.

“Korva is there anything you can do to help? Goodness knows you have more experience with this sort of thing than I.”

“It depends.” Came a husky ruffled breathiness of words in reply that had the sense of magnificence in restraint.

Slowly my head lifted up off my knees and my eyes traced through the flowery understory of the ancient forest until they fell upon a massive boulder and more directly the massive feline reclining upon it who nonchalantly eyed me over

with a critical and yet un-cruel demeanor. It was the largest tiger that I had ever seen in my life, but more important to the moment was had it actually just spoken?”

Confused sounding Asmantha asked the tiger, “Depends on what Korva, dear?”

“On his will to live, but of course.”

“Oh would you please take over for me Korva. I have no right to ask it of you, but I am older than most and well, I’m simply too old to adequately care for him as I should.”

The massive tigress that could have taken down the largest of marsh bulls with one swipe of its paw broke from its regard of me to glance up at Asmantha. She blinked and then rose and there was simply no way of being prepared for the

majestic sight of her coming down from off her perch as she came toward me.

She stopped within a paw's strike of me and huffed out a breath of intensity that washed over me warmly. Her heavy toothed jaws opened and her words were direct and as piercing as the claws sheathed within her paws, "Mourn the dead no more or else you will soon join them. Now if you want to survive then follow me and do exactly all that I tell you or I might just finish off what was started last night."

"Korva!" Asmantha admonished reprovingly.

Korva flicked her tail and moved off to the side as her tail continued to beat back and forth through the air as she ambled along on past me. In shock I gazed after the tiger that was retreating

away from me. What did I do?

I glanced upward to the only one who had showed me kindness and Asmantha said, “Go with her. You will be quite safe with her.”

How was that possible, as the beast had the look of one that would devour me without a second thought?

“She has just recently lost her cub. She is your best chance at survival. I suggest you go after her now as she may not wait for you.”

Born upward to my feet by one of her roots I faced her not really knowing what to say or do so I bowed my head to the tree that spoke as a sensible being and who had showed me kindness when I needed it most. In return she likewise inclined the crown of her branches with a creaking swish of her leaves and then I

was running away.

I was running after certain death to be sure as I knew that tigers killed people and even ate them! What would keep her from eating me? For that matter where was she?

“Behind you, little fool.”

Abruptly in my haste to turn around I tripped and slammed into a tree trunk as the husky voice of the tigress had seemingly come out of nowhere right next to my ear so close that I had felt the heat of her breath. Groaning I pulled myself up off the ground.

My face felt bruised from where it had connected with a tree. All that was forgotten though as the realization occurred to me that I had lost hold of the most treasured thing I had left in this world.

My eyes lifted and there it lay before the tigress that stood farther off the ground on four legs than I did on two. Her paw was bigger than my head and in mute terror I watched the powerful talons of it flex as if they had a will of their own.

As scared as I was of her, I didn't care about even continued life in this moment, as much as I needed to maintain some connection with my past. Dodging forward I snatched up the sword that had been my father's and scuttled backward with it held tightly to my chest.

In all this the tiger made no move to hinder me and indeed as I rose back up to my feet I saw approval in her gaze for me for the first time, that is maybe, anyway. With this tiger I wasn't really sure about anything.



Her teeth showed and husky voiced she said, “Lesson two. Never run in the forest unless you wish to play the part of being a meal for a stronger beast.”

I blinked and blinked again. That’s simply didn’t make sense.

“I shouldn’t run from danger?” I asked helplessly confused.

“Do you want to be eaten?”

“No!”

“Then why would you act like something that could be eaten?” She moved on then and coming close she huffed out, “And by the way I prefer my meals to be clean and not caked in dirt just so you know.”

A quivery shiver coursed through me as the meaning of statement made full impact. The sudden question on my mind was what would happen if I got washed

clean in a rainstorm or something. I looked upward but the sky was blocked from view by the dense overhead canopy.

I followed after her warily even as I acknowledged that she'd given me my first clue as to not being eaten. Don't run. Simple, but hard to define the courage to the attainment of.

My belly constricted painfully and issued forth with a grumble that caused Korva's ears to twitch. Her tail swished upward and smacked into a low-lying branch. The swinging branch caught my attention along with the five elongated red looking juicy fruits that were attached to it.

“Lesson three. Focus on opening your eyes to seeing everything, but focus only on what is important and let the rest drift

by you.”

Snatching all five of the juicy looking fruits as I walked past I held them for a moment before asking the tiger I trailed behind as if I were her cub, “How do I know there not poisonous?”

“Now that would take care of the problem wouldn’t it. By all means eat all of them so fast you can’t discern the difference in something good for you and something that will kill you.”

Scowling at her I regarded her swishing tail for a moment before tentatively taking a bite out of one of the fruits. It was delicious and the other four were gone quickly.

I felt better for having eaten the fruit, but certainly not full. I said nothing however and before to long in our journey through the forest Korva’s tail

moved in gesture again, but I'd already seen the dusky purple colored berries on a nearby bush.

Hesitantly I stopped and began picking as many of them as I could for fear of Korva moving on without me. It was strange. I was afraid of her, but the prospect of being in this place without her was even worse yet to comprehend.

Thankfully she had paused long enough for me to collect most of the berries that seemed ripe enough for me to eat. I busily stuffed them in and Korva moved on.

I reclaimed my grip on my father's sword and worked on balancing it over my one shoulder instead of dragging it. It was very heavy, but I would never be without it.

My gaze fell upon a juicy looking red

fruit being extended toward the trail by an overhead vine and my mind was already fixatedly imagining what the exotic taste of it would be like. Sugary for sure.

I stopped and reached for it. One thing stopped me. Korva had not directed me as before with her tail as to this being something good to eat.

Still it was right beside the trail maybe she'd just assumed that I'd pick up on the fact of it being something to eat. Something didn't set well with that last thought within me and reluctantly I let my hand close into a fist and fall away from the fruit that even smelled good to my famished senses.

I made to walk on, but was immediately shocked out of my senses by the realization that Korva's face was

eye level with me and but a foot away. Breathing heavy I stepped back quickly and guiltily I wondered as to what would happen next.

Korva's face of whiskers and massive studded canines bore a speculative look of interest as she extended out a forepaw and dexterously used one massive razor tipped talon to ever so delicately draw it down the side of the succulent looking fruit, that I had almost eaten, as to just pierce the skin of its outer layer. The slit in the fruit made she withdrew her paw and a clear looking fluid seeped out from the slit and welled up for a moment before it fell to splat upon the broadleaf of another plant below it. Immediately there was a hiss and a little puff of steam and incredulously I watched as the drop of the fruit's nectar burned a hole

through the leaf and then several more leaves below that one until it hissed loudly in contact with the ground before finally falling silent.

The enormity of what just one drop would've done to me had me swallowing and feeling on the verge of throwing up. Still staring at the fruit of death that she had pierced Korva softly huffed out in a softer tone than I'd ever heard from her yet, "Sometimes what one sees, though beautiful to the eyes and the senses on the outside, hides a heart of darkness. Mark this fruit well for it is a guide into the hearts of man and beast alike. Appearances are ever deceiving. You were wise to be wary of the unknown. Perhaps you will live another day after all. Tell me what is your name?" She finished at the last as she

brought her intense eyes to gaze upon me ever so directly once more.

“Tarik.” I managed to mumble out, not sure of what this feline would do next.

The intenseness of her gaze glowed even more so and then she glanced about quickly and in alarm I gripped my sword tighter as I became aware of the sudden cessation of noise in the forest around us. Now as I paid attention I noticed that this area of forest that we had wandered into seemed much older than other areas that we had traversed.

What did the silence mean? I watched as Korva’s ears twitched back and forth, but then became more relaxed as the sounds of the forest came back to life all around us.

Glancing my way she said softly, “From now on your name is Torlin.”



I made to object, but with a husky hint of deep menace Korva gritted out, “You will do as I say!”

Abruptly she made to turn away and move on, but I had something to say and very much on edge of what the consequences might be I said, “I will do as you say, but not in this matter. I am in your debt already Korva, but I cannot deny the name my father gave me! I cannot do it and if that means my death then so be it.” I mumbled out at the last expressly hoping that it wouldn’t come to that.

Korva glanced my way with sharp intensity for a moment before she let it drop from her face. Musingly she said, “You’re going to be the death of me boy. Oh well, I’d rather have a strong cub than a cub not able to speak his mind.

Very well, Tarik, shall we move on now?"

I nodded my head intensely relieved that she wasn't going to rid herself of me. She moved faster than before and I had to run at times to keep up.

The sound of my breathing was loud, but the loss to concentrating on much of anything other than keeping in sight of the striped tail of my protector and guide, I did become aware of one thing. The forest was watching me in a way I didn't think that it had been before.

What did it all mean? Was I crazy to believe as I did that the forest suddenly seemed to be focused in on me?

Perhaps I was crazy, but the feeling remained just the same, even as I fought to maintain belief in my sanity. The worst part of the feeling was that I

couldn't discern what the intent of the forest's inspection of me was rooted in. Time would no doubt tell the tale, but would it be a story that I'd want to hear?

An hour passed by and I almost crashed into Korva's rear as she came to an abrupt stop. Breathing heavy I worked on getting in air and switching which shoulder my father's sword rested against.

The changeover of the sword to my other shoulder made I looked around to take in my surroundings. Eyes widening I beheld that we were on the periphery of a grassland that appeared to be bounded by the forest for as far as the eye could see.

There was a breeze and I watched with appreciation as the grass undulated beneath the pressure of it. It was as if I

had come upon an inland sea made entirely of grass.

My attention centered then on what was in the grass further out from us. Monsters!

I felt my mouth fall open at the sheer size of some of the creatures in the distance. Korva moved and my attention was immediately drawn back to her.

She gestured with her head to a nearby tree of massive proportions, "Climb that tree as high as you can and then go further still." That said she moved away with a swish of her tail into the tall savanna grass.

"Are you coming back?" I asked out loud with a voice that had an unmistakable quiver to it that normally would've shamed me, but right now I was too paralyzed at the thought of being

left alone to care about anything in resemblance to pride.

Korva glanced back, “I will try, but the hunt is ever uncertain as to how it will go. Life and death come to all of us and I make no promises. We each must survive as best as we can.” That cryptic statement said she was suddenly gone from view with one long bound into the sea of grass that moments before had mesmerized me, but now like the forest filled with all manner of oddities behind me I found myself to terrified to move for fear of what would happen next.

As I stood there shaking like a leaf I came to the conclusion that I gave voice to in sudden determination, “I can’t go on living like this!”

Giving a careful glance around me I then knelt down onto the ground of the

forest and did something that came very hard for me to do because of all that had come to be in my life to make this moment of desolation what it was. I began to pray as I addressed God by name, “Eloah.....”

No matter how I tried to form words that was all I could get out. Minutes stretched by as I fumbled for what to say.

My home was gone. My mother was dead and most likely my father as well. All my friends. There simply was no prayer that could undo what had been wrecked and torn apart in my life.

All that remained of my life was the here and now. I had no past to go back to and no future without help of some kind.

My mind seized on that theme and mumbling I finished my prayer, “Eloah, please bring Korva back and please

don't let her eat me! In the name of Your Son Yeshua I ask and pray this.”

Hurriedly wiping at sudden tears I got up as I intentionally left so many things unsaid along with the many questions that I might never have answers to. I approached the tree Korva had indicated and slinging the strap of my father's sword over my shoulder I grasped a hold of a vine and began pulling myself up the tree.

Climbing the tree was slow going with the weight of the sword along with my own unreasoning fear at every sound that occurred which only served to divide strength away from my efforts to climb. In my lack of attention my grip on a limb slipped off and I fell or I should have fallen anyway.

Hanging in midair I glanced around

and then finally upward to behold that it was now the branch that held me. Not wanting to, but unable to avoid it I turned my head the other way only to behold a face wreathed in a smile upon the trunk of the old tree that I had been climbing up.

Boisterously then the tree spoke, “Thomanalin’s the name!”

The tree eyed me up and quirking a leafy eyebrow asked, “And now who might you be scampering about on my branches and crunching me bark?”

Paralyzed too much to reason as to what to accurately say I whispered, “She told me to climb! I....I....”

“She did now? And what right does the Miss Korva have going about ordering a treebeast such as myself about ehh?”



I had no answer to that and I braced myself against what it would be like to find myself freefalling towards the ground. Had I really climbed so high already or was it just an illusion how far down the ground looked beneath me. There was simply no way I would survive such a fall.

The gripping branch flexed and I closed my eyes only to then open them as I made gentle contact with a broad limb higher up than I had been before. Shaking I looked about as the grip of the branch let go of me and once more the voice of the treebeast spoke saying, "Rest easy lad. It twas wise of your friend to points me out to you as I won't be standing for a guest of mine to come to harm. Yes, she be a wise shebeast, she be. Here lad you must be hungry after

such a climb.”

Before I knew it nuts of several different varieties started being tossed onto the broad branch that I clung to. Dazed I looked about to see if all the trees were alive as this one, only to see them motionless as the outreaching branches of the treebeast picked nuts by the score from them only to toss them onto my perch.

Shakily I sat up and with a heavy grunt the treebeast said, “That should hold yuh a bit. Now no slicing me bark off as you be crack’en them nuts with that great weapon of yours lad.”

Peering down from my high perch I caught a stern glance from the treebeast’s face below me that echoed the sentiment of his words. Hurriedly, I said, “Yes Sir!”

“Now, I’ll not be having this Sir business laddie. My name’s Thomanalin.”

“Yes Sir.” I said, not even realizing what I’d just done until it was too late.

Thomanalin rolled his huge knobby eyes and with a shake of the topmost branches of his tree form body said, “Eat your dinner boy and then be getting some rest as who can tell what changes tomorrow may bring. Aye, who can say what even the night will foster. It will be an adventure to be sure. Eat up boy. The future is unsure at best, but I be thinking you’ll be a part of it somehow.” That said Thomanalin’s eyes closed and his branches became still and free of gestures.

Was he asleep? Had I imagined everything?

All of a sudden one knobby eye opened and I jumped as the treebeast gruffed out, “Eat up lad and get your rest or did you not hear?” He inquired leadingly and not able to help myself I asked in return, “Hear what?”

Both of Thomanalin’s eyes opened and there was no doubting the seriousness in the otherwise affable seeming treebeast, “No one wishing to survive in the forest sleeps at night. Mark my words well young lad. Night in the forest is a dark time. Aye, sleep now and then later on survive as best as you’re able to boy. I’ll wake you when it’s time to run.”

My voice quavering I asked, “You won’t protect me?”

“Lad yuh don’t know the half of it. Aye, yuh don’t. I’ll do what I can, but

word of your name has already spread. I heard it from a hazelnut and he from an acorn and by now the whole forest is waking up to the fact that a new age is about to begin. The skin walkers, minions of darkness that they be, will be having a say about it I reckon as they have ruled these parts for some time now. Aye they'll be after you soon enough." Thomanalin shook his great top branches with a mournful move of emotion before adding, "So many children there be in the forest and few to shepherd them to be sure."

"Children?" I breathed out.

"Aye, ya didn't think ya was the only one now to escape did ya. Enough, I'd tell ya more, but ya wouldn't eat much less sleep if I did so be to it young'un and we'll greet tomorrow's sun together

or apart as the case may be, but preferably for you, alive. Aye, that would be good.” Thomanalin finished with as his features that reflected the warmth of life became wooden and expressionless once again and I was left once more both alone and full of questions.

Skin walkers? Other children?

I looked around but here, high up in the canopy of the forest, the moment was rather peaceful and devoid of the angst to be found in the treebeast’s doom and gloom outlook of the future. That said I knew so little of this amazing place that truly it would be foolish of me not to be prepared.

Bringing the hard pommel of the sword forward I lined up a nut and cracked it against the limb I straddled.

The shell cracked open and I feasted on its succulent contents.

The process was repeated over and over again until entirely replete I stopped. Tiredness overcame me then and carefully I laid down on the limb making sure that my sword was near and not in any danger of falling. The moment my eyes closed I felt the weariness of the day of fast-paced travel occur across all my senses and unconsciousness soon took over.

Branches descended protectively around Tarik until he was encased in foliage that both hid him from view and ensured that he would not fall from his lofty perch. Thomanalin blinked and then cast a worried glance off over the shifting sea of grass.

## Chapter Three

# To War!!!

*Slowly the hours of the afternoon drifted by until at last Korva returned. She paused at the base of the tree as if asking permission and resignedly Thomanalin nodded. With ease and with as little use of her powerful claws as she could manage Korva, ascended until she was upon the sturdy branch where the boy lay. She gazed at him for a long moment before turning her gaze to glance down to Thomanalin's uplifted one.*



*“Do they know?” She huffed out in question.*

*“Aye, Miss Korva they do.”*

*Tiredly Korva reclined down upon the branch and glanced at the sun that was dipping down toward the horizon.*

*“I’ll do what I can Korva, but it will be a nip and tuck thing at best.”*

*“I know.” Korva said not lifting her head from off her paws.*

*“You’re a goodhearted shebeast you are. Got a heart of gold ya do missy.”*

*Korva growled slightly and a branch descended to swap her tail in response. Her ears curled backward, but she made no further move to protest such treatment. She let herself go into a deep sleep, but her senses remained fully alert to even the slightest of interruptions in the daily rituals of the*

*surrounding forest.*

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I came awake with a start and gripped the branch beneath me reflexively. My momentary panic at my surroundings abated as I took in the sleeping form of Korva bathed in newly risen moonlight.

She'd returned after all, but the temporary lull of knowing that I wasn't all alone except for a talking tree disintegrated fast in the light of the fact that it was quite dark and the forest around me was wreathed in a dreadful silence as if nothing dared to breathe for fear of giving away position.

The forest was so dark and creepy with its hidden portends of danger and uncertainty that my eyes drifted to the

shifting grass heads of the savanna just beyond the sheltering boughs of the trees that grew along it. Abruptly the sea of grass had all my attention and the forest behind me was forgotten.

The grass of this inland savanna glowed!

Even the myriads of wildflowers caught up in the grass here and there glowed in the hue of their principal colors of decoration, but predominantly the grass tinted a bluish light green dominated over everything else. I had never seen so beautiful a sight as this before.

The wind swirled stronger in a deep downdraft from the heavens above and the grass rippled from the actions of the strange down pressed breeze as if enthusiastic to receive it. In awe I

watched as the breeze grew stronger and then oddly I felt a clammy moisture in the air and in bewilderment I looked up into the dark sky only to behold a freefalling wonder beyond any imagination to have ever thought possible.

An iridescent sheen of vibrant blue touched off by the silvery glints of a full moon was falling like a cascading wave down out of the sky. Shocked to the core of all I knew or thought I had known, I beheld an ocean's worth of water so light as to be air descend upon the seas of grass and immerse them in a glimmering barrage of color and swirling current.

The shimmery haze of this sea fallen out of the sky bathed up against the branches of the surrounding forest as if

in replica of waves upon a beach. I felt the mist spray with each crashing glimmer of moonlight.

To my surprise I breathed it as if it was air. What manner of miracle was this?

My gaze broke from the sea of grass to glance at Korva. Her eyes were open and with a bright look to them she huffed out quietly, "Watch what comes next."

My gaze turned back and I almost fell off of my seat on the branch at the sight of fish and larger creatures floating down out of the sky as if on a fast-moving current only to abruptly disperse among the fronds of grass that now featured a panoply of bright dots rising up and out towards the sky. The bright dots of color seemed to be a food source and abruptly shoals of the sky fish

separated apart in hot pursuit after each one of them.

It was all too much to take in, but I tried my best. Beyond the sounds of the misty waves breaking against the forest boundaries I couldn't hear much until suddenly I did.

Sharp perturbed clicks so close together that they formed a staccato beat sounding out and then in disbelief I watched a whale, longer and more massive than the tree I clung to part through the upswept mists coming off the savanna grass. His clicks and whistles sounded loud as he swept by the forest edge right in front of me.

Never had I heard of such a thing as this! The very air I breathed had become an ocean in the heart of a forest. I just didn't understand how any of this was

possible!

I looked to Korva and blinking her eyes knowingly she said, “There is much that man does not know of the land of Angarta. You are privileged to see the mysteries that the forest yet holds.”

Desperately I whispered, “I don’t understand any of this!”

“There are dimensions to life. You’ve lived in a fixed dimension all your life, until now. Now you see that movement between dimensions is possible even as all that was created by Eloah, to my knowledge, borrows from the same matter of existence. Even as the beauty you see is sharply so in reference to its Creator, know also, that evil’s handiwork is at play constantly in the sought for corruption of all of it.”

Just then a blaring cry rent through the

night air and a quiver of awareness shot through me. Korva abruptly got up and looked off into the forest even as pig-like squeals erupted in great number that completely shattered the peace of the night which had been brought on by the tranquility of the sky ocean upon the savanna.

The sound of the disturbance in the forest sent the shoals of fish in this inland sea of air fleeing and with concern I glanced into the dark understory of the forest far below us as the awareness of Korva's concern drew the tension I felt in the moment to a fever pitch. The squeals in the undergrowth had stopped and now all that remained was a silence so pervasive that it had a resonance all of its own.

My focus on what could be going on



below was shattered by Thomanalin's voice, "Look to the trees, the traitorous swine of my own heritage!"

I gazed up and across and I saw eyes. Unhuman eyes and then apart from the eyes of silently watching menacing figures of shadowy darkness tree branches began reaching out towards me. There was nowhere to draw back to, but there was no need to.

The broad beam of the branch below me shook as Thomanalin's own branches snapped back and forth mightily as he fended off the outreaching arms of all the surrounding trees, who as one had turned traitorous against us. Thomanalin's deep voice was one resounding echo of anger and tumult as he railed against those of his own tree-like kind arrayed all about him, but lacking of his finer stature in

that they had given in to the whims of darkness's demands.

The eyes watching me moved and glancing down I saw bunches more of the creatures congregating at the base of the treebeast. They were almost humanlike, but only to clearly weren't upon closer inspection. They had the faces of lizards and row after row of glimmering teeth to prove it!

With horror I watched as with calculated ease they moved for the trunk of the treebeast and it was then that I realized that the surrounding trees were but a diversion to tie up Thomanalin's considerable capabilities of self-defense. My horror ridden gaze rose to Korva as she spoke tensely, "Tarik, don't be afraid. You have a future. Never forget that as I don't doubt my own

purpose for being in this moment. Now hold on brave boy and don't let go!" Then with a roar of overwhelming ferocity I watched her turn and lunge out into space.

Down she fell through air only to land with all claws churning upon the heads of the gathered enemy below. A slim branch twirled around my middle and brought me up securely against a stouter limb and in horror I felt the branch I stood upon shudder and heave even as the ground below seethed as boulders of great size went flying.

Deep pressed roots that had grown for a millennia undisturbed ripped themselves up and out of the rich loamy dirt of the forest floor and in the rain of debris and thrown boulders I beheld the spectacle of Korva lunging left and right

about the base of Thomanalin's trunk attacking the shifting mass of pressed in demonic entities that now struggled for breath and the ability to remain standing as Thomanalin's roots broke free of the ground he had occupied for as many years as any tree about could remember.

Thomanalin's roars of rage had become bellows of a deep-seated wrath, ages in the making, as with intensity of focus he freed himself from the ground all the while fending off a dozen attacking trees once friends, but now overruled by evil's desires. Valiantly he fought to be free and with tears streaking down my face I beheld his broken off root ends too well buried to be freed and so he had twisted free of them as if severing off his own legs.

Korva was latched into and knocked

down again and again, but again she rose up, the blood of her enemies dripping from fang and claw to be mixed with her own in a terrible onslaught of shared viciousness that I was only too well aware of as I had seen but a days' time before, the deaths of all that I had ever known played out in much the same fashion as the warriors of my people had fought against the overwhelming odds presented against them. They too had fought to hold back evil's desires, only they had failed as even now so did Korva.

I saw her go down under a mob of the chortling lizards and this time she did not rise back up. "Noooo!" I wailed out, but it did no good.

The pack of slavering reptiles leaped upon the huddle in order to get a bite of

the strength that had held them at bay from their desired goal and somehow intrinsically I knew that these creatures fed off the strength of others that were more noble than themselves, as if some ravening horde that got high off of the destruction of the spirit as well. With a roar greater than all others before Thomanalin jumped and my whole sense of life changed to slow motion as the treebeast of immense girth and size arced upward and toward the horde of bloody feasting creatures as all his remaining roots flailed viciously.

In horrified wonder I saw the blood red eyes of my sworn enemies from this day forward rise upward to gaze in fearful amazement in the illuminated darkness as Thomanalin began to come down. Some tried to run, but those were

snapped off their feet by whip like fibrous roots that reached out and cracked with the echo of a bull whip.

Thomanalin landed and it was to the sound of crunching bone and flesh as Thomanalin's great statured figure descended upon the mass of feeding hell spawn. I was jerked back and forth viciously as Thomanalin twisted with grinding intensity everything beneath him to a bloody pulp of sheer gore.

I had no time then to gather any thought as abruptly Thomanalin let out a bullish roar and began to run. Trees not given over to darkness's command bowed out of his way, but those obstinate to their new course of fallen acceptance remained as a bar to his escape.

It did not matter though, because

Thomanalin destroyed them as he found them, all the while deflecting every one of the outreaching branches that shot out trying to reach at me and grab me away. The destruction on display all around me was too unreal to even begin to define as the night lit up with howls and the sounds of shattering wood.

It was only too apparent that the forest about me was one of mixed loyalties as one by one trees made their stance known whether they be friend or foe. Three strong oaks bristled in Thomanalin's path of willful destruction and he charged forward with a will towards them calling them all sorts of names even as the three trees interlaced their branches in order to stop the onrushing treebeast whose snapped off roots twisted like the many legs of a



centipede in combination to carry the great bulk of his trunk across the forest floor at high speed.

The three oaks were almost the same size as Thomanalin and I saw the end of our flight in the night fast approaching. I glanced back along the way we had come through the wake of twisted off trees only to feel the icy grip of fear squeeze about my heart at the sight of even more of the reptilian beings running on all fours across the debris of traitorous trees and upturned boulders in their pursuit to get me.

There seemed to be no escape from this night of hellish horrors and grimly I accepted it. A bugled roar that matched the intensity of several voices shouted out with harmonic intensity completely stopped the beating of my heart.

My head whipped forward once more and in awe I watched the knobby limbs of three great treebeasts such as Thomanalin each grip around a trunk of one of the three oaks and then pull with a twisting grip that shucked off the heavy armored bark of their victims who reacted in complete surprise of having been attacked from the rear. The trees, that had forsok their honor in favor of the praises offered to them by fallen whisperers of vanities, mourned now audibly as with resounding cracks they were twisted free of their base trunks and hurled off to the side to bleed out all of their life-sustaining sap. Their mournful wails were quickly forgotten even as their sap continued to run free to stain the ground with their impurity of tree stock.

On Thomanalin rushed and like saluting sentinels of shared wrath the three treebeasts of Thomanalin's kind, though of different tree species, drew back majestically to let us pass by completely undiminished in speed. My eyes took in the long face of one of them that had the appearance of an ash tree. He spoke with a rumbling echo that sounded like a hollow log bumping over rocks, "Remember us boy!"

The other two spoke aloud as their principal branches reached down and twisted off branches from the fallen oaks only to form oaken clubs of them, "Aye, and so let the War of Reclamation begin!"

"Aye!" The first one bellowed forth with as he shaped up his own oaken club from the oak that he had dismantled

before crying out, "To war!"

All three bellowed so loudly that the treetops of the forest before them waved back and even through the jumbling passage of Thomanalin's great bulk across it I felt the forest shiver. Branches and darkness half obscured my view, but the sight of the three treebeasts with tree arms swinging away upon the coldhearted enemy at our backs was a sight that brought a comfort all of its own.

I turned my head forward only to see that every tree made way before us now with not a one resisting us. We were going to get away!

A boulder the size of a hay cart came hurling into view and try as he might Thomanalin was unable to avoid it as it crashed into his trunk near the base.

Thomanalin grunted aloud and with a totter forward he began to fall.

The branch about my waist seemed almost to cut me in half as Thomanalin's great bulk fell to land with a crack of branches upon the forest floor. The branch about my waist released and I fell a short distance to the forest floor along with my father's sword.

I wheeled around my vision obscured once more by tears. Thomanalin's eyes blinked open and I saw the finality of what would soon be his fate written in them.

Screaming at the top of my lungs I cried out, "Why?"

His age worn features twisted with concern as he huffed out sounding both out of breath and of a diminished life force, "Why what, son?"

“Why does everyone have to die? My parents! My friends! My people! Korva! You!!!”

Thomanalin’s face twisted into a wry smile, “Son, the answer you seek is simple. Seek it and you will find it. I’m really not the right one to answer it for you. Now run lad! Run and don’t look back!”

Nodding and tugging on my father’s sword I did that which the treebeast, who had all my respect in the world, commanded even though I understood nothing of what was happening or why such loss of life should occur all on account of me. In the distance I heard the demented roar of a giant bellow out victoriously even as I, all too, well remembered the roar of their war cries as a contingent of them had battered

away at the doors of the Citadel of Vortraya, until they had pulverized the iron reinforced timbers to toothpicks and smash their way into the Citadel. They had gone down under the piercing strength of wave after wave of drug tipped arrows fired at them, but with the Citadel gate smashed the fate of the Citadel had been sealed and I had been sent down an escape tunnel too small for adults even to follow behind in.

The cries of the giant and the feel of his heavy footed landings upon the forest floor aided me all the more in my flight through the forest to escape. Escape to what though?

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*The giant came to a stop beside the*

*fallen treebeast and Thomanalin gave him a baleful upward cast glare. The giant grinned viciously and kicked out savagely and the already smashed wood of Thomanalin's trunk splintered apart even further. Thomanalin's eyes blinked closed with pain.*

*Laughing the giant sniffed the air and lumbered forward in pursuit of the boy whose scared sent freshened the night air with the promise of how sweet his flesh would taste. A root whipped about the giant's ankle and with a displeased roar the giant wheeled around to finish off the old treebeast, but in so doing he gave the momentum needed to start the bole of Thomanalin's trunk mass to start rolling down the slight grade. Thomanalin's trunk bowled into the*



giant's shins and with an unsteady wobble for stability the giant fell forward with a loud crash upon the boulder strewn forest floor.

Silence reigned for only a moment before being broken by the giant's rageful curses. He had started to rise only to feel the encircling grip of Thomanalin's remaining roots fasten about his legs even as Thomanalin's remaining branches gripped a hold upon the giant wherever they could find purchase as one sturdy branch wrapped about the giant's throat in a constricting ring of squeezing intensity.

The giant's roar was gagged off abruptly and then he began to fight in earnest to be free as all his breath remained choked from him, but Thomanalin's grip about his throat

remained even as the giant tore restraining branch after branch free of Thomanalin's trunk. Steadily the giant's efforts grew diminished, until they became no more at all.

With a weary sigh Thomanalin relaxed his grip upon the corrupted flesh of one of the fallen orders and half turned away to roll face upright so that he could stare at the star laden skies overhead. The surrounding branches of the trees about the scene of battle that had obscured his view withdrew in order for his gaze of the sky to be free of interruption.

"Aye, thank you for that. You'll all make fine trees someday. Just don't forget. Don't ever forget that ya was made and who it was that made you. That's all I ask. Be good and feed off

*the essence of what I grew to be in life and now willingly give back as once more I return to the dirt I lived upon all these many years that I've been blessed to see. Grow strong and never forget! I haven't. I remember from whence I came and so will you." Thomanalin's words fell silent, even as silence reigned in the forest around where he lay. He lay as a mighty log upon the ground and in silent mourning of the loss of one of the greatest of his kind, every tree about the scene sealed forever the memory of his words and actions within their growth rings.*

## Chapter Four

# Ancient Hatred

Dawn, when would it come? What did it matter?

How could I ever hope to survive in this place as hunted as I was by one and all? Even now I felt the presence of a hunter at my back.

Enough was enough!

I wasn't running anymore. Everyone was once more dead in my wake and I had nothing to go on with.

With a shaking grip I pulled the scabbard free of my father's sword and

let it fall to the ground. Backing up away from the sounds of pursuit I headed for the light of the savanna ocean that I was once more near to. I found the glow of its vividness comforting and that alone was my focus of heading for it rather than finding my death in the spot that I stood upon or some other spot.

I backed up until I could hear the splash of the ocean's airwaves against the forest edge. When I stopped backing up they stepped into view. Five of a horde that had numbered in the hundreds was all that remained of these creatures of dark manipulation.

Out of breath they regarded me raptly from their reptilian eyes that made them reminiscent of snakes walking on legs. Slowly they came closer and as they did their images glimmered out of focus to

be replaced with the visages of human beings.

In shock I continued stepping backward holding the sword as still as I could which wasn't very still at all. It was far too long and heavy for me to wield and yet I promised myself that I would do just that.

I wished to kill these five changelings. They kept changing their appearance from one human form to the next and the reality of how compromised humanity likely was by these creatures caused wrath unlike any other at the present circumstances to arise in me.

“Stop it!” I screamed in anger and they did. Once more rooted in their cold reptilian form they scented the air with their snakelike tongues and regarded me curiously with a sense of cold

calculation within their gazes.

I stopped backing up. I was done running. I was done being afraid, too!

Closing my eyes I whispered fiercely with all my heart, "Please, help me kill them Eloah!"

All five of my adversaries chuckled in a disgusting fashion and I opened my eyes set to the accomplishment of my task. I charged and lacking the strength to swing the heavy sword I instead in the momentum of running forward turned around and then in the spiral to be once more forward facing again I let the momentum of my spiraling motion lift and extend the sword out from me as all I focused on was continuously turning, while staying on my feet and holding onto the sword.

In my swirling vision of the world I

saw the heat of fire extend down the blade of the sword and now in fast-paced motion I saw the surprised faces of my enemies as I twirled past them even as the blade of fire passed through them along the way. Completely over spun and dizzy I fell to the ground only to recover my equilibrium and scuttle back the way I had come dragging my father's sword behind me.

Getting up I held the sword out as one by one the five still shocked reptilians crumbled to the ground as the light of life left each of their cold-blooded bodies. In shock I gazed at them fallen upon the ground.

Had I really just done that? I knew I had, but how? My eyes just couldn't believe what they saw.

“Well, that was impressive.”



If I could've run I would have, but my back was to the edge of the savanna ocean, whose glow of let off light clearly outlined the image of the being that was materializing out of thin air just ahead of me. The being had all the appearances of being a man, but he was no man of that I felt sure.

He didn't strike me as being one of the shape shifting reptiles that had hounded me this night. No, he struck me as being far more evil than anything I had ever encountered before and the fear I felt in being in his presence quivered throughout me until the sword I held waved about erratically.

Chuckling he stepped closer and with all my might I fought to hold the sword upright as a source of protection from the dark fiery depths that I saw playing

within this creature's eyes. He stopped and turning his head to the side he regarded me indepthly as his unusually long almost feminine appearing hair drifted to the side, "You know, I really see a lot of potential in you. I think you could be someone of importance one day. Maybe even a Dread Knight. How does that sound?"

It sounded horrible, but something from within me said not to converse with this being. The lap of effervescent airwaves behind me echoing through the trunk of a tree called to me with the tranquil peace of its resounding melody even as I vainly sought about with quick glances for an escape from the presence of him who stood before me.

I edged closer to the watery air and I saw concern briefly dart across the

being's features before being replaced with confidence that seemed almost too shielded as to be natural. He spoke, "You know, I could let you return to your lands. All your people aren't dead you know, including your mother, by the way. Uma misses you terribly, Tarik."

Rage swept through me and stepping closer I brandished the sword higher, "Liar! My mother is dead!"

"Oh, how do you know?" He asked innocently.

"Because I felt it! I felt her die!" I screamed emotionally at him.

Remembered pain came to assault me and my eyes grew obscured by tears as I remembered the feeling of my mother's connection with me failing. Blinking madly I refocused on the dark being before me and belligerently I asked,

“What do you want? You’ve taken everything! You’ve destroyed everything good, you and your filthy minions! I hate you!”

“Oh, hate is such a powerful word, little one. I hate too. For instance I hate absolutely everything there is about you, you see. I hate your humanity, the image that you were crafted in, even your eternal destiny is loathsome to me! Yes, hate, that’s what I feel for you on a level far deeper than you can ever imagine.”

“Then why don’t you just kill me and be done with it!” I screamed at him.

My adversary chuckled and said, “Because I hate you so much that it delights me to see you suffer as you are and as you have. See how much I hate you little upstart of a mistaken attempt at creation. I hate the very essence of what

gave you breath!” The being said as he lashed out at me verbally so dementedly that the fire of his eyes engulfed his whole form for a moment.

Strangely though I felt detached from the scene and in the aftermath of his outburst I calmly said, “What a waste you are! You hate me and yet all you have is loss, because despite your passion you don’t have power over my spirit and so you’ll always be at a loss when it comes to me and others like me.”

The fire was back, “Okay kid, I’ve had enough of a chase for one night.”

He reached out and grasped a hold of my father’s sword blade. I did my best to pull free of his grasp on it, but he gripped down all the harder upon the sword and as he did his grip upon it

turned molten looking. With intensity he said, “Despite what your parents may have led you to believe, the fact remains that I do have power and you are entirely within my domain.”

The sword handle that I gripped a hold of became too hot to handle, but I held on anyway even as I felt the palms of my hands start to burn. Abruptly the sword was ripped from my grasp and with a cry of anguish I watched as the being of darkness itself focused the fire of his gaze upon my father’s blade and with intensity previously unmatched I watched my father’s sword melt and drip apart as molten blobs to the forest floor to sizzle noisily as it amassed in puddles.

The being looked up and now once more calm in appearance he asked,

“Now, how’s that? Like the look?”

In a rage past understanding I made to launch myself to my death to hurt him even as the disappearance of the last surviving link to my past had pierced me to the heart with sorrow. My foot had started to move forward when suddenly a voice from within said, **“No child. Wrath is mine. Come to me.”**

In consternation I turned to look at the pressed airwaves of mist at my back even as the command that had rippled throughout all of me left me forever changed and in intense need to hear more.

**“Come!”** Was repeated once more and without a second thought I stepped into the watery air of the ocean.

A grip that felt like lead heated in a furnace seven times hotter than enough to

melt me seized a hold over the top of my shoulder and instantly the heat of it threatened to burn a hole right through me. I cried out in agony into the bubbly air even as it filled my lungs chokingly, “Eloah!”

The need to escape the burning touch upon my shoulder was immense, but truly most of all right now I wanted to be apart from everything that caused pain. Sobbing, I felt despair as I was dragged backwards, but the water in front of me suddenly boiled with motion and I was sent head over heels into the glowing grasses of the savanna.

Dimly I spun expecting to see the creature of torment incarnate following close behind me only to be rewarded with the imagery of a whale having beached itself upon the shores of the



forest with such disturbance that trees were falling left and right. I didn't know what to think and indeed it was hard to think as I felt mortally wounded from the touch upon my shoulder.

I looked to my shoulder in a daze and beheld the essence of blood drifting into the upswept currents of this airy ocean. I was going to die.

At least it was peaceful here within the glowing fronds of the savanna's grass. I closed my eyes, but opened them as the sharp echoes of the noises of a whale's song made me come to awareness.

I screamed as a huge mouth came down over top of me and consumed me whole. It was hard to breathe and consciousness faded and as it did I had the feeling of being transported upwards

at a high rate of speed.

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*The night that seemed like it would never end was finally coming to an end as dawn made its welcoming glow upon the far horizon. With that first glimmer of light the oceans of the savanna retreated upward into the sky with all the creatures that called them home and once more the seas of grass present within the forest of Angarta became open to the beasts of the field to once more roam upon and consume.*

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The feel of water lapping up against my cheek had me lifting my head slightly.

I blinked my eyes open and blinked again. Where was I?

I heard the percussion grunts and clicks of a whale. A whale!

I spun in the water I was half laying in and in the gloom of this place of otherworldly strangeness I saw the whale that had swallowed me whole. It lifted enough out of the water to study me with its great eye before sliding forward into the water and letting its snout dip beneath the tranquil waves of this place as it disappeared completely from view.

Without a doubt the whale had saved my life. It had rescued me only to bring me here of all places. Where was here?

For the first time the sound of thunder echoing about the misty semi darkness of this place registered to me. There was

light, but it was as if all of it was just faint reflections gleaming off of something else. Reflections of what?

I looked up and gasped even as I instinctively pressed down into the gentle lapping water. Above me as far as the eye could see stretched a vast cloud mass of the most violently powerful storm clouds that I had ever seen. The sight of their latent power brought terror to my heart, but the beauty of the iridescent colors that shot through briefly here and there through the clouds had my whole being filled with awe.

In the supreme silence of this place of solitude I lay staring at the clouds overhead as they continually twisted and formed protectively around something unseen and yet briefly hinted at by the vibrant shots of color that coursed

through tiny breaks in the cloud mass that gave evidence of something indescribably beautiful hidden beyond the separating cloud cover. Lightning repeatedly shifted through the maelstrom of clouds, but strangely I knew it wouldn't rain. In fact I doubted that it ever rained in this place.

In silent ponderence I let my eyes drift down from the fantastical sight above to gaze upon the plain of existence that I found myself mired in. Directly before me lay water. How far it went I could not tell only that it seemed to have no end.

Far out I saw a white cap form moments before a whale crested the surface and then slid back down. Except for that disturbance nothing else seemed to move or at present be distinguishable

in this realm of in betweenness.

I glanced up again and the urge to lay back in the water and stare up at the clouds in expectation of seeing what lay beyond was an overwhelming sensation. I started to do just that when a noise with a repeating pattern to it made impact with my senses as any noise in this mostly silent place would have.

The sound was coming from behind me and I began to twist to look, which is when I felt something terribly wrong with my shoulder. I glanced down fearfully to behold my clothes burned away from off my shoulder and the flesh of my shoulder rawly burned and exposed without a covering of skin.

I panicked a little at how bad it looked and then I panicked again as the sounds I'd heard registered to me even

closer than before. Despite the pain I turned and wobbly got up to my feet.

A man was approaching me. He was tall and I recognized the build of a warrior even as he was outfitted as one. He wasn't just any warrior though.

I had never seen a warrior so impressively dressed as this one was let alone the confidence that he exuded in a statement of his ability to live up to every aspect of his dangerous looking appearance. He had the air about him that said he had earned every aspect of his regalia.

My mouth grew dry as the being that I'd mistook for a man came closer and closer. His eyes burned and for a moment I feared that I was faced with my tormentor from the forest once again.

Then such a wave of peace beyond

comprehension seemed to overwhelm me that blinking I fought to stay on my feet.

**“Tarik?”**

I glanced toward the approaching figure, but I knew that the being had not been the origin of the voice that I had heard. It was the same voice that I'd heard within my spirit all my life since I'd been a little boy barely able to talk.

**“He means you no harm. He is My messenger. He will bring you safely to Me.”**

I blinked again as the reality that I was being approached by a messenger of Eloah fully registered. Like a niggling worry then the sensation of an inference made its way into my mind. Safe from what?

I glanced around and jumped in fright



as I beheld three dark cast figures making for me fast across the flat plane of this strange place. The motion to turn and run had no sooner occurred to me as the occurrence of a strong hand settling over my uninjured shoulder rooting me to the spot in the security of person such as I had only experienced in the arms of my mother and father.

My eyes closed as the feeling of being safe overwhelmed me with its comfort. It had been so long it seemed since I had felt safe.

My eyes opened only to trace down the drawn saber of golden perfection so fine that it imparted its own glow to the scene of edged in darkness all about us. Solidly I rested back against the armor clad form of a messenger of Eloah.

My gaze lifted to behold that the three

figures cloaked in a darkness far darker than the dimness of this realm had stopped. They made no move to come forward as if they sensed even as I did that even the three of them were no match for the warrior at my back.

I glanced to the side and then to the other quickly my eyes widening immeasurably at the sight of more such warriors as the one who held me that had come to my aid. They stood silently along the periphery of my vision and then they began to advance upon the three cloaked figures ahead of me.

In one smooth move of form and unmatched perfection of synchronicity their blades as brilliant as the one wielded by the messenger I stood before were all held at the ready. Shaken beyond measure I moved willingly as the

hand upon my shoulder bade me to turn even as the bright glimmer of his sword was gone as it was re-sheathed.

The advancing line of warriors stepped past us with an unmatched resolve more so then any army of men set to do their task. The most surprising thing of all though was how I could matter so much as to warrant all of this occurring.

They were here to protect me and feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the love I felt being pressed down upon me and no doubt from the weariness caused by everything else that had occurred these last two days that had drained my soul of hope I began to tumble forward only to find myself caught and then cradled gently in the arms of the messenger that had been sent

to collect me and as it were snatched me from the bowels of darkness once more.

Idly, as he walked, my senses took in the absence of the splash of water upon the booted steps of the messenger who carried me. Now in its place there was a hollow echo of sound as each boot heeled impression stepped forward to land down solidly.

My eyes opened and I glanced down in astonishment as I beheld what it was that we were standing upon. Glass!

We were walking on glass! I looked wildly about this place of mystery from the clouds that promised the storm of all storms, only to be softened by the presence of streams of color so intense as to only occur to the viewer of being the best of cheerfulness to the dim flatly outlined plain of this place devoid of the

shapes of trees and rocks and then back to the shimmering floor that bespoke of its own mysteries.

“Where am I?” I whispered.

“Above the world, as you know it.” Came the deeply resonant reply from the messenger who held me as if I was of great worth. I glanced at his face and blinked as the clearness of the goodness of his being was almost painful to endure even to look upon, because I in comparison felt so much darker.

His gaze touched with fire shifted to me and he smiled before asking, “Are you ready for what is to come next?”

“What?” I whispered in reply.

“You’ve been granted an audience. An audience with the King. Your King.”

I swallowed before croaking out, “No, how could I be?”

“Well said, young Sir. Even so, it is to be and those that are called by the Spirit of the Most High are worthy indeed, so do not fear, Tarik, for you are greatly loved and ever in the thoughts of Him who created us both. Let us both be in awe of the Creator and be moved by nothing else as by nothing other than Eloah’s words has all been created.

Reflectively speaking I said, “You’re very different from him.”

Somehow the messenger knew what I meant and I watched a hint of rage I could only define as righteousness flame to life within his eyes, but all he said was, “He was not always so and yet one day the loss of purpose you saw shall always be, even as to all the judgment of the Most High must come.”

I did not ask any more questions even

though my spirit fairly bubbled alive with them.

All of a sudden I felt much better and as if sensing it the messenger set me down onto my feet. I glanced at my exposed shoulder, but was greeted only by the sight of new skin. Not even a scar remained!

I glanced at my companion, who only smiled and said, "There is healing in the presence of the Almighty. This way to your destiny, Tarik."

He gestured with a hand before heading off in that direction himself. I glanced from him to my shoulder and back.

Giving a quick glance at my surroundings I snapped free of my daze of wonderment and hurried after the messenger. Reflexively I lifted my hand

and felt at my fully restored shoulder.

Under my breath in complete awe of what had been done I whispered, “Thank you Eloah!”

**“You are within My mercy, son.”**

Trembling from the feeling evoked within me at the words from within that sounded louder than ever before I stumbled slightly. I caught myself and with a shaky breath I took notice of the fact that the glassy floor of this place was changing.

It was shimmering through a series of colors and the blurry hint of something more was appearing from the other side as if the floor was a pane of glass with oil smeared across it. Utterly fascinated I stared downward at the shifting glimmers as I followed closely behind the messenger.



The colors and imagery were getting brighter. I began asking the question as I lifted my head, “What are the colors about? I think I see..... see.....” My words died off as my gaze took in my changed surroundings.

I still walked upon the same desolate plain of dim refracted light as before with the same awe-inspiring cloud cover of something beyond grand poised tantalizingly close overhead. What was really different, however, was the fact that we were suddenly very much not alone as we had been before.

Rank upon rank, messengers of Eloah, stood in full battle regalia and preparation for war. It was an army seemingly without number and yet I felt as if only a few were needed to conquer the whole of Walenthyana .

Speechless I stumbled forward after the one who had brought me here to this encampment. This encampment perched..... where exactly?

I didn't know. My gaze drifted from the pressed ranks of an angelic host without number to where a few, I took to be of even greater stature of rank, stood gathered about in a circular stance.

None of them were gazing at each other, but instead all of the captains of war gathered gazed down upon the shimmering floor of this place of detached feeling as if it was poised between heaven and something else. My eyes fell to the floor where they were gazing and with a gasp I stopped walking.

The floor beneath their booted regalia of armor was clear as crystal and not

cloaked in a mirage of glimmering smoky quartz as the floor of this place was elsewhere. It was as if they stared down through a window at something.

I wanted to see, but terror at the awesome presence of these mighty of the mightiest held me in place. In panic I looked for the one who had brought me here only to see him quietly standing nearby not looking perturbed at all for my distractibility.

I was about to say something when a voice spoke from the ring of warriors by the crystal spot on the floor, "Would you like to see, Tarik?"

I dropped like a stone to the floor as the presence of The One who'd had His back to me turned fully about to regard me. Trembling I pressed my face to the shimmery floor as my heart beat a flutter

of nonstop turmoil of emotion at the reality of whose presence I was in.

The floor of glass reverberated beneath my face with the steps of the One, whose Name had been set above all other names by Eloah the Father. The ability to breathe ceased from me.

A hand as scarred as the legends of the Fire Spirit Scrolls had attested to suddenly bore me up to my feet and I was forced to look into the face of Him, I had only ever hoped to see at the conclusion of my life upon the land of my birth, but that I now stood across from still caught up in the life of my mortality. Inwardly quaking I took in His words to me, which held a wealth of warmth and the promise that I could trust every one of them.

“There is no need for you to fear

young one. The Father brought you here. You are an invited guest and no enemy to anyone among My host.”

I glanced about and it was true as the eyes of all were seemingly directed upon me and yet I felt no malice directed at all towards me, a boy of a lower order of flesh than this higher plateau of reality. He had been a being of flesh and blood such as I was, even so The One before me now had once allowed Himself to be born into my realm of existence as the Almighty's Son of old had allowed Himself to be used in service to His Father to be born over again into the body of flesh and blood such as I possessed.

He knew. I saw it in his eyes and I felt it in the warmth of his hand upon my shoulder, once burned by hell, but now

rejoicing in the balm of complete healing. In an anxious and yet uncontrollable way I stepped forward into the willing comfort I felt in this man who was like me and yet grandly apart from me.

The One, the King, loved me! Somehow everything felt better knowing that. The words of the Fire Spirit Scrolls were true!

Everything I had believed as a boy, taught to me by diligent parents was true. There was no lie in this place, only peace and the strength of limitless power, arrayed in favor of my future, of all things.

It was too much to take in and I sobbed heavily in the completion of spirit that I felt in the presence of this Man, who was Eloah in the flesh. He

had made a way for me to avoid the hell that I had seen in the fallen angel's eyes and felt in his hateful touch upon me and now as His arms held me to Him I felt the purity of love that had made it all possible.

All of a sudden a heavy righteous fear filled my entire being as with a crack of thunder and a roar of power without end there came to be the presence of One that I dare not look upon suddenly residing at my back. I would've fallen except for The One who held me, as it was, all the angelic host before me was bowed down upon one knee in respectful deference to the Master of all creation that was manifested behind me in an awesome glory too bright and magnificent to look upon.

Surely, I of all those gathered here,

should be on my face the most but the hands holding me up remained securely upon my person. Then an audible voice beyond the comprehension I'd always had as the silent urgings from within my spirit spoke with an authority as that of an intense fire that had redoubled over seven times only to give breath and say, **“Show him my Son. Show him that I see everything. Everything that goes on in the world of men.”**

As if in a daze I stepped out beside my Savior towards the crystalline circle on the floor. With bated breath I came to a stop in amazement as I beheld Walenthyana.

The imagery of the seven lands zoomed about and focused in a dizzying way as to show everything of landmass and at the same time be looking into the



daily affairs of every living individual upon the face of the land in a multi-tiered scope of view that was impossible to explain other than that I was witnessing it in real-time before me.

Literally, I was standing above the world I had been born to and in the light of what surely must now be heaven that existed above me, what I saw below seemed to me as being a small thing and instantly my mind, as if aided from within, by the concept that for the Ancient of Days the land below truly was but a foot stool in comparison to the glory of what existed above it. In quaking fear I felt the Majesty of the Creator breathing against my back in an unfathomable way even as every last part of my spirit basked at being in the presence of the source of all creation.

Crying, I stood still as once more the truth of all I had been taught as a boy and believed in faith as I had, was now being made real to me in the flesh in a way that forever was inscribing itself upon my heart. Flames licked about me, but I didn't burn.

Everything about me lay exposed to the One who had made me. Truly it always had been so, but I had never realized just how on display the daily actions of my life and the thoughts of my mind were on display for not only my Creator but also the entirety of Heaven's mighty host. It was humbling to even begin to comprehend.

I didn't know what to say or even if I dare speak at all. What did one say?

In need of help against the awesomeness of Divine presence behind

me that I could never hope to please on my own, I glanced to the King of Glory, the radiant Son, beside me who was the equal in spirit of all that pulsed with fire behind me and yet was a man after the likeness of my creation and that had once been mortal of body like me.

My cry for help not to be consumed by the righteous fire of the presence of the Almighty was preempted by the voice that had spoken everything into existence, **“Now you see yourself as I see you. All those who believe in my Son, I find no fault in, even as He bore the sins of all. So now you know in what high regard I view you child. You are to Me as a son. Never forget that Tarik. Do not cease from the ways of my Son exemplified to all mankind and testified of by the prophets of old.”**

I bowed my head forward in acknowledgment of all that had been said as words were beyond me and then suddenly I was singing and with eyes closed I turned and fell down before my Creator singing still the song that bubbled forth out of my spirit in an endless worship of praise to Him to whom all praise belongs. At first my voice alone rang out and then I felt as if the presence of the outer reaches of heaven just above us seemed to descend and suddenly my voice was just one of many, as the angelic host paid homage, even as I did, to The One that was before all others and who has no end.

Their voices rose loudly in a chorus indescribable even as it replicated perfect harmony beyond the abilities of my own singing, which was unique to

me, but no less the equal in heartfelt praise to The One who had made me.

As I sang, all of my young walk in the faith that my father had witnessed to me and that my mother had dutifully taught me was completely realized and I cried out with both joy and the need to give something of worth and then suddenly all words of my spirit were gone and silence reigned about me even as the presence of the mighty river of the Spirit of Eloah seemed to flow through every last part of me. Fearfully I looked up as the voice of my Creator commanded, **“Stretch out your hands young one, but old soul of heart.”**

Expecting death for my temerity to look I was instead reprieved by the sighting of that which would've led to my death by the sight of a thick heavy

cloud. A cloud that rested upon a throne, even as static charges of lightning coursed throughout the cloud as if it was a living veil for the epitome of glory beyond viewable by the human eye. Obediently I put out my shaking hands even as I remained on my knees with eyes downcast.

**“Where is your sword young warrior?”**

Feeling overcome by remembered emotion I bawled out, “He destroyed it! I lost it!”

**“No, you held onto it bravely. There is a difference son. You have the heart of a warrior and yet you have no sword. Truly the swords of men melt when faced with the extremes of heat but I have a gift for you.”**

A hand materialized out of the dense

smoke and in it was clutched a scroll.

**“Do you know what this scroll contains?”**

On a hunch I whispered out, “Your Words?”

Deep laughter that warmed every last part of me with life sounded out, **“Why yes, you are correct. Well done son, you have remembered My teachings, ever may your parents be blessed for this. Now, what are My words young one?”**

I thought extremely hard about it and all I could come up with was summed up in one word, “Life?”

**“Yes, life, son. The man who lives by My Words written in these scrolls shall never perish, but have everlasting life and now let My Words replace all that you have lost.”**

The hand that grasped a hold of the scroll let go and the scroll swirled through the air in a golden whirl of light to alight down upon my still outstretched hands. Truly my hands burned as the scroll before my eyes turned into the imagery of a fiery sword beyond all brilliance of manly fabrication. As if deeply imprinted into my very heart my Creator's voice said, **“This sword that I give you to wield will never be taken away, for even as My Words are forever, even so shall all pass away before one jot or tittle that I have spoken should be lost. Now rise and step into My calling for your life!”**

Rising up still clutching the sword that was more than a sword, but now felt as if it was within the very essence of who I was, I stepped forward and found



myself upon the back of a fiery chariot. Even as I had felt but a moment before I now watched as the fiery sword in my hands became a living flame that dispersed into the very heart of me and I gripped a hold of the side rail of the chariot that was constructed of fire and as if from a long way away I heard the Almighty say, **“Remember all that you have seen and know that My eyes are always upon the ways of the righteous. You are a chosen vessel by Me to do wonders so that this generation is not left without a witness. Fight for Me! Let no other cause consume you as I am first in all things and from Me every good thing comes, even so ask of Me and I will deliver you what you ask even as My Words are the sword by which you shall live by. Now, son,**

**open your eyes.”**

I opened my eyes and once more I stood within the forest that I had been driven from. Darkness was giving way to light as the sun rose over the horizon.

No sword remained in my hands, but from within I remembered everything and from the fullness of my spirit I began to sing. My voice was but that of a boy, but I had been forever changed and even as I knew that I felt the forest do the same.

Dimensions of awareness previously unknown to me opened up and as I sang of the glory of my Creator and the sovereignty that He alone possessed, all the voices of creation around me began to cry out with joy, as the enshrouding darkness that had remained both day and night within this forest of mystery was

beginning to be driven off by the light of the glory of the revealment of the ways and commands of Eloah, the Most High. Creation knew His Name and so I sang it over and over and the forest as a whole all about me remembered.

Like a shockwave the truth of awareness of bygone eras rippled through the vegetation even as the very air of the forest changed as electric shocks sparked enthusiastically even as flowers began bloom ever more so profusely. Just as surely, every dark creature that had slipped into this forest and polluted it with its presence now scurried away, as they were all reminded of how temporary their existence was.

My voice became just one of many as trees breathed out and the rocks rumbled

and the animals of the higher orders rejoiced with roars and bugles of triumph as they felt order once more beginning to be restored to what it had once been like before it had been broken so long ago. I did not question my role in all of this or why Eloah would choose me, of all people, and yet just as surely He was using me to bring forth this change and it was within my heart to please Him in all that I did, so I sang all the harder as truly His Spirit was doing all the work.

I began to walk still singing completely unmindful of all the dangers that had filled my young heart with fear, mere hours before. In the light of what I knew in this moment, there was no room for fear.

Indeed, there was only room for

singing in adoration of all that I had seen of my Master. A jaguar of immense size bowed down before me upon the path that I strode and I let off singing even as the song of renewal that I had first given sound to resounded throughout the forest as it continued to work a change for the positive. The jaguar lifted his massive head respectfully and in no way did I fear him as I waited for his words.

“Master, this way. Your kind need you, even as my kind once more recognize your authority over us.” He issued forth on a ruffled huff of air that washed over me warmly.

“Lead on Rafargan.” I said, as his name was supplied to me from within the spirit.

He inclined his head and took off through the forest at a lope and I

followed along only to realize that I was no longer a boy. In some astonishment as I ran I looked down upon my hands and saw that they were those of a man as was the rest of me. Truly I had been changed and with a will to please my Creator I ran all the harder and rejoiced in the feeling of being grown up beyond my years.

Coming to a glen within the forest I stopped as the jaguar sidled off to the one side even as he rumbled, "We saved all that we could."

My gaze ran over the gathered children many of whom I recognized that ranged in age from barely walking to early teenage years that all together numbered about three hundred. With emotion in my voice that didn't sound at all like I remembered it from yesterday I

said, "You have done well, Rafargan. I thank you for this service that you and other loyal beasts have put upon yourselves to do, at great peril to yourselves. May you all be blessed by the Most High for your kindness to us."

**"So it shall be."** Echoed out the familiar voice of glory itself that I had just heard in a realm above this realm of dimensional existence.

The gathered children and creatures alike flattened to the ground in terrified abeyance at the sounding of the voice above all others, that now spoke with an authority that none gathered would ever dare question, **"I, do not do as others do or see as others claim, as it has not entered into the hearts of any those secrets which I have reserved for Myself, only to reveal them to whom I**

**deem worthy. Behold, you are a remnant yet worthy to bear arms and testify as to the truth of your Father's ways before the world and now you see that I have not forgotten you. I see all. I know all. I reveal all and by Me all things that have come to be first came into existence by My Word. Few in the eyes of the world you may be, but I will raise up a remnant in these last days that will testify of Me and many others whom I will call will join you and there will be a witness against the darkness of this age and you shall not fail in this quest, for it is I the Most High, that goes before you! I AM has deemed it so and now let the last days begin! Fight for Me, children, even as your fathers and your mothers before you did, so even now it falls to**



**you to do righteously and if you so do My will then know, that I will be your friend, your comfort, your overcoming help in time of great need. I am faithful to all those who place their trust in Me. Now let the work that I have purposed begin, and let none of you call yourselves weak for behold, I have made you mighty!”**

Every creature of the forest both of tree and of flesh, roared in a salute to the voice from above even as the forest once more shook with the presence of the Almighty close by. My gaze drifted down from the sky above to the gathered assembly of young men and women who rose from off the ground in astonishment to find themselves no longer children.

They glanced from one to the other and then their eyes turned to me and I felt

the rise within me to be a leader and with a prayer whispered for help I spoke aloud, “Yes, you are no longer children, but the choice to act like a child remains within you. You’ve been called to a life within the forces of the Most High in order to witness of the truth first revealed to us to witness of the scrolls authored by the Fire Spirit, the Spirit of Eloah. Now is the time for you to decide whether to accept you’re calling and fight for the Most High or to remain here without a cause to call your own. I am called to fight and if needs be die in order to fulfill the Creator’s Will for my life. I have seen only a little and yet I tell you the promise for those who believe in the ways of our faith in Eloah above and His Son who came to us in the flesh are truly great! I will not rest all the days of

my life until I see evil vanquished and wickedness cast from the hearts of men! Who is with me?"

Those gathered in the clearing gave out a great shout and Rafargan sitting nearby gave out a deep chuckle of appreciation. I glanced his way and respectfully he rose up and asked, "What are your orders Sir?"

"First we take back the forest. Then wherever else the Spirit of The Most High leads us."

If ever a cat's face turned wolfish Rafargan's did that now as he licked his lips and said with a gesture of one paw off to the side, "I know where a den of iniquity lies nearby. Shall we pay them a visit?"

I chuckled deeply instantly taking to this jaguar's demeanor of confidence,

“Lead on.”

With a great bound forward of bunched up muscle springing free, Rafargan set off through the forest again. I sprang after him seemingly unarmed to the task and yet completely unmindful of it at the same time, along with the fact of whether or not anyone from the clearing was following me or not.

## Chapter Five

# A Divine Calling

The forest around me became a blur as I ran at great speed in pursuit of the Jaguar, as I would never have been able to do as the boy that I had started this day out as. Everything had changed and with opened eyes I saw more of my surroundings than I ever had before.

The treebeasts mixed among the other tree kinds were an open book to me now, both those who ashamedly remained silent and those who were cheering. That said, none of them sought to twist free of

their roots as Thomanalin had done or seemed able to move freely about as Asmantha had.

Even in these curious entities of the forest there were those who excelled above the aptitudes of their own kind and now looking back I beheld that only seven of all those gathered in the clearing were in hot pursuit of the future as I was set now upon doing. So be it then.

Who said armies had to be large in order to accomplish something of great significance. I would rather have a handful of righteous warriors willing to go against all odds then a legion of warriors with a preset breaking point that they weren't willing to go past let alone be challenged by.

Calling out in the run through what felt

like layers of the forest rather than a span of distance traveled, I asked for what I felt was the immediate need and that was something to fight with.

**“Jump!”** Commanded the voice of my Creator from within and I did.

The blur of the forest abruptly diminished to a slow slide of realization as there suddenly appeared heavenly knights of light as I had seen above within the intermediary realm above this plain of existence. They pressed in from all sides as if a part of this reality and yet maintaining distance from actively being a part of all of its physical limitations.

Their outstretched hands fell upon me and bore the immediate results of feeling myself outfitted in a way that felt oh so right. I landed and as I did I spun around

to gaze at the outfitters of heavenly origin only to see one toss something bright and shiny at me.

My hand reacted and with an agility of skill spoken into me I seized ahold of the grip of a sword grander in appearance than even my fathers had been. For all its beauty though, I knew it was but a tool in the here and now and not my answer to any battle of the spirit, but that said it was still beautiful to behold and I whispered my intense gratitude to my Heavenly Father above at receiving such a gift as this.

Sensing some latent property of the sword I gripped it with both hands as I spun around forward once more and pulled opposingly with both hands. The blade I gripped morphed apart until two replicas of the original were now



gripped in either of my hands.

With a shout that felt like thunder to my own ears I streaked forward after Rafargan and several others of his kind as they with a ferocity equal to my own roared and jumped over a rocky ledge to disappear from view. I raced out upon the rocks and likewise jumped with yet another cry of war echoing from my lips and trailing out behind me as I fell down through space confident in the future of conquest that lay before me in a way that I could never explain other than to say that it was of Eloah.

My booted feet slipped down through the dank misty air of a pit in the forest that never would I have dared to enter before let alone trespass in the vicinity of. Evil was steeped into the very rocks of this place that had seen much of

unspeakable atrocity, but now bore witness of a change orchestrated by the outpouring of Eloah's Fire Spirit that had been given to those willing to wield it or should I say those willing to be wielded as a weapon by the Most High.

Truly, I felt apart from myself and all I had ever been before as I fell down confidently into a pit that held many horrors of which I only saw as unnatural things overlong meant for destruction. The eyes of all the creatures gathered below gazed up in open sighted looks of horror even as they outnumbered us by 10 to 1.

The descriptions of them were too numerous to mention. Men with the heads of rams along with their female counterparts, single eyed monsters of great height wielding stone hammers and

the slithering form of massive snakes with the faces of men and women that were kept poised above the ground as in place of legs their giant coils of snakeskin did the work of propelling them forward.

There were more atrocities than these, but truly I could care less as to the horrocity of their form and the shapes of dismaying unnaturalness. They all must die!

That knowledge was everything in this moment and all I intended to apply myself towards. Rafargan sank his teeth into one of the coils of the snake people even as his great talons latched on and the two went tumbling as with a hiss the snake woman sought to bite Rafargan with a set of exaggerated canines that I took to be as poisonous as the natural

world's true kind counterpart.

Rafargan tumbled free of the twisting coils and the snake woman reared forward to strike. Twisting in air I sliced through the back of her unnaturally scaled neck. The blade in my hand swung true and with a cut off hiss her head went toppling even as the body of her coils went writhing in the death spasms of its former kind.

Blood showered about freely and with a resounding crunch of stone pulverizing beneath me I landed with an agility of force upon the floor of this pit beyond any normal endurance of a man to withstand on his own and apart from the empowerment of his Creator to do marvelously. With a cry of triumph I flexed upward from my landing squat even as the ground reverberated beneath

my boots as those who dared to experience the life of a righteous calling made impact with the ground of this cursed hole in the midst of a former paradise of old.

Lifting both swords out to my sides I beheld the licking flames of heat that coursed down them, which seemed but the outpourings of the eternal spirit of my Creator within me and I knew joy. My God was with me and every battle from this day forward, no matter if it was to my death, would be to the glory of my Elohim and with the same passion that I had witnessed of those who had interceded to spare my life the day before I cried out, “To war!!!”

I sprang forward towards the horde of surprised minions of darkness's alchemy. This pit that had served as their

home now bore them no escape from the warriors of lit upon flame that carved into them with a ferocity of will beyond any they had ever witnessed before in the hearts of mankind.

Consternation rang out and their ogerish grunts to bleating voices punctuated by agonized hisses sounded loud as the multitude gathered was burned by Heaven sent fury. The time of man was supposed to be all but over! In their wicked consciousness's they could not believe what their eyes or senses were telling them to the contrary.

Where had this remnant of the old Creator seekers come from? Their answers remained hidden to them as they fell beneath carving blades of flame that swung with skillful abandon that was unmatched in skill or passion by any of

the creatures pressed back against the walls of what was to become their own cemetery.

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Sweat dribbled down my cheeks and squinting I peered about the gory carnage of this place that no longer bore the presence of the twisted lifeforms corrupted apart from the higher orders of creation. Turning about I beheld Rafargan standing nearby.

He stood on three paws as blood ran freely from the fourth. That said the fire of his eyes was that of a warrior, sated in the knowledge that a great victory had been achieved.

I shared with him in the moment, but only for a second as suddenly the walls

of the stony pit began to shake violently and debris began to rain down upon the twisted bodies of the fallen. My eyes took in the stone stairs to the far side of the pit and pointing with a sword I cried out hoarsely, "This way!"

The others of those who had dared all to follow me to this pit headed fast for the stairs. Both worn of body and spirit I followed along behind them.

Great boulders began crashing down and the stairs themselves began cracking up. Things didn't look good and I was on the verge of despairing when suddenly the stairs stilled in their trembling to a significant degree.

My eyes took in the sight of the cause for that as I beheld the roots of trees all along the rim making a concerted effort to hold the stones together near the



stairway even as the rest of the pit was becoming quickly unrecognizable as the forest above caved into it.

“Up them!” I cried in a rejuvenated spirit as I saw the strain the trees were putting themselves under to hold the stairs together for us.

I was the last one to the stairs except for Rafargan who trailed behind me and with a will I surged up them as the grumble of stone and the creak of tree roots under pressure rang loud in my ears. I reached a landing in the stairway and stopping for a moment I looked back. Rafargan had only made it half as far as I had and noticing that I had stopped he roared, “Go!”

That’s simply was not the way of it. I sheathed both my swords into scabbards that I hadn’t noticed until now and then I

ran back down the stairs that were beginning to heave up and down again as the tree roots lost their battle in holding them steady.

Rafargan, looking drained of life, mustered up a growl at my appearance by his side that was halfhearted at best. He was a big beast. Fully my size and a full half more and yet I didn't care as I seized ahold of clumps of his black fur and lifted with the strength of a man yet untested to the extreme limits of his endurance.

“No master!” He grumbled worriedly as I lifted with a heart to do the impossible. As his massive belly cleared over my helmeted head and he settled heavily upon my shoulders I started up the stairs with a heart that felt on the verge of bursting because of the

exertion demanded of it.

My lungs had no air and he was far too heavy to reasonably carry up such a steep staircase, but I didn't care. As long as it was in my power to do something about it no one was ever going to be left behind again. That said I knew it wasn't likely that my dedication to such a noble ideal would be that long in the grand scheme of things as we simply weren't going to get up these crumbling stairs in time.

Hands seized a hold of both me and Rafargan and in dismay I realized how close we suddenly were to the top of the stairway. Where the time had gone I didn't know as it felt like I had been in the effort to climb but a few steps for over an hour.

In a daze I stumbled along with the

forceful tugs of the others upon me and with a grumbling rumble I heard the stones of the stairway fall off into the abyss behind me as I and those with me tumbled forward into the forest understory. The destruction of the pit continued, but I was lost to it as I fell to the forest floor spilling Rafargan from off my shoulders in the process.

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My heart hurt. Everything hurt!

Hands pulled at me and I was flipped over onto my back. Blinking I opened my eyes as I felt my head come to rest on something softer than the rigidness of the forest floor.

I stared upward into the green eyes of one of those few who had chosen to

come with me. Her helmeted visor obscured much of her face from me, but I'd already seen enough.

She was beautiful and something about her called to me with a finality beyond simple attraction and yet my heavenly purposed task in life was such as to not allow me the desires of a man in any normal span of an era. I had a prescribed journey of conflict ahead of me and the look of caring softness reflected in those eyes down upon me was very hard to fight against.

Mumbling as I panted for breath I whispered out not really making any sense, "I have to fight. Nothing else matters right now."

Her visored head nodded and in a husky sounding voice I instantly felt stirred by she whispered, "I know. I can

wait.”

I blinked. Wait? How long would that be?

I didn't know. All I knew in this moment was how much I needed rest and the cushion of her lap beneath my head had a comfort to it beyond my ability to fight and I closed my eyes giving up the ability to remain objective. Eyes closed with unconsciousness closing in I asked, “What's your name?”

“Jafina, my Liege.”

Shaking my head I muttered, “I'm no lord.”

I didn't see her shake her head no to my statement or hear her say, “In the end our people have the leader we always needed. Why is it that you have come so late to us, when we are no more a nation?”

Rafargan laying not too far away left off licking at his injured paw and said, "He is who he is and he is because he is."

Jafina looked up in the spirit of consternation at the large cat's words. Rafargan smiled and said, "In the forest we have a saying. It goes like this, 'Every nut comes from a tree, but where did the acorn first grow, if not appointed by the Master of Time to do so.'"

Jafina whispered through the gaps in her helm, "I don't understand what you mean by that."

Rafargan ruefully said by way of further explanation, "Every forest starts out small so why worry about how few of you remain? If it is meant for your people to live then they will much the same as a forest springing forth from a

few randomly placed nuts that survived through chance and circumstance to become a forest such as you see around you. There is no point in worrying about numbers as any great endeavor first begins with but a few.”

Jafina looked away and remained silent as she gazed back down at the warrior whose head lay resting heavily on her lap. Rafargan observing the two kept silent upon issuing forth any further remarks but that said he couldn't help but let a ruffled smile perturb across his lips as he contemplated on the reality that it took two trees to make a nut.

Rafargan looked away and with interest took in the sight of the debris strewn pit slowly filling up with water from a stream once rerouted by an ogre. The changes wrecked upon the forest



were beginning to be wiped away one by one.

It was a good time to be alive. A dangerous time, but a good time for those who remembered the old ways. The first ways.

Rafargan looked about the clearing formed beneath a massive ash tree. All members of the band of eight other than Jafina were battling to stay awake and rumbling out softly Rafargan said, "Sleep well young warriors, as for once there is little to fear in this part of the forest as night falls upon the land."

The ash tree, revealed itself as a treebeast, whom Rafargan knew by the name of Sostina, breathed out a relieved sigh in echo to his statement, "Tis so. Tis so. But if there be any danger I'll be a dealing with it! Sleep now and I'll keep

the watch even as by the grace of the Almighty above I no longer have to see the evil of that pit persist one day longer than I already have these many long years.”

Rafargan let his head rest down upon his uninjured paw and his sides breathed out evenly in a peaceful much-needed slumber as he took the treebeast’s word with confidence that she would do what she had said.

Sostina’s gracefully smooth barked features located higher up the length of the tree creased into a bitter sweet smile as she gazed down upon the warrior that had begun to galvanize a forest long asleep once more into action. Softly she said taking care that her words were not loud enough to rouse the sleeping jaguar, “You did well Thomanalin. Aye, ya did.”

She turned her eyes to look about as night fell upon the forest.

In the distance the sky ocean's fell and yet the silence of the forest was no more as creatures long trained to be silent now timidly spoke out their songs as they once had long ago before the twisting of all that was good had occurred. Emotionally Sostina soaked in the sounds of what truly was freedom on the rise.

Freedom came at a cost though and for this one night Sostina was grateful to stand guard over the lives called to a higher purpose that slumbered beneath her trustingly. Tonight they would be safe, but what about the other nights?

How could so few overturn the legions of darkness that existed expansively across this forest let alone

the lands beyond it? It was a tall order to be sure, but glancing at the newly formed lake nearby she acknowledged only too clearly that the impossible had already been achieved once today. Perhaps it could be achieved again.

Aye, she hoped so. It was good to dream again.

## Chapter Six

# Whispering Leaves

### **Three Months Later**

The ground of this marshy wetland depressed beneath every footfall I made upon it. There were but a few trees here and there that had managed to survive within the bog as everything else was choked out by the massive grasses that grew up over my head by the span of another man's height still.

It was dark, but even as no sky ocean fell upon this distant corner of the savanna the grasses still glowed dimly

enough by which to see by. Mists rose heavily all about me and I found myself despairing of the purpose that had driven me to come to this foreboding haunt that not even the dark ones cared to linger in, as it was simply just too unpredictable.

These marshlands laying off to the one side of the inland savanna were a no man's land between the forest and the grass where only the bravest of creatures dared to roam. The marshes could open up and swallow one whole in the blink of an eye or worse yet, catch explosively onto fire as gasses, formed from rotting vegetation, erupted.

The swamplands could burn down in a day and yet, with the passage of a few days the new grass would already have risen several feet into the air once more obscuring what lay within its damp

enclosure. Rumor had it that what lay reclused within these marshes was worth the risk I took to come here.

That said my hope was dimming even as I contemplated on the unlikely reality of being able to find my way out of here. My hand reached out and I felt at a broken read of grass. It was a fresh break.

In the dim light I looked down and the soggy ground gave evidence to the fact that something large and heavy had come this way. I knelt down and felt the ground. With eagerness my fingers traced the outline within the sticky mud that the creature's hoof had made.

Rising I headed to the right as this was the way the tracks led. I moved as swiftly as I could as I had no wish to be found in this marsh by days first light.

The insects were truly a force to be dealt with let alone how unbearable the heat of day would make the smell brought on by the decay of everything once living now left to rot within the stagnant ponds of water situated all about.

The muddy track I followed suddenly rose unexpectedly to higher ground. Before long I was on a path. No one, including the oldest of the treebeasts, had mentioned anything about there being paths within this place of pressed on despondency.

I made much faster time as I ran along the path that now bore the tracks of several beasts and not just the one that I had followed to this hidden corridor through the grasses. Inwardly I rejoiced as the evidence of more and more traffic within this realm of tall reeds and



standing water became evidenced.

Suddenly, my journey here was a success, even if I came away empty handed. The legendary Horses of Zavorra had managed to find a way to survive.

They were no ordinary horses. Indeed they were the first horses from which all other horses had been sired that populated the length and breadth of the seven lands. Unlike their offspring though, they had not lost their ability to speak in an understandable tongue, at least that was the rumor. Time would tell hopefully soon enough whether that still was the case.

Perhaps of all the obstacles presented in the taking back of the forest the most formidable one remained firmly stationed within savannas of this end of

the forest where the sky oceans did not fall upon. Once they had, but through sorcery and a twisting of the air the oceans of the sky, no longer came this far out into the grasslands.

Few creatures dared to come out into the heart of the savanna, as out here there was no cover from the foe who had made it their home to the exclusivity of all others. A foe that ran as fast as the fleetest of my father's horses and yet possessed all the cunning of a man.

Truly, two had become melded into one in an act of sheer depravity beyond the morals of all that should ever be. The Centaurs of Argantheum, hybrid constructs of both horse and man, were the most formidable foe that remained within the forest that with an awakening zeal was casting off the vestiges of time

and claiming back all the goodness of the ways that had once been.

Fallen men and the twisted creations of the fallen angels alike were fleeing the forest left and right, as suddenly the forest was becoming a more unsure reality for them than they had made it for all high order peaceable dwelling animals. The renewal of this seventh land, greater in honor I now felt than all the others, was held in check by this one final holdout of evil that existed within the very heart of the forest.

I would not rest until it too was stamped out. That was why I was here.

I slowed my pace as I felt the presence of something other than myself within the cloistered vestiges of this grassed over jungle of reeds and rotting vegetation. I had brought no weapon

with me for if the rumors were true it would have served me no good and above all I did not wish to offend the magnificent creatures that lingered on here in this marshy place of lost dreams.

The centaurs, it was rumored, feared the crushing hooves of the Zavorrans more than anything else, as the centaurs in the eyes of the first horses were the worst of all possible abominations. It had been from their own stock that the centaurs had first been created from.

In the desire to crush all of the purity of the original orders a long time ago the Horses of Zavorra were deceived by several of the fallen angelic host. Imprisoned, against their will, the mares had been bred with the seed of man and through great sorcery the seed had taken hold and its offspring had been the

centaurs.

Worst of all, those same mares had been cajoled by their new masters to continue in service to them and it was in those days that all the captured herds of the Horses of Zavorra had lost their voices and become as seemingly unmindful of comprehension as many of the domesticated animals of the seven lands were today.

Upon having a great degree of their specialness endowed upon them by their Creator stolen from them, they had been herded from their inner forest paradise to serve the needs of men the world wide in both industry and war. The centaurs however had remained.

They were an elite force within the armies of darkness as they had sprung forth from one of the highest honored

creations of all and mankind itself. It was heavily rumored that those Horses of Zavorra that remained hated the centaurs with a consuming vengeance that drove them mad with the lust to kill them.

It was for this reason that the centaurs hunted the horses from which their own origin had come from down through the many years until the point of extinction had been reached many years ago. No horse of the first-order of horses that had not allowed themselves to be polluted by the actions of fallen men or the cajoling promises of devils in disguise was safe upon the savanna.

The centaurs set traps for them and as the centaurs were truly cunning opponents, many of the surviving herds had vanished over the years until it was

rumored that only one bunch remained. This intermediary land of marsh and bog was the last holdout of the Horses of Zavorra and with a silent hush to the night I stepped out into a stamped down spot that was quite sturdy and not marshy at all.

All around me the tall grasses of the marsh rose up sharply to between 10 and 14 feet high. Their cast-off glow only illuminated the scene dimly, while heavy mists enshrouded everything else.

I walked steadily forward into the space until a voice directly from behind me rumbled out deeply, "Tell me, man, why have you come here, to my domain?"

Gripped tensely by the stress of being both surprised and the self-acknowledgment of the deep peril that I

was in, I turned slowly around and let my eyes take in the most resplendently proportioned stallion that I had ever laid eyes on. He regarded me from a distance of not twenty five feet away across the clearing with a tossed mane of vengeful credence that said my time was short.

Spreading my hands out from my unarmored sides I said as I kept my head lowered deferentially in respect to this legend of a creature, "I am unarmed. I mean you no harm."

The stallion raged out savagely, "Man needs no weapons, save words alone!"

With one awful bound forward he surged directly toward me and I closed my eyes. There was nowhere to run to or any way possible of defending myself from this creature, even if I'd had a sword for truly the passion of this



stallion was such that he would have impaled himself upon my blade in order to simply crush the life out of me.

The crushing impact of the stallion into me never happened as with a dance of cat like grace he spun away from me leaving only the impact of churned up sod clumps to ping off of me. Slowly I opened my eyes to behold the massive stallion pacing in a circle around me.

He spoke, "So, a man with courage or perhaps at least one with a higher ideal than simply feeding himself and breeding. A rarity these days to be sure. I'll humor you a little while longer. Why are you here?"

He stopped to regard me solemnly with a look of wisdom going forth from his eyes that bespoke more in volume than I had seen in the eyes of most men

and I said, "You know why."

He tossed his head impatiently and I continued with, "What man in his right mind would venture into a place like this in the dark of the night if I was not in desperate need of something. You have ears and I know that you must have noticed the changes taking place in the forest as of late."

He looked away and said, "Truly the leaves have ears and a willingness to gossip, Tarik. What you do is noble, but you have nothing you can offer me. Still it has been encouraging to see that courage and truthfulness of character are yet to be found in the hearts of man, though you be fewer in number than my own kind. Go now, as it is as I feared that you have come here with nothing to offer other than the promise of a

centaur's spear through the flank. I am not ready yet to be so foolish as to hope that there is any future in having hope that things will ever get better.”

With a bounding leap he was gone and for several solemn moments that stretched on into minutes seemingly without end I stood there as the sounds of the stallion's passage through the marsh grew dimmer and dimmer to the ear. I had not expected this.

Somehow I had expected to come away with more. We had little enough chance as it was against the centaurs in their grassland habitat and now without the option of fielding our own cavalry we had no hope at all!

I looked heavenward as my despair in the moment took full hold of me and seemed to blind me to the reality of how

much of the seemingly impossible that had already occurred. Blinking I clung to the scattered testaments of faith hard won over the past three months and reaffirmed them within my soul as a source of strength to go on in belief with.

“Not by might, but by the Spirit of Eloah will the fight be won.” I nodded in affirmation of that stated truth and pressed forward in the direction that I hoped would take me clear of the marshes.

We would just have to do without the horses as hard as that was to contemplate doing. If it was Eloah’s will for us to succeed we would and if not then we would make a tasty stew for days to come in the cook pots of our enemies.

It was midday by the time I managed to wearily pull free of the marshes and gain the firmer ground of the savanna. I would have to move stealthily from here on as the centaurs kept a steady patrol of this quadrant of the savanna and unarmed as I was I would be a meal for them before I knew it.

All that in mind, I jumped completely startled, as I rounded an out flung clump of tall marsh grass invading into the savanna to behold the black beast of my late-night encounter of the night before. He stood gazing out at the dry open grasslands before us with a wistfulness that was truly heart rending to behold.

I turned my gaze from him to look at the grass stretching out before us and

tried to imagine how awful it must be to be a horse destined to rule such a plain of grass and yet be permanently cooped up within a stinking mush pit of insecticidal horror as what lay behind us. I shook my head at the imagery of what torture that must be, especially for the Horses of Zavorra as it was rumored that they were extremely long-lived.

“You do well to empathize with my situation. Empathy is an often overlooked quality in a leader. It gets thrown out too much as seemingly a thing of weakness, but in reality all the best generals have always had it, as how else do you get into the mind of your opponent, but by imagining exactly how he is viewing the situation.”

The way he spoke in terms of reflective quality bespoke of experience

in the matter. Just how old was he?

He looked me directly in the eye and said, “My age matters not, all that matters is that the rage of injusticeness still lies like fire in my heart as from the time of being a young colt I witnessed my mother run through by a centaur’s lance, only to add to that all that I have seen since then. My words of last night were for the leaves of the swamp trees to hear as no doubt they have told there story to others since then, but there are no leaves to listen here Tarik so now you see the value of playing the mind of your opponent, correct?”

Speaking softly I said, “I see the wisdom that has preserved the members of your kind up till now and I am humbled because I have much to learn.”

“Ahh, but at least you’re willing to

learn. That Tarik, is half the battle in and of itself. Now mark my words young warrior of the Most High, that if there is to be a battle upon these plains then surely we will take part in it, as yet fire remains within us to strive against all that has corrupted what once was our domain that we ruled over with majesty gifted to us from on high. As to any more detail I will not say as it is best for the plans of any battle to be few and simple and above all talked about as little as possible, but know that we will be there to take part in it.”

I stared into the stallion’s eyes and for a moment there was stillness and then he shifted away to head once more for the marshes that afforded them cover from their nemesis of the day. I did not like the independence the stallion insisted on



having, but it was beyond my power to make him do anything so I stayed silent and left all my questions unasked as I took comfort in the fact that the odds were now a lot more in our favor, but then who was taking odds to begin with. In the grand scheme of things I knew that luck had nothing to do with our successes within the forest these past few months.

The other children who had been changed into young adults had come around and had found some courage to take part in the endeavor my original group of seven had started, but they had less merit than the seven who had leaped into the flames of destiny as it were right alongside of me at the first battle and thus I had positioned each of the seven as vanguards over the group of the late

bloomers until each governed over approximately 50 fighters each. It was a small army indeed, but we were winning with the help of our forest allies and the grace of Eloah.

Indeed, Eloah went before us in opposition to all those who were not of His creation and those given over to the ways of darkness. Steadily I was learning that numbers didn't win the day, but rather a combination of rightness of purpose and the strength of the Spirit of the Most High.

All that said, grave doubts arose within me when it came to the centaurs and I hated myself for the lack of faith that evidenced within me where they were concerned. I had seen their maneuvers as they wheeled around in perfect formation out upon the grass as

they tempted us to leave the shelter of the forest and come out and face them.

Their prowess with weaponry was immense as were their beastly abilities of speed and size. They were smaller than the Horses of Zavorra, but in number they added up into the thousands. The coming battle with them needed to be fought in the mind surely before any engagement of land and steel was begun.

If I were a centaur and knew my numbers were far greater than my opponent how then would I act on the field of battle?

As I walked my mind fought over all the possibilities and with a whispered prayer for guidance I began to do what the centaurs had done to the horses for years on end, in short I began to form the basis for a plan to trap the centaurs, but

surely they would not fall for it and yet arrogance has a mind of its own. All that remained was how one might massage the aspect of their arrogance to be the only thing the centaurs acted out of in retaliation with.

Indeed the only weakness my enemies of the moment possessed that I could lay firm claim to was arrogance. Arrogance within their superior numbers and trained prowess in battle. Surely, if there was any undoing of their stranglehold upon the savanna it must lie there and to that end I planned accordingly, but many questions remained.

It was getting on toward dark before I reached the border of the forest where our forces lay encamped. The treebeasts loyal to us were here in this spot in greater number than in other areas of the

forest and so the dark of night posed less of a threat to us.

That aside we had plenty of sentries. Idly I let my gaze drift upward to a lofty branch where Rafargan lounged indulgently upon. His big yellow eyes glowed down at me and his ears perked up as he rumbled out softly, "I trust that you met with success?"

Schooling my voice as to not reveal too much I said, "Well, I found them, if that's what you mean. Getting them to do anything though would be more akin to attempting to keep the leaves from whispering."

Rafargan chuckled, he said nothing else and in a way I knew that he had seen through my purposed crypticness. Looking around at the leaves of supposed friendly trees gathered all

around I wondered as to how many of our private conversations were being broadcast about whether through maliciousness or just plain gossip. It was a sobering thought to consider to be sure.

Honley suddenly appeared from beside a large oak trunk. He was one of my group of seven and of them all he was the strongest save for me. Most importantly though he was ever reliable and had been of great help to me in seeing to the structuring of the army that we were amassing.

“How goes the war?” I said, knowing already that there had been no skirmishes today.

“The same.” He commented. I patted him on the back and went to move on, but paused as he asked, “Will they

help?”

Glancing to him I gave him a direct look that said otherwise from my comment of, “Hard to say yet.”

He nodded perceptively and glanced at the trees surrounding us. He apparently had been wondering the same about their trustworthiness.

“Tell me, Honley, when you were a boy did you ever help your mother weave the dry grass mats for the floor coverings?”

“All the time. So have most of the others, why?”

“Well, I want you and all the others to start weaving ones just like them except for one thing. Idly I pulled my one sword from its scabbard and sliced off the stem of a dead twig.

Leaning down I picked up the twig

that was the thickness of my thumb and then some and began fastening a sharp point to the one end of it. Sharp point completed I now had a stick of about 10 inches in length. Holding it out to Honley I said, “Harden it in the fire and then include it in the mat like so.” I said as I positioned the stick with the pointed end facing upward to the sky.

Honley blinked and then said to my continuing chagrin, “Yes, my Lord. We’ll all get busy right away making them. Where did you ever come up with such an idea?”

“Something my father once made mention of. Honley you seriously need to stop referring to me as a lord. I came from the same village that you did and I make no claim to royalty.”

Honley’s brow smoothed out as he



smiled and said, “And what else would be befitting of our leader. Truly you are a lord among men. While none of us has any claim to being of royal blood, you of all of us have been appointed to the position of leader by the Most High, no less, and so it seems to me that respect deems me in turn to be respectful of you for the significance that the Most High has placed in you and so I will continue to do so respectfully, Sir.”

I sighed and began to move on. Sudden hunger assaulted me and I started to make mention of asking if any dinner remained when Honley preempted me by saying, “She has it ready for you. Just over that way.”

Not meeting his gaze I nodded and continued on in the direction that he had pointed. No explanation was needed as

to who the, she, in question was. Only Jafina took it upon herself to do the extra work of not only seeing to her own needs, but often to my own as well. I appreciated her greatly for it as I had the tendency to forget what I needed in favor of accomplishing more in the larger picture of things and yet I felt guilty of the extra effort she put out on behalf of me.

I stepped into the welcoming blaze of the small fire and set down beside it. I reached out and picked up the thoughtfully prepared meal set near enough to the fire as to stay warm, but not get too hot as to burn.

I took a bite of the food and with appreciation glanced over to where Jafina lay back against a tree trunk asleep. As if on cue her green hued eyes

opened to stare at me enigmatically.

Of all my fellow warriors she was the most lethal. In a way I doubted if she had ever even been asleep. She was always seemingly ready and as for an ally and confidant I could ask for no better.

More than that, I could not wish for any deeper relationship with her in the here and now and thankfully she did not require it of me, but instead she remained open and ever helpful as if she lived to be of service to me. She asked no questions as to how the meeting with the horses had gone, instead she let me eat and I felt myself relaxing more and more by the moment.

The prepared bed of blankets suddenly looked very good, but I forced myself to finish the food, which really wasn't all that hard to do. Jafina spoke,

“When do we fight the horse devils?”

Horse devils was the common name for centaurs, especially by women as the lusts of the centaurs were well known from the fables that we had all been taught of as children. Centaurs sought to copulate with anything they could get their hands on, but human women especially.

Such an act of bestiality often resulted in the death of the woman in the worst way possible. Long had the legends been told of the fabled horsemen as mythical bogeyman that carried away girls that didn't behave. None of those stories had ever been really all that seriously taken, until we had come here to this forest only to learn that such creatures still existed.

I glanced her way and said, “They

have reputedly over 5000 of their kind fit for battle and we have but a mixed force of man and beast numbering something short of 500.”

Her eyebrow rose, “Since when have numbers mattered, my Lord?”

There was that title again. To answer her question though it hadn't been a thing of concern up till now. From a realistic view the disparity in numbers should matter, but acts of faith were ever, if rarely, won by greater numbers.

Case in point I certainly hadn't had numbers in my favor the day that I had jumped into the pit with but seven others and some large cats to help me in a battle that any would have deemed impossible to step away victorious from. Walking on that same faith I nodded and glanced over at Jafina and asked, “How

about we take them on tomorrow.”

Smiling she nodded and said, “The sooner their destruction comes the better, I’m thinking.”

“Your faith truly outshines my own Jafina.”

She shook her head no and abruptly rose up from the fire. Not being able to avoid it, my gaze as if drawn from a primal urge from within, took in how beautifully filled out she was in all the ways that would drive a man to desire her as his bride.

It was not only her great beauty that bore attractiveness, but it was also the confident way that she had about her that made everything she possessed physically only seem more amplified. As beautifully feminine as she was she lacked nothing in agility or stamina.

I was her leader and her attention to me as such was humbling but even more so, the fact that she wanted me as something more than simply that and it was both a daily surprise to me even as it was a torment and willing myself not to give in to the desire to dream about all that there could be with her I glanced away from her and said, "They have but one weakness and it is this that I wish to exploit above all others."

"I have heard of their arrogance even as I have witnessed it with my eyes." Jafina said softly and I nodded in concurrence before saying, "In order for us to be successful we need them to over commit themselves and do something rash."

"I do believe you have left out one other weakness that they possess Tarik

that may well lead into taking advantage of their primary weakness.”

Feeling drawn in by her I turned my gaze away from the fire and back to her only to witness that the sight of her was the greater of the two blazes within my vision. Softly I asked, “Which is what?”

“Their lust, especially for a woman such as I. You need them angry in order for them to act impulsively upon the field of battle, yes?”

Speaking slowly I said, “Yes, that would be very helpful.”

She nodded and then said, “Leave it to me my Lord, and Eloah willing, I shall get you your war of tomorrow.”

Staring with the intenseness that I felt risen to a fever pitch within me I asked, “What are you planning?”

As she backed away from the fire



gracefully she shrugged and said, “Oh something, no doubt on the foolish side of what would be commonly done, to be sure.”

“Jafina .....” I called out warningly, as if I had exchanged roles with her late father, to which she only chuckled and said in response to my censoring tone, “I learned from the best.”

That said she was gone from the fire’s light, every instinctive urge within me bade me to go after her and put a stop to whatever she had in mind, but I remained where I was by force of will alone. As a leader I had learned that to let others excel and thus gain their own glory and recognition before Eloah one had to give them free reign to rise and fall on their own terms.

To stop Jafina was to limit the

greatness of her potential and truly would my desire to pull her back from her reckless course be the same if she was some other woman that I had no interest in as a mate? Probably not and though remaining by the fire was the right thing to do any chance that I'd had of getting restful sleep had vanished far from me.

Closing my eyes I folded my hands and commenced to pray. Prayer was all I had now to affect the positive future of the woman that I wished to be mine above all others.

Tiredly I made my pleas known until in fatigue I collapsed to my side next to the fire forsaking the blankets altogether. I closed my eyes and did my best to let go of Jafina to whatever fate Eloah had reserved for her, but it was hard and yet

I had nothing to succeed in if I didn't trust my Elohim with what I wanted most.

## Chapter Seven

# Male's End

Jafina stole through the darkness of the forest as if she was a tigress on the prowl. Confidently she made her way through the dark as if she could see as well as a tigress and truly she did possess a better set of eyes than many.

Still she relied on an uncanny sense of direction and other intangibles to guide her through the dark and not just eyesight. Finally she stopped in a moonlit patch of the forest.

The forest was silent around her,

devoid of the resurgent night sounds of late. Sensing the majesty of the beast that she had purposely come through this section of the forest to find, she inclined her head forward respectfully and waited silently not saying a word.

A long moment passed and then a shadow fell across her as something truly of a massive size stepped within the glow of the moon. No words were said as Jafina glanced up to take in the massive beast before her whose antlers stretched out to the side of his head as wide as she was tall and then some on each side.

One great hoof lifted and tapped down on a rock and she took that as her lead to speak and softly she did so, "It is said that you are among the last of your kind left alive. You live here within the forest

and venture no more out onto the grasses of your former realm. Your mates have all long since been slain and their young ones perished with them. Truly, you are alone or so it would seem. I am not the last of my kind, but truly my people are few and I know to some degree the loss that you must live with daily. You are not alone in your suffering. Even as you are not alone I wonder if I could ask of you assistance in the struggle we have against a common foe?"

Like water rumbling from an underground brook the great deer spoke, "You wish to ride me in place of the horse that did not come to aid you in your quest to win back the forest lands."

"No." Jafina said shaking her head slowly before then saying, "I need you because of you. You in no way are a

replacement, but rather you are a rarity that I greatly respect and humbly ask assistance of.”

The deer swung his massive head away, but continued to tower over her as she stood before him. “Your words are flattering young one, but my days are long and though vengeance is desirable I know that it is a fleeting emotion that serves no good in the end.”

“Does dying in this forest apart from your home of old serve any good purpose, noble one?”

The massive head swung back to her abruptly and bravely Jafina said in continuation, “I speak for myself when I say that I would sooner die with a sword in my hand with my enemies before me then die in the isolation of a place that is not my home!”

“Youth speaks rashly. It is ever the way of the young to insist on action in place of reserve. There is a time for everything young one.”

Jafina nodded respectfully in deference once more to the great beast who was the last of his kind and turned to go.

He spoke, “A time to live and a time to die. A time to mourn and a time to fight.”

Jafina turned back wonderingly and the great deer stepped forward into the light more fully, “Run and fetch a second sword young one. The query you seek patrols the forest edge beyond me before dawn’s first hour. It would be well to be ready to greet them would it not?”

In relief Jafina bubbled out, “Yes Sir! Thank you!”



“Why do you thank me? As I see it I have but allowed you to hasten my end as it were.”

Jafina stepped forward and reaching her hand out she let it softly slide along the muzzle of the great deer, “One of your great age has seen much I know, but these times that have come upon us are like none before. I serve under the leadership of the man in whom the Spirit of the Creator burns as brightly as a forest set ablaze. You, if you are to face the enemy with me tomorrow, must have a change in heart to believe that with Eloah guiding us and His Son aiding us even as the Most High’s Spirit goes out before us that truly we can accomplish anything. I have seen it done and I have faith to see it occur again and my great wish in this moment is for you to see it

too.”

The massive head nodded and Jafina left the moonlit glen quickly. The great deer stared after her for a moment and then commented dryly into the dark stillness, “And suddenly the young are wiser than the old. It must truly be the end for what sound reasoning is to be found in doing as I have when with belief the impossible is rightly doable? For such a day as this I suppose. Even so let it be!” With a resounding stamp of his front hooves the great deer threw back his antlered rack of greater pride than any other beast in the forest and issued forth a bellowed outcry of war and rageful pride that coalesced together as a statement of a beast ready to fight and no longer content to dwell within the shadows and watch the years drift by.

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The centaurs galloped hard along the forest periphery. They passed by this way most mornings in search of prey or any incursion into their territory.

Rounding a bend in the forest they drew to an abrupt halt as they collectively through up chunks of sod with their hooves as they caught sight of the great antlered beast approaching them solidly through the tall grass. Perhaps most unexpected of all was the imagery of the woman who sat astride the massive deer's great bulk that only tended to make her look smaller than she actually was.

The light of the rising sun glistened off the blades of two drawn swords which

she wielded in either hand with an ire that said she knew how to use them. The centaurs shared a glance and then as one turned to gaze once more with lasciviousness upon the woman sitting astride of the great deer.

The leader over the other five in the group spoke, “The morning holds both a feast and a bout of entertainment for us it appears lads.”

The others grunted in ascent as their beast like male appendages half distended in anticipation. For all of them the prospect of a woman such as this was a rarity not often afforded to them and so it would be an encounter to cherish. They would feast upon her along with the deer when they were done with them both and that only excited them more as the meat of both was rare

to find these days.

As one the six centaurs reached back with their manlike arms and drew forth their broad swords from the scabbards affixed to their horse like flanks. They had no wish to cut the woman up until they'd made sport of her, but the great deer had to be dealt with swiftly as they all had a healthy appreciation for its powerful antlers. Antlers that would soon decorate the loft of one of their savanna stables.

The desire to be at the woman drove them forward in an unorganized stampede even as the majestic sized deer picked up its own speed. The centaurs knew the drill. Charge the deer head on and then at the last moment shear off to both sides of it and slice its legs as it charged past being too ponderously huge

to nimbly dodge after them.

With its leg tendons severed it would collapse to the ground helpless to avoid their next move. There was no beast of the savanna able to outwit or maneuver them save for one combination. Man mounted on horseback. It was every centaur's worst nightmare as two were better than one and regular horses had better stamina than they had for long-distance travel.

The front two centaurs raced side-by-side with swords lifted high. The distance was closing rapidly and in anticipation they gripped the swords they held aloft tightly. They all blinked in tandem though as the woman dressed as a warrior suddenly arose even as the deer's great rack of antlers lowered to skiff just above the ground.

Unbelievably then the woman jumped forward to land upon the head of the deer. Her sense of balance was perfect and both lead centaurs gasped as the deer's head suddenly catapulted upward with all the momentum the massive weight of boned antlered mass could afford.

The woman was catapulted upward and through the air directly at them. She spun forward in a somersault as sunlight gleamed off both swords held outward in a series of mad flashes that made it appear as if the swords were alive.

Vainly both lead centaurs tried to recover from their surprise and bring their swords to deflect the twin blades of their foe, but it was too late. The blades arched inward and then both flashed outward and forward in two

harmonious swings of sun kissed steel.

The centaur's heads both went rolling as their lifeless abominate apparitions of horse form with that of man crumbled forward onto the savanna floor even as there polluted blood sprayed across the ground. The next two centaurs swung their blades, but met only the resistance of air as Jafina slipped past them and came out of her somersault freefall to land upon them.

Her booted heels slammed down hard onto the backs of the two close riding centaurs and with a decisive backward stab she sent both blades goring clean through each one of the two centaurs that she was positioned in a straddle pose between. With a jerk her blades came free and she jumped off to the one side as with blood frothing at their lips the



two centaurs joined their counterparts into tumbling lifeless to the savanna floor.

The great deer streaked past at great speed as it cut off to the one side suddenly. With a dexterity of seemingly great ease both swords were holstered and in the next moment Jafina's hands gripped a hold of an antler.

The deer peeled away to the left sharply with Jafina hanging on as the last two centaurs drew up in a shower of dust and torn up pieces of grass. They stared dumbfounded at what had just occurred before them, but they were seasoned warriors and with swords lifted high they began to give chase, but they needn't have bothered.

The great deer was swinging back around in as tight of an arc as it could

and both centaurs pulled up unsure only to then gaze in stupefaction as Jafina let go of the antlers and swung out away from the deer as she flew out into midair in a movement that seemed sheer suicide. She flew out horizontally only to come up short with a jerk as a length of rope fastened about her waist and a piece of antler on the other end became taut.

The swinging arc of the deer's sudden sharp turn sent Jafina swinging through the air at the centaurs where they were drawn up in indecision. The midsection of the rope that Jafina was affixed to caught them both about the torso and fairly yanked them off their hooved feet as the rope made a circling restraint about their waists. Jafina spiraled around the pair of centaurs a second time

and without ado she cut herself free and landed as gracefully as a cat upon the savanna.

Both centaurs fell down to the tune of bellowed pain and outrage at what had just taken place. Jafina calmly approached the pair of tasseled up centaurs unsure of their surrounds as they found themselves bound up within the restraining coils of rope clasped tightly about their manlike necks and torsos.

Lifting her swords by the blade ends Jafina savagely clubbed both centaurs unconscious with the pommel ends of both swords. Then just as equally savage she sliced off what made them both male. The two unconscious centaurs lay twitching upon the ground unmindful of what had just been irrevocably done to

them.

The great deer walked forward and gazed down at the pair. Jafina still stood with swords drawn breathing heavy.

She glanced to the deer, but he said nothing. Jafina stuck her swords fast into the ground and wiped the sweat on her brow away with a forearm. Groaning with anxiety she said, "I shouldn't have done that."

She gazed once more upon the severed genitalia that lay upon the bloody grass even as the wounds she'd caused continued to bleed freely. It was doubtful that either would survive such an injury.

Slowly the deer shook his head no and glancing to him Jafina said as if to contradict his silent statement, "But what if they bleed out? Who will carry the

message that we need sent?”

Voice rumbling rustilly from unuse the deer spoke, “Whether they bleed out or not a message has been clearly sent my dear. They certainly deserved worse than you’ve done and whether they live to hobble off or more of their kind come to find what happened to them the end result will be the same. War.”

Pausing a moment he seemed to reflect before saying, “I do hope you’re ready for it.”

Jafina shrugged her shoulders and said, “When have we ever been? I am but a child somehow aged and advanced in talent to what you see now. I know not how it is that it came to be, but I do know that my Creator can do anything, which includes fighting this war for us.”

The antlers shook affirmatively, “Well

said.” He rumbled out with before beginning to turn away. Calling out he said, “Come. I will escort you back to your camp.”

Jafina quirked an eyebrow at the massive beast seeming to think she had need of an escort, but without a word spoken she reclaimed her swords and headed out on foot alongside of the beast.

“Do you have a name?” Jafina asked after several long moments of amicable silence.

“I’ve had a few, but I’m not sure how to interpret them for you properly. Call me Brown.”

“Brown!” She laughed out loud as she looked at him askance.

“It pretty much describes me does it not?” He rumbled out with.

“Only on the outside, but Brown it is my friend.”

“Good and I shall call you Male’s End.”

Jafina blinked and then as full realization hit her she blushed beat red with embarrassment. A rumbling like low thunder shook through her beastly companion and with chagrin Jafina groused, “Some friend you are.” As she took in the very real fact that the animal was laughing at her.

Brown continued rumbling with inward pleasure until with a heavy sigh he muttered, “I haven’t laughed like this in years. I feel younger.”

Jafina smiled and good-naturedly laid a hand to his high shoulder as they walked along, “Who knows maybe there’s a flock of does out there held up

in a corner of the forest just waiting for a big stud like you to come along.”

“Doubtful my dear, but a pleasant thought nonetheless. I’m ready to go on and so if I die in this battle to come it makes no difference. It’s just that I hate to be the last one of my kind. I know it may not seem right, but I’d rather die tomorrow than live another year by myself.”

Jafina said nothing for a moment and then contemplatively she said, “I bet she’ll be lighter in color. More of a sandy brown, with the most beautiful big brown eyes you ever saw. Yep, I’m sure of it.”

Brown glanced to her and she nodded big with emphasis and he looked forward again. In the early morning light the camp along the forest edge became



visible and Brown stopped, "I think I shall enjoy spending the rest of the day out on the savanna for once and dream of a pair of big brown eyes."

Laughing softly Jafina started forward through the grass toward the encampment.

"And what of you young one? When do you content yourself to have a mate?"

Jafina glanced wistfully ahead toward the campsite among the trees. The tip of an antler brushed ever so slightly against her hair and wiping at the silent tears upon her cheeks Jafina glanced to her companion.

In a rumbling voice that had a very deep level of caring to it uncommon to be found in what some would just regulate to that as of a dumb beast, Brown said, "It will come to be even as

you desire young one.”

“Oh and how do you know?” She asked ducking her head away embarrassed by her tears.

“Oh, I just do. You could say I’ve come to be attentive to the small things and I..... I just know.”

Jafina nodded her head, “Well, that’s good to know. Pleasant day to you Brown. Sweet dreams of brown eyed beauties.”

Jafina had started forward when his reply reached her, “And what color of eye will you be dreaming of I wonder?”

Half turning back Jafina said with a sad laugh, “There brown too.” She headed on and was out of hearing range of the great deer as he announced to the early light of dawn, “The future will be here before you know it young one. I

have not waited for so long to see change occur only to see more of the heartbreaks of the past occur with it.”

Glancing out into the savanna to where the horse devils would come from he said authoritatively, “No! Let there be war and with it change!”

He glared menacing out at the savanna and waited silently for the tide of war that would surely come with swift violence upon those encamped in the trees. Just being in the savanna for a few hours of uninterrupted delight had brought home to him all that he'd been missing of his old home for so many years now.

Let the battle come he was ready for it. Throwing back his head he cried out with an ear rending bugle of challenge packed full of all the aggression caused

by the remembrance of tragedies of bygone days. The bugled cry rippled out over the grassland disrupting the good morning chirp of birds and insects.

In a far-off corner of the forest bordering the savanna a herd of seven beasts lifted their heads and perked their ears upward attentively. They listened intently in the stillness that followed and then there again came the resounding echo of a bugling call. Of one volition the small herd walked forward through the gloom of the forest and out into the savanna they had been forced to avoid for years.

Unerringly they headed across the savanna towards the source of the sound the such that they had not heard in a very long time. They too were at an end of caring for the survival of one more day

as opposed to death tomorrow if only it meant to be with some of their own kind once more.

The trees had been whispering a lot of late. What it all meant they did not know. All they did know though was that the strength of the bugling cry in the early morning light was a summoning to action and so they walked on through the day in a steadfast distance eating trot as they embraced whatever the future of tomorrow might bring.

Elsewhere in the morning unfolding upon the land the bugled cry roused the trussed up pair of centaurs. In horrified stupefaction the pair stumbled painfully up onto all four hooves as they cried out pitifully at the self-awareness of what had been done to them.

Their whole world of purpose and

being was suddenly at an end and with dread they realized that they would be the laughing stock of all their brethren. Quickly then their minds turned to hate. Hate directed at the cause of their shame that had come to them in the form of a human woman.

Hate above all else drove them to painfully stumble across the sunlit savanna for the stables of their kind located in the heart of this far-flung section of the savanna. They would see that woman die the most excruciating of deaths. They surely would and with that hate driven purpose burning bright they forced themselves into a gallop so that vengeance would be all the sooner in the making.

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*Jafina made her way past the sentries and quiet campfires they had all but gone out. Her human brethren and beastly allies alike still lay mostly asleep as if sensing the need to acquire extra rest for the fight to come.*

*Her feet took her to the lone fire in the trees. He often rose early in the morning to pray, but as she reached the fire she saw that this was not the case today.*

*He, like everyone else except for those on sentry duty, was fast asleep. It was still cold here in the trees as the light of the sun had not warmed the air yet and hugging her arms about herself she stared down at the man who was her leader by day and who captivated all her dreams of the future by night.*

*More than anything in the world she wanted nothing more than to lay down beside him and feel his big solid presence of warmthness of body and spirit against her, but it wasn't to be for right now. Tomorrow there would be a battle that would effect a change in everything. If they won they would still be more battles and until those battles were won this man's focus had to be elsewhere and with that knowledge pressed firmly to heart she lay down coldly, alone upon the ground just beyond his still booted feet.*

*Not able to help herself she reached a hand out and ever so lightly laid it on the heel of his boot. Any touch even this impersonal of a one was a relief to her and tiredly she closed her eyes.*

*In startlemeant though she opened*



*them as a warm hand closed about her wrist. Before she could rise she was pulled along the ground and with a pent-up breath found herself in the next moment exactly where she had wanted to be a few moments before. In his arms.*

*Not daring a breath she said nothing as he situated her on her side with her back pressed up against him. Air seeped in past her lips and a few unsteady breaths later as the warmth and touch of him against her flooded her with heat she whispered, "We shouldn't. We....."*

*"Shut up." He said softly against her hair, even as he flipped his blanket over the two of them.*

*Laying still staring wide-eyed into the fire as her cheek rested comfortably*

*on the arm of the man she loved more than life itself, she debated about what to do. His words against her hair gave her the excuse she needed then to stay exactly as she was, "What kind of a leader would I be if I let my best warrior catch sick from being too cold."*

*It was a lame excuse and they both knew it, but they remained as they were. More comfort than she'd ever known before radiated throughout Jafina and in a form of paradise bordering on sublime her eyes drifted closed.*

*"Have you given me a war?" Came the soft query from behind her.*

*Smiling sleepily Jafina said, "Yes, my Lord."*

*"Stop calling me that." He grouched out, but Jafina was already lost to*

*dreams and fantasies of all life could be like if they only won the ability to live to see the future.*

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I stared at the flames of the dying fire beyond Jafina's head. I was a fool perhaps, but a contented one.

There was simply no way not to show that I cared and that I wasn't made out of lead. I was human and I was deriving as much comfort from having her near as she was from me.

I was also driving myself nuts, but in this moment I was content to be driven crazy. One or both of us might die tomorrow and I didn't want to be alone any more than she did in the face of the struggle to come and all that it could

mean.

“Eloah forgive us if our weakness for each other is a flaw in our ability to lead an army to victory.” I whispered softly.

I closed my eyes as only the peace I derived from the sound of her breath for air was my answer in the early morning dew that lay upon the forest. The desire to win the war we faced for survival only became that much more real to me as the presence of the woman I adored pressed in snugly against me.

As I relished the feel of her the reality of yet something else worth fighting for came all too real to me. She was something that I hoped more than anything had been created just for me.

Time would tell, but until then there was the here and now, and now would have to be enough, as tomorrow wasn't

promised to any of us. Leaning forward I lightly kissed her hair before whispering, "Sweet dreams my love." Her hair smelled like spices had been sifted into it and I found deep contentment in the few moments that we had managed to share together knowing that before long the affairs of the day would once more draw us apart.

# Chapter Eight

# Dominion

The battle lines were drawn with more and more centaurs gathering by the moment. That was good. There would be less of them to chase down this way.

I said as much to Honley and he rolled his eyes. Smiling grimly I turned to survey our battle line.

A line of sharpened staves ran in a solid line on a projected angle just right to get a centaur in the chest. We had advanced into the savanna several hundred yards and if ever there was a

poor choice of defenses this was it.

All my defenses against the hybrid cavalry before me were forward facing. I had no rear defense in place and it was only too apparent that I had unwisely left the safety of the trees, which would have impeded the centaurs greatly from being able to circle in and around me.

To all the world I appeared the fool. Even now I could hear the raucous voices of the centaur high command just forward of my position across the grass not 200 yards away.

Suddenly harsh commands were called out and I felt the shifting of the impact of many hooves upon the ground. That said I put the enemy count at just over 3000, which left something close to 2000 of them unaccounted for.

I listened to the swishing gallop of the

hybrid horsemen as they did what I had expected of them. They thought me stupid as anything other than their own reasoning opinion was of no high regard. Sometimes misjudging one worked to the advantage. That said this would likely be the last time such a ploy would work, because if it did there would be many a centaur dead this day.

My back to the high command of the centaur elite that remained where they were making no move to confront our wall of spears as they dispatched two side wing parties that even now filtered into the peripheries of my vision as they swept wide of our wall of spears in their effort to cut in behind us and charge our column from the rear. The moment of confrontation would soon be upon us.

An energy hard to describe swept



through me and with a pulse of the thrill for war that seemed ingrained in me somehow I drew both my swords and cut them through the air in a stretch of my arm muscles that rushed with the blood of anticipation for the moments to come. A wildness to kill those who opposed us swept over me and I made eye contact with Rafargan, whose gaze was a match for my own.

In the background as the twin columns of outflanking centaurs angled to charge us from the rear I heard the flurry of sudden tumult as they met with an unseen resistance. My intensity upon Rafargan brightened as the wails of horsemen going down split through the air.

I blinked authoritatively and Rafargan with a roar that percussioned through the air about me leaped forward and with

one great bound thirty other big cats of assorted size and absolute loyalty did the same. I brought my outstretched blades in close as the big cats breezed by me in route straight for the indolent centaur high command standing at ease in the grass behind me beyond the spear wall. In turn the high command was completely obsessed on what was happening to their cavalry on their flanks with no expectation of an attack being forced upon them. That was their second mistake today to think us incapable of any offensive ability.

The big cats surged with fury across the ground far faster than any human could have distanced and with wide-eyed alarm the centaur leadership reached, for still sheathed swords, as all their focus was pulled away from the

struggling attack on the flanks that had met with more resistance than expected. Any bugle cry for retreat went unheralded as all focus leapt to the big cats and all the ferocity that they had to their name as kings of the forest.

With no cry sounding out for retreat the well-disciplined centaur cavalry brigades sent to outflank my position, pressed on through the lethal carpeting of mats hidden in the grass studded with sharpened staves. Centaur after centaur went down pierced through the hoof or through tripping over those fallen only to fall and be gored themselves on the upthrust points riddled through the grass.

With the morale of our enemy shaken, I watched as they cleared the mats, leaving almost a third of their number impaled and crying out to them. The

centaurs, now fully to our rear, regrouped and drowning out the cries of their impaled comrades thrashing upon the ground they charged us with a vengeance.

I waited tensely as the charging line of trained centaur warriors drew closer. 200 feet..... 100 feet.....50 feet. I lifted my swords.

My human companions, in this war for continued humanity and the right to worship our Elohim as we saw fit, quickly advanced toward me and bending down they pulled up yet more sharpened stakes as the ones that were fixed outward into the savanna remained in place.

The sharpened polls lifted and were braced into place for the impact of the stunned centaurs caught in full gallop

moving too quickly in order to affect a stop from their hasty charge. Vainly the forward members of the line tried to hack off the pointed ends of the poles, but driven on from behind they were impaled on the lowered stakes just the same and went down by the scores as other centaurs buck jumped over their bodies only to be met with the same resistance.

The crashing charge of the centaur force had come to a full halt and with a roar I charged through the stakes on my side of the line still facing the centaur high command and with an answering cry all my companions did the same. With weapons held high we chopped our way into the heavy pressed centaur line.

In such close quarters they had difficulty in bringing their huge swords

to bear without damaging their own companions and we took full advantage of that with our shorter weapon movements. I swished left and right at milling centaur legs even as I dodged their jerky swings at my head.

The ground rumbled behind me as centaurs with legs crippled fell to the ground only to be hacked into by those who were following behind me. It was a full on pressed slaughter as there was little the centaurs could do other than try to stamp on us with their hooves as we took the legs out from underneath them.

One did manage to stamp on my foot and with a cringe of pain I moved my foot away and savagely hacked into the centaur responsible. He fell and I thrust my way forward once more through the gory scene.

Suddenly the flailing of hooves and horse like screams of terror were gone and there was airspace around me. Blinking away the fog of war I witnessed the fact that the remaining centaurs were fleeing. They galloped on full past there still impaled brethren that lay calling out to them for assistance from the flanks and headed straight for the trees in a group of about 200 strong that had lost all taste for the fight commencing this day.

They disappeared into the forest and moments later I heard screams of terror and general mayhem as the treetops shook violently. The treebeasts had no love for centaurs either and I doubted that a centaur of the group made it out alive from the forest.

Bringing focus to bear, I responded to

the clasp of Jafina's gloved hand on my arm. Inwardly I rejoiced that she was alive and well, but forcing myself to be objective I turned in the direction that she indicated and saw yet more confrontation in the making.

Hoarse voiced, I gestured my companions back to the wall of spears that lay facing the savanna that we had vacated in our mad dash into the ranks of the captured centaurs. The centaurs from the savanna side were in a full on charge straight for our spear wall.

Rafargan and his companions a few less in number raced across the ground just ahead of them. They had a weary look to them that I too felt for myself, but it couldn't be helped. It was fight or die right now.

The big cats loped deftly through the



spear points fixed facing the open prairie and moments later the maddened centaurs hit the line of staves. It was a stupid charge. One that lacked any common sense and that was for good reason as all the more reasonable minds of command lay slashed to pieces by Rafargan's crew somewhere out there in the grass. Now the army we faced was one ruled by hotheaded warriors who thought they could plow through spears and keep on going.

The front lines of them piled into the stave points as expected, but then those who came forward after those in front fell tore at the remaining stakes even as we rushed forward with repurposed stakes from the rear of the line and jabbed at them as they muscled their way through the spears leaving many of their

companions stuck fast in their lust to kill us for the outrage of masterminding a successful defense against them when in their minds such a thing had been a thing of impossibility.

They were determined beyond all reason to kill us and as it just so happened to be, so was I, in likewise fashion in regards to them. We pressed back against their onslaught hacking at them savagely as we met together in close quarters just as we had done before, only this time they kept advancing. They were in a fine bloodlust of retribution, they were, only they had no mind left for tactics and with a bugled roar I heard the last piece of my plan slide into place.

The centaurs lost in their hateful push forward neglected the sound of what I'd

heard. Wanting to see I forcefully swung up to stand on the back of a centaur already dead and hung upright upon a driven in stake.

My vantage point took in the staggered line of what I could only attest to as heavy cavalry at its finest. Jafina's deer of yesterday's heroics led the charge out in front with a full rack of glistening antlers lowered to the field as beside him ran at full speed a collection of horned rhinoceroses, cattle, and other large deer like species. Each one represented the last members of their kinds that had all practically been wiped out due to the overhunting and obscene sexual appetites of the centaurs.

Now they came together in a long sought out act of revenge as the close packed centaurs could not move to cut

out their victim's legs as they had often done before. Packed tight the rear most members could only gasp with fright and struggle to be free of the conflict as the line of heavy thundering beasts converged on the rear of the heavy pressed centaur column.

The scattered line of large prey animals hit with crushing force and centaurs went flying even as from the impact more of them were forcibly impaled on the stakes that we had positioned before us and those we wielded by hand. The centaur morale completely shattered and with squeals of fright they clambered for an escape, but the options were few, even so, some managed to slip through and streak for the horizon.

The horizon formerly empty suddenly

bristled with movement and I groaned with worry that another contingent of centaurs had arrived to take part in the fight. I relaxed though as I realized suddenly what I saw weren't hybrids but were real horses and they were running all stretched out side to side in perfect lockstep formation that any general would've been proud of.

With a will the line of horses plowed into those who were of hybrid form. Centaurs were fleeing the scene every which way that they could and it was a wonder that any managed to survive the onslaught of the horses who were by far the quicker.

They brought the centaurs down with swift well-placed kicks or bowled over top of them with their greater mass and desire of spirit. The routing centaurs

were decimated and it was fewer still that made it through the onslaught of horses with a grudge for a past abuse of rape and the willful manipulation of their kind to foul for any to speak of lightly.

The savagery of the horses aside, they did not pursue the few that made it through, even though they could have easily done so. That seemed odd to me and wearily stumbling through the piled up bodies of hybrid refuse, I made my way out to the savanna unlittered by the bodies of the fallen even as the last vestiges of our injured foes were put out of their misery with swift justice.

It had been a bloody day to be sure, but I had the feeling it wasn't over. The horses were coming and the big black one that I had spoken to was out at the

front of them as I knew that he would be.

He was majestic in every essence of the word and humbled, I remained where I was as with a shower of dust the last surviving horses of high order birth came to a ground shaking halt before the plain littered with the dead of our shared nemesis. The stallion came forward blowing hard, but his words were measured even as they were weighty, “Well done young warrior, but this battle is not over! All that has been done this day may yet be undone. Your army must go now as fast as you can to the north where there is abundant water! Maybe then some will yet remain and the fight can continue to see another day!”

“I don’t understand.” I said shaking my head before asking, “Is another army coming?”

“Worse than that I’m afraid. Fire is an avenger that once started knows no master, save one. Tell me son of the Roalain Plains, are you brave?”

Staring into the savage eyes of a stallion that I could see feared nothing in life, I affirmed, “I am committed to the task of doing the Creator’s will. It is His strength that sustains me and to that end I am willing, to the death, to accomplish all that is needed to preserve the truth of His words in the hearts of man.”

The stallion stamped the ground imperatively, “Very well then! It will be you and I, together to face the flames, but the others should go and go now!!!”

Turning on faith that the stallion was to be trusted I called out to both man and beast that had gathered about, “Go, do as the stallion commands, flee to the north!



Those of you who are able to help those wounded please do so. Warn the forest creatures that you come across as you go. Go! Go now!”

The mighty deer who had led the charge at the end swiveled his bloodsoaked antlers as he swung to the north and bugled out a stentorian cry that started the ball rolling as a harem of seven stalwart looking does followed in lockstep formation after the last male of their kind who truly was a leader among all beasts. His pace picked up and he did not diminish it even as he gracefully dipped his antlers down and picked up a badly injured leopard.

The leopard perched high in the antlers hung on with three good paws as predator and prey worked together this day in a shared purpose of destiny.

Rafargan was coordinating the moving of all those injured and briefly he and I shared a glance and then he was gone.

The Horses of Zavorra swept past me and helped the wearied host along. Jafina stood still a short distance off from me as if stubborn to the action I had commanded and lifting a sword I pointed to the north.

She remained in place for only a moment before turning to do as ordered. A beautiful sorrel colored mare swept in beside her and in surprise Jafina turned to her as she spoke something and gracefully knelt down on one knee. Timidly Jafina stepped forward and swung onto the back of a horse never before ridden only to hold on then as the mare swept forward swiftly after the disappearing host.

All that remained upon the plain where the bodies of the fallen and the sound of the wind whistling through the tall grass heads. It was in the wind that I smelled what I yet hadn't seen evidence of.

Fire truly was coming. Who had set it?

There yet remained a sizable force of centaurs and such a fire would decimate them even as it would us. I turned and beheld my sole companion left within sight.

Gazing into the stallion's eyes I asked, "Where does our journey lie old one?"

"Through fire and every sorcery of darkness they may choose to throw against us. You may call me by my name. Feveren, I was named long ago and so I remain. Better a name than to be called

old.”

Gazing at him honestly I said, “I meant no disrespect, Feveren. Your wisdom and length of days is our saving grace this day. How did you know that fire would be used?”

“It is the way of a desperate foe to wipe out that which he cannot control or bind to his will any longer. You, Tarik, are a rare gem in the world of men. I have lived long and truly I have never seen your equal.”

Shaking my head I said, “I’m just a boy, now seen as a man. I come of nothing, but that which was put upon me to do.”

“I know Tarik. I know and yet it remains as I’ve said. Shall we face the road ahead now or do you wish to take another route?”

I blinked as the reality that suddenly this majestic leader of his special kind had abdicated authority over his own actions to whatever I might will in the moment. I found the moment crushing and turning from him, I faced the open savanna and in the distance I saw the horizon start to glow. The fire was coming.

The savanna, and likely the forest with all of its ancient memory, would be burnt up in such a provoked blaze. Gone would be the last sanctuary known to man or beast from the pressuring hordes of the enemies beyond this land that had already consumed all the other lands.

Everything I had fought for these past few months would be at an end, if something wasn't done. Somehow the fire must be stopped, but it ran deeper

than that.

I felt an electric quality to the atmosphere that told me that all was not what it appeared to be. Feeling overwhelmed by the conflicting whirl within my emotions that threatened to spin me to the ground I gritted out, “Enough!!!”

The whirling continued and rage swept through me. Jamming my sword points into the ground I fell to my knees as the reality of my focus spun as if I was a spinning top set to run its course along the top of a table caught in a sudden earthquake. Leaving the handles of my swords to sway in the breeze that brought more and more the smell of eminent demise I clasped my hands together and prayed aloud, “You did not call me to this road to protect your

people Eloah, for me to give up now. My actions this day are ordered of You and I fully submit to Your will for my life this day and now I wait upon You, my Elohim, to show me the way forward and what I must do to fulfill Your perfect will! I wait on You Master, even as I have been called to serve in the Name of Your Son, so let Your will be done in me. This day I resist evil and all that has been set against me, in the name of Yeshua!”

Eyes closed with my world still a whirl I remained on my knees content to burn if need be even as I was confident that I would receive an answer. Truly what was the sense in living life if one could not take faith that there would be an answer when one needed one the most. A life without faith was an

expanse of nothing propped up by a promise never believed in, but for those who believe there is no failure to thrive and the reality is that patience is needed along with trust.

I had seen my Eloah work. I had been in His presence and even though physically overwhelmed in this moment as I was, I knew what I knew and so I would stay, even so believing to the end.

My lips moved in praise for the battle already won this day and in gratitude for the small loss in numbers for our side, I thanked my Elohim and as I offered up praise the whirling focus of my emotions stilled. I opened my eyes and I saw the presence of fire moving out in front of me in a path across the grass, only the flame did not burn the grass.

The breeze blew forcefully at my back



and within my spirit I heard the voice of the Fire Spirit softly say, **“Come.”**

Rising up abruptly I reached for my swords, but the Fire Spirit breathed out even as the flames in the grass rippled, **“Leave them.”**

I almost lost it then as it felt like I stepped into the mighty current of a river past comprehension of power. The fire upon the grass swirled around me and in awe I saw the flames lick over the skin of my hands, but I was not burned. The Fire Spirit spoke once more, **“Come child for even as you have believed so it shall be accomplished.”**

I turned and beheld the stallion as more power than I had ever possessed swirled around me in a comforting balm, as it served as an enabler of my spirit to do bigger and better things for the

Kingdom of Eloah. Without hesitation Feveren stepped forward and pressed his muzzle into the flames that scorched over my hand and yet left no heat in its wake.

The fire ablaze upon my palm danced up his muzzle until the whole of him was ablaze even as I was. Speaking then as the inspiration to say what I did came from outside my own knowledge I said, "Take me to the heart of the forest."

Feveren bending down on one knee said with solemnity, "I will do all that you ask Tarik, for now I see what my eyes have never seen. A fire prophet from of old has once more been gifted so as to be a light to the world of the love of the Creator for all His creation. Even so I thank the Son, I praise the Father, and I exalt in the presence of the Fire

Spirit, as all that was promised even now is coming to pass. I am at the ready for you Master.”

Without a further word spoken I swung aboard the massive stallion who lunged forward with a will towards the towering columns of flame in the distance. Chunks of sod tore free to fly up into the air behind us in a cascade of churned up dirt as divinely appointed destiny left a trail before us to follow.

I leaned forward and gripped a hold of the free-flowing mane of black hair as Feveren outran in speed any horse I had ever witnessed in life. What the heart of the forest was I did not know, but the Spirit of Eloah within me was urging and I was willing even as Feveren was being obedient to his destiny so too did I seek to do my Master's will.

Those moments of walking on top of the world came back to me with a fullness now that I hadn't experienced in months. The imagery of heaven just above obscured by a myriad of colors so bright as to burn the eyes I could in this instance think of nothing I could lose in this life that would be the equal of gaining an eternal presence in that heavenly court one day.

The joy of experiencing no fear, save for that which I had in reverence for my Creator coursed through me like an enabling brook of powered up storm surge. I urged Feveren on faster and with great heaves for breath he did so until it seemed that we flew across the ground.

I moved in easy synchronistic motion with the greatest beast of his kind and together we charged headlong into the

upswept column of fire and smoke raging across the savanna towards us. The fire didn't touch us and the smoke did not deter us.

We broke through the flames that evaporated away from us as if from a fire of much greater strength to once more surge forth onto the blackened plain that reflected only the death and solitude of total destruction. On Feveren raced tirelessly as if he had been waiting all the long years of his life for this moment only to now unleash the full fury of his pent-up rage in a moment of time.

It was a song that called to me and I cried aloud with a shout of war as the cinders and burning embers gave way before us to bade us entrance to a forest fully ablaze as an ancient realm tasted the hungry destruction of fire for the first

time. Rules had been broken and now all around me the forest screamed in anguish.

I could hear the trees and calling out I asked for help for them along with all those I held dear even as burning embers sheened down upon us in a fiery waterfall of unmatched viciousness of color and burdensome destruction. Still the heat of the flames was held back from us as if a force of some invisible quality did so or no doubt we would have instantly combusted as everything else was.

“My Eloah send your rain! I ask in the name of Your Son so that a heritage of this place You once made special will remain!” I cried out above the blaze of an ancient place cast into misery.

The smoke blackened skies overhead

darkened dramatically and the sun raced across the sky as if he rode on a horse the equal of the one I road if not greater. With the absence of light darkness fell only to silhouette the fiery blaze all around us as the pitch blackness of night fell half a day sooner than it should have.

With the darkness came an opening in the skies above, only it wasn't rain that fell, but the sky ocean's themselves. The heavy vapor mist sank down not only upon the entirety of the savanna, which it had not done in several hundred years but it also doused over the forest as well and with a great hissing of extinguished flame we were heralded from behind as the ocean mists surged through the forest corridors leaving no flame unquenched.

With the ocean mists came the tides of

life that called it home and looking back I urged Feveren faster as a whale came up fast behind us. I needn't have worried for before we were contacted by his great bulk he spun to the side and the momentum of his action sent the vapor mist splashing ahead of us extinguishing every flame in sight.

For a moment it was hard to breathe but then we were free of both ocean mist and flame alike as Feveren's hooves dug into a steep incline that he lunged upward with a vengeance. On this uprising pinnacle within the forest the trees were not burnt and immediately they felt loathsome to me even as I felt the eyes of a thousand and more mythical creatures of folly stare back at me from the silent ranks of dark trees that studded this upward sloping causeway that we



now traveled upon, which I could see had once been a road.

The putrid sense of being viewed by evil on parade invaded all my senses, but Feveren did not back down and neither did I. Up ahead of me on a rocky corner of the trail lay an old tree that had all but fallen to the forest floor.

Hardly a leaf remained upon it and though to some all they might see was a tree, a long time in the dying, I saw an entity that had been daily tortured for a very long time. I bid Feveren to stop and he did with a half rear of impatience to be locked in mortal combat, but won over to be patient past his passion by his pledge of loyalty to me.

I slid off his back and slowly approached the old tree that clung on to life somehow as it was mostly

swallowed up by the dark pushing wrath of those trees around us that had no song of life within them. As I walked upon the cursed ground of this place my voice rang forth as I began to sing deeply in a language unknown to me, but that issued forth out of the Fire Spirit that was within me, that with every spoken syllable gave direct homage to the Creator of everything.

I sang the words given to me from on high and marveled at the deep richness of them that vibrated through the air with a power unseen and yet felt. Not any power of mine, but His who had sent me here to this place once blessed, but cursed worst of all right now.

The cursed enchantments of this place did not matter as the Spirit of Elohim within me was a force never to be

denied victory. The very rocks beneath me vibrated with a keen knocking together of sound as if awakening to the remembered fear for who had created them and indeed it was so.

Restoration was to start here and putting my hands to the great bulk of a tree that eight men couldn't have reached around I began to push. There was no need to push as if utilizing all my physical might, which would have proved useless, rather the Spirit of the Creator was more than enough to accomplish any task.

The great rotting bulk groaned and began to rise up to where it had once dominated the forest canopy above for, perhaps, since the creation of the world. I pressed onward all the while singing deeply all that the Fire Spirit would

have me say and the tree rose into the air steadily.

A boulder fallen into the cavity of where the trees great roots had once been well entrenched before it had tipped over, moved out of the way, as all the trees around shook in fear that a day had come that would see their treachery rewarded. With a loud groaning thunk the great snapped off and snarled trunk of a tree that remained but perilously alive by the fewest of branches came to rest again in its old surrounds.

I pushed no longer but continued to sing as the Fire Spirit gave me utterance as I knowingly prayed for healing and restoration silently within the language I did not know even as the Spirit of Eloah spoke directly to the Father. There was a snapping motion and I opened my eyes to

glance down only to see new resurgent roots issuing out from the rottenness of a tree long thought hopelessly unresurrectable and tormented all the more for it.

The rocks around me shook for glee as they'd had no part in the shames of this place and I smiled as the joy of their emotions touched my heart. I glanced up and witnessed two great old eyes staring down at me even as one tiny little branch with but three leaves moved back and forth with the rhythm of my song pouring out in the Spirit to my Creator. I started to draw down in voice, but the old eyes frowned and with a negative shake the treebeast said in a deep voice, "Deeper! Press deeper young warrior! Sing!"

Closing my eyes I heeded his advice and despite the weariness that assailed

me as if plagued in strength by an unseen foe, I sang louder and more boisterous than ever before. Blindly I turned from the old tree and faced the grown-up forest that did not belong here and I let my heart sing out against it.

How long I sang I do not know, but as my voice drew to an end of usability so did the passion of the Creator's Spirit within me and I knew it was time to stop. I'd settled down to my knees at some point and now as I opened my eyes for the first time since my pleaded love song to Eloah had begun I was stunned to see that a vast change had occurred all around me.

The trees that had resisted the light within me were all gone. They had simply passed as if into nonexistence and all around me lay the green slopes of

an upward sloping mound of a hill that I was nearly to the top of.

I got up and turned only to behold, in wonder, a tree as grand as surely as it had ever been in the zest of life and yet still one possessing the age of both its good times and the trials of its last years.

“A beautiful song my Liege. Truly, it has been my pleasure to hear the voice of all the Kings of Angarta, but none has ever sung as you have and yet, let the Spirit of the Creator be thanked above for He has raised up in you a workman suitable for the task and one made worthy through trial by fire to be wielded as a fine blade in the His hands. Now look behind me Tarik and tell me what you see.”

I stepped to the side of the treebeast's great resurgent bulk and saw a castle

poised on the hill above that surely on a clear day, even as it now was, one could see all of Angarta.

“I see a castle. I see the heart of the forest.”

“Aye, you do, man, whose name means, ‘I have a story’. You have no memory of it, but once there ruled here a great line of kings who were the greatest in power and wisdom in all the seven lands. They were given authority from on high to rule over all this realm of Angarta and even lands beyond and as the story of man goes, they began to lose sight of what made them great, until all freedom was lost and these lands were taken from them. I was appointed to be a watchtree and so I have remained knowing this day would come. I tell you truly, Tarik, that the years that remain of



this world are limited in number even as the prophecy that one day the kingship of Angarta would be restored have now been fulfilled in you, lad. Aye, take everything I say to heart for the truth is what it is. No one knows how much time remains, but until that day comes we fight even as you have this day. No battle have you faced such as what you soon will, but be of good courage for the outcome of all eternity to come has already been written and to put it briefly, we win!”

The old tree chuckled then and I was forced to smile even though I felt frozen to the awareness of all that was being revealed to me. I was of a kingly line? Was I truly to rule here?

“Tarik.”

I glanced up to the watchtree’s old

knowing eyes located far above. “I know you have many questions and I will do my best to fill you in on all that I know, but as of yet the heart of the forest still lies within the control of the one who burned you with fire. You must take back your dominion over this land as it is yours by right. Go and know that as you face darkness, head on, all it can see is the Light it once knew but forsook to become something less than what it once was. Be of good courage young King, for behold you are not alone in this quest to fulfill the Words of the Creator.”

I turned to look at my back. There was Feveren regally standing at ease, but beyond him stood a vast troop numbering past count of warriors greater than those who would ever walk upon the land as they were not of the land, but

of heaven.

From within my spirit breathed the words of my Creator, **“Command them son. Truly it is I that has made you great and it is I that sets the battle before you, even as it is I that receives the glory from the faithful actions of a loyal son who would sacrifice all even life itself in order to see that My Will be done. Even so it is with this great love that you love Me with that you can now attest to the love that I loved you with first before ever the first man was created! Mount up now son and ride forth into the destiny that I have predestined for you this day as to be but a fulfillment of My Will!”**

Shaking and yet driven with power to accomplish the Will of the Father, I ran

for Feveren and did as commanded. In a voice far louder than the still quietness of the Most High's Spirit within the corridors of the temple of my body a voice from on high thundered forth from the sky even as a window of heaven opened up to pour out even more of a host prepared for war, **“Ride!!!”**

Feveren leaped forward with a raged squeal up the path toward the Citadel that bristled with all the remnants of a forest's former corrupted enchantment. I glanced over my shoulder only to see the angelic host right behind me as they ran as swiftly as the fastest horse alive, while holding drawn swords aloft.

A thrill of unimaginable significance swept through me and I cried out in praise to my Creator, “Blessed be Your Name in the highest, my Elohim. To Your

Glory!”

Then as a thunderous echo that coursed over the ground both to the forward of us, and as a quake of radiating outward force the angelic host to my rear, repeated my words as did those falling down through the air with swords already drawn. A great wail arose from the creatures and fallen ones within the keep at the breast of the hill and yet through all the cacophony of sound I could hear the thunderous echoes of the watchtree's joyous laughter in the distant background.

The barred entryway of the Castle rundown in appearance, but that had no lack for grandeur, loomed ahead of me and I charged headlong for it trusting that a way forward would be made. Indeed the rocky ground ahead of me burst forth

as great boulders hovered in midair with a vibrating intensity so forceful it hurt the senses and with a wave of my hand I gestured it to the gate and at the speed of lightning the boulders crashed forward with eagerness as if each was trying to outdo the others as they smashed into the gate and the wall of the castle itself.

The gate was entirely blown off its hinges and across the square that lay within. We thundered through and some of those of the elite force of immortality that had been granted me this day to accompany me in this battle ran through the smashed open portal behind me but the majority of them simply ran straight up the castle walls or through them even as more of their heavenly number rained down from above all over the castle grounds. Absolutely no quarter was

given.

With no sword in my hand much less seemingly the need for one I let Feveren find the way forward that he seemed to know by heart. His great hooves thundered as he aggressively buck jumped up a high series of stone stairs that led upward to an impressive building.

No creatures dared to stop us as all were fleeing for cover from the avenging host that had fallen upon the place from on high, but that in itself was an act of pointlessness personified as where could one hide from the eyes of the Creator that had set forth the decree for total destruction. A stone courtyard opened up to us at the top of the stairs and with a clatter of hooves Feveren surged across it headed directly for

another series of steps that led up to two great wooden doors.

Feveren climbed the stairs and then rising up with an earsplitting cry of a stallion at war he crashed downward. Both front hooves crashed into the aged wood of the doors and with splintering abandon they broke apart inward to reveal a darkly lit Great Hall that boded only the presence of great evil.

Feveren made to move forward, but I said, "No."

He stopped and I slid off his back. He made no move to leave the shattered doorway that cast much-needed light into the Great Hall, but he did not enter either.

Moving forward I strode across the marbled floor headed for the dais and throne at the far end of the Hall. The



figure that sat upon the throne was the same as he who had burned me as a child with but the touch of his hand after he had melted my father's sword.

He tossed his head with arrogance, "So, you've come to reclaim the throne. Truly, a pathetic remnant as it were, as you haven't done one thing in the forced seizure of it yourself."

Oh, I was about to, I acknowledged with grim point of focus as I mounted up the stairs with no hesitation. He stood up hurriedly as the contemptible hate that he had for me spilled out past the reserve of his earlier statement.

Arrogantly he reached out to seize a hold of me, but I seized ahold of him first, in the same way that he had once done to me. I gripped down on a form created apart from my humanity to

always be immortal and yet he was powerless against the force of the Fire Spirit that was housed within my mortal flesh.

His blazing eyes widened as I pulled him in close to my own eyes and speaking so closely that spit from the force of my statement landed on his face that was already shifting out of phase from the image of the man that he outwardly manifested to the imagery of the dark dragon that that he was, “It’s time for you to get out of my house!!!”

That said I proceeded to drag him, scales, talons, hot fiery breath and all, across the length of the hall to the broken doors with the same determination of focus that had moved me to push upright the bulk of a tree that three giants would’ve struggled to lift. There was no

task too great for my Elohim to handle.

My Elohim was greater and I knew it and in this moment I walked in the full belief of it. Gaining the stairway to the outside of the Great Hall I spun and the Dragon of great enchantments and disgrace tumbled halfway down the stairs before catching himself with dug in talons.

His head lifted as his eyes focused in on me with a savagery greater than I had ever seen upon the countenance of any creature under the sun and in a tongue flickering sibilant roar he said, "You may have won this day boy king, but know that I will return. Men are but ever weak creatures and you have weaknesses just as all the others before you did!"

He took flight then even as great

numbers of the former ranks that he had once been home to stood by in righteous fervor to do whatever was asked of them, as they gazed mistrustfully upon the dragon's every action. I watched him fly away from the Citadel with misgiving. If it had been permitted me I would have gladly attempted to slay him, but that was not my destiny and indeed the Dragon's fate was a sealed destiny of an immortality of suffering the likes of which I could never equal in any revengeful act.

Watching as he disappeared over the horizon I said grimly, "I will be waiting for you. Elohim have mercy and give me strength to stand as a man after Your own heart continually, so that what weaknesses I have are but an avenue for Your divine strength and grace to be

manifested through. In the name of Your Son Yeshua, in whom all grace is founded, I beg this of You Heavenly Father.”

I noticed the angel standing closest to me nod his head affirmatively and glancing at him I recognized him as the one who'd carried me from the water as a boy and delivered me safely from harm in the intermediary realm that lay above the clouds. It would seem that he was still positioned by my side rather closely.

He smiled warmly and with a slight nod forward of his head he asked, “What are your orders for us, Tarik?”

Humbled beyond words I asked, “Would you and the others act as emissaries for me? Would you go out into all the other lands and wherever

there are those who yet believe in the Creator as I do would you tell them that here in Angarta we are willing to fight and die if need be in order to serve Eloah and keep His ways. Tell them how committed we are to The Way of Yeshua. If they choose to come here would you then also help them along the way?"

"We would, Tarik." He said, then as I watched the host that had won this place with relative ease disappeared into thin air, until I and Feveren were left alone.

Glancing to Feveren I asked, "Would you mind letting the others know about how things have worked out?"

Feveren nodded his head and trotted away down the stairs in hop skips and soon I was entirely alone except for the big old sentinel tree positioned along the pathway to the castle. A part of me

wanted to venture out and talk with him but I needed to stay where I was for now.

I felt sure of that even as the thing I knew to do right now was to pray. Pray for help. Pray for guidance. Eloah had made me a King. What did that really mean?

How would I be able to accomplish everything? The biggest question of all those in my prayers though was when could I expect the attack that I knew would be coming in force soon enough.

Even now I knew that the same armies and maybe more beyond those armies that had destroyed my homeland and decimated my people to the point of annihilation would be focused with an iron will to come to this forest and kill every last one of us. How would such a

great army be defeated when my own people greater in number and strong in faith had not been able to stand against them?

Why would prayer be answered now when it hadn't been from off the lips of my parents? I did not know the answer, but one thing I did know, though, was that Eloah always had a plan and the one thing I shouldn't do about any of this was, worry. Instead sinking down to my knees I prayed for Eloah's will to be done.

I basked in the peace of the knowledge that the battle for the forest had been won this day. That was a lot to be thankful for.



## Chapter Nine

# On the Mountain

They came from all over, slowly at first and then in greater number. People from all walks of life and ethnicity.

The forest and all that dwelt therein welcomed them and within weeks small thriving communities had been established both in the forest and out upon the regions of the savanna where the sky oceans did not reach. Night and day they came and a place was made for each of them.

There were rules. None of the talking

beasts were for the use of food purposes. None of the treebeasts that had been on our side were to have any lumber harvested from them. Other than that, I exacted no other strictures except one and that I held above all others.

No other God would be worshiped within the realms of Angarta other than the Creator, Eloah, The Most High. The penalty was expulsion from the forest if repentance was not made. In the last nine weeks, of the thousands that had come to the forest only four had been cast out so far.

The people regarded me with respectful caution that bordered on outright fear. I had done nothing to hurt or harm any of them and yet for lack of a better way of putting it, the forest and all its creatures viewed me as their master.

Every infraction or misdeed that was made by mankind was reported on by the trees. In addition the animals that talked did likewise.

People seemed to find that unnerving and were seldom at ease around me and I did nothing to overly bridge the gap of separation that had arose because of it. Indeed most of my days I spent in isolation for the most part from the opinions of others as I went about seeing to the care of newcomers and the grievances that did arise.

It kept me busy, but always in the back of my mind was the expectation of the inevitable. Sooner or later news of an invasion into the forest would come. To that end I required that everyone that was able-bodied enough to fight was to practice on a daily basis.

My consortium of fellow children turned into men and women were the principal instructors as for whatever reason Eloah had endowed us with an uncanny ability in the arts of war. Over all the people and the training of them I set in charge my group of seven and it was them more than anyone else who helped me by dealing with matters that arose, which really didn't need my insight. They too, were viewed with respectful caution and together we remained close as a group even though we were split up in different parts of the forest in order to oversee the people properly.

I looked out over the castle parapet that I strode upon and the clearness of the day let my eyes see over the treetops of the forest below to the inland savanna

beyond. Jafina was out there.

She had stationed herself with those settling into the savanna. She had an unbridled love for the freedom of riding the mare, Soranya, who had in turn accepted her as her master.

Neither I, nor Jafina, were happy with being apart, but for now it was for the best. The day had still not come wherein it would be safe for us to step away from the demands placed upon both of us in order to focus on ourselves and in a way it was easier for us to live daily apart than to see each other daily and be tormented by what we wanted together as a whole.

The daily peace we experienced in the aftermath of the heart of the forest being won back over was deceptive. At heart we all knew it couldn't last. In a

way we were all half listening for the bullhorns of the Auranto legions to herald the approach of a great army bent on destroying us.

As expectant as we were for that reality to come to pass in a way I had become quite encouraged as very few I had met with who had come seeking sanctuary in the forest had done so not expecting to have to stand up and fight for the freedom that we currently enjoyed. The drive to come here had seemed to be founded more out of the willingness of an inner need to gather together with other like-minded individuals and to that end, if need be, we would die together. With that in mind everyone trained with eagerness and a will of determination to do what was needed in order to stay independent from

the rest of the world for as long as we could.

I gazed down to a lower grassed parapet of the castle where Feveren idly grazed in the evening glow of the sun. He had chosen to stay with me and I was intensely grateful for that.

Beyond the sheer joy I had at traveling at high rates of speed over the savanna and through the forest there was the added bonus of him being available to talk to on a daily basis and sometimes in the night. In the absence of Jafina I found myself talking about my closest confidences with him more than anyone else.

He didn't seem to mind and in general he wasn't shy about giving his opinions on whatever the matter may be. He had given over the care of the other horses to

several stallion offspring of his and they seemed to be doing well under the added responsibility, but still I could tell that it had been hard for him to step away from the free ranging lifestyle he had always possessed and yet he said nothing of it to me.

He was always ready for when I might need him next. In a word we had become the best of friends.

I had another friend. I turned back to the view that the castle walls afforded me and took in the robustly growing tree that sat entrenched along the road to the castle.

Virtrolian Pithymas was his name, but he went by Pith for short to those he called friend. From him I had learned a great deal and like most of the other treebeasts he was a wealth of



information when it came to offering solutions to problems or suggestions for improvement.

I found Pith less drama conscious than many of the other treebeasts though, but I endeavored to spend time equally with the longest living members of my reign and to a one they enjoyed the attention. They, perhaps more than anyone, knew how short this era of tranquility and restoration might be, but they also bolstered my faith by being constant reminders of what Eloah had done in the past and how even the present was but prophecy being fulfilled.

I took all their words and sermons to heart and pondered on much of what they had said well into the night sometimes. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye I saw Feveren's head go up and his ears

prick forward.

There were many noises about the castle as it was being worked on and repaired from an eon of neglect, and to my own perception not a noise was out of place within the daily hubbub of the restoration work. In addition to that I felt no evil presence and the whispers of the trees held no alarm within the rustling of their endlessly gossiping leaves.

Feveren's gaze turned toward the horizon and I turned my gaze to focus there likewise. The brightness of the late afternoon sun made it difficult to see, and for a moment I saw nothing.

Gradually then I saw flying shapes emerge out of the brightness of the sunlit backdrop of the sky. My hands fell to my sword handles, but at Feveren's snort I held off from issuing an alarm.

I glanced once more to him and he tossed his head negatively in indication that my alarm was unwarranted. Uneasily I let my hands fall free of my sword handles as I let the scene play out.

The shapes in the sky grew bigger and bigger. They didn't have the bulk of dragons, but whatever they were they were huge and there were close to a hundred of them.

Pith called out in an old language unknown to me, but in a statement that I recognized as a greeting of sorts. In answer there came a shrieking cry that split through the air as if it was a lightning strike.

The flying objects were eagles. Massive eagles.

These must be the eagles of the Lost Mountains, for nowhere else had I ever

heard of such birds as these existing. The legend went that they only lived in the highest peaks of the mountains that were completely inaccessible to by man, because man had lost the ability to speak to them.

The question of the moment though was, why had they come?

They soared in close to the castle now, but in the distance I saw more of them still coming. How many of them, it was hard to say, but a thousand wouldn't have been too large a number.

They weren't all as big as this vanguard of eagles though, which led me to believe they were of a multitude of different species of birds of prey. Again why had they come here?

In my heart I felt that I already knew why, but I wanted to hear it with my own

ears. With a flutter of their massive ten foot wide wingspan to either side of their bodies the forward consort of the winged battalions came to settle down upon the battlements of the castle. One eagle in particular landed in a grand display of aeronautical might before Feveren on the grass plateau that he stood upon.

Authority lived in the strutting manner of the winged creature that stood as tall as I was. Feeling a bit of trepidation at the coming meeting I made my way down the battlements in the direction of Feveren and this leader among all birds.

As I went I passed under the visage of great eagle after eagle that sat perched along the wall top. The size of their talons that gripped down on the width of the wall top was both a thing of awe and

a daunting thing to consider if ever one had to face them in battle.

I walked up to Feveren and he and the apparent leader of this winged consortium seemed to break off from a silent conversation they had been having in order to face me. I respectfully bowed to the winged creature that I desperately hoped would be an ally and never that of a foe.

I straightened up and the three of us stood silent for a long moment. The lordly king of birds blinked his massive gold hued eyes that possessed the fierceness of Feveren's in full battle mode as if it was a permanent state of being, which I didn't doubt in the least as being exactly the truth in regards to this creature.

The eagle's stare was unnerving and I

did my best to meet it unflinchingly. Gesturing wide I said, "I welcome you, friend of Feveren. Soar our skies at will and the forest is yours if ever your kind should wish a nesting site among the trees."

The eagle blinked his great eyes and nodded slowly in acceptance of all that I had just offered. He turned then and strutted to the wall top that overlooked the steepest gorge of the hill that the castle was constructed upon.

Looking back he gave me a comehither look and graciously I complied by moving closer. I came up to the wall and stood beside him and staring at me speculatively through his great eyes, the eagle gestured with his beak down to the gorge below in a way I read only too well.

The eagle wanted me to jump!

I stared at him silently querying in the spirit as to what I should do. No answer came to me other than the feeling that I was in the presence of a friend.

“Sir, should we man to quarters?” Asked a warrior who had hesitantly approached from off to the side.

I waved my hand dismissively and said, “No, stand down. I’ll be back.”

“Sir?” He asked before crying out in alarm as I swung up onto the wall battlement and dove over the side of it.

‘This was crazy!’ Was my self-professed diagnosis as I cut through the air to what surely would be my death. I held my arms out to the side as if to ward off the fast approaching ground.

In relief I felt the gentle, but secure clasp of the massive talons that could



gore me in half fasten about my upper arms securely. The transition from freefall to lifting up so that my boots skipped off the tallest of the trees was gradually done as the great wings beat powerfully and methodically above me.

We gained altitude and looking about I was treated to an eagle's view of Angarta. Steadily the eagle flew to the east.

Out over the forest we went. A journey that would've taken me two days at a run seemed to pass by in the span of an hour.

Before long the forest perimeters of Angarta appeared and beyond lay the beginning of the lands of the outer realms from which so many had fled from to us. Abruptly the eagle headed north as a wind current caught a hold of

us and northward we went at great speed.

I passed over lands I had not seen before, until with the suns fading light we were within reach of a series of mountains that I did not know the name of. What was the purpose of this flight into the unknown?

I did not know, but I was eager to once more feel my feet upon the ground again and as if sensing that the eagle gradually lost altitude and we left the fast-moving current of air behind. The peaks of the mountains grew close and my stomach rose up in my throat as we soared by rocky upthrusts only to plummet downward into a high mountain valley.

The shadows had already grown dark in this high walled valley. With a great

ruffle of its wings the eagle landed me down gracefully upon the ground, only to then gain altitude and leave me behind.

Incredulously I saw it gain in elevation as it sailed away from me and out of the valley with no bye, nor leave, as to why he had brought me here. Everything was silent about me, as if held in suspense as to what would happen next.

Swallowing down nervous anticipation of whatever may be lurking in the heavy tinted shadows that were gaining ground by the moment, I waited. Suddenly disgusted with myself I withdrew my hands from my sword handles and wiped at the cold sweat on my face.

My trusting ability of Eloah's greater plan was really lacking right now. I may

not know anything about where or why I was where I was, but I could trust this was Eloah's divine purpose and if so I wanted to learn whatever it was He wished to show or teach me.

Spreading my hands wide with palms up in surrender as I bowed my head I said, "I'm here my Eloah. I..... I'm eager to learn anything ..... everything you would care to share with me."

Stillness reigned within the valley that had grown very dark. Patiently I waited.

Out of the silence imposed upon my emotions a voice spoke, "**Sing to Me child.**"

Tears fell down my face as the force of the presence of Eloah became fully real to me. Not daring to look around I whispered, "Please help me, Spirit of the Most High."

**“Always.”** Breathed the Fire Spirit’s reassurance into my soul in a tingling balm like wave of comfort as to render me only desirous of more.

Softly then I let my lips fall open and I began to sing a song. I didn’t know what to sing truly and so my mind listened to and agreed with everything that poured forth out of my spirit,

*“Before time began You knew me.*

*How can I doubt this day when I know You brought me here to You.*

*Eloah, You alone are my God!*

*I’ll serve no other, but You always.*

*Though I don’t see my way as I wish,*

*I know that I have a place with You, so  
why should I be afraid.*

*You are enough for me.*

*I've seen how You work.*

*I know that You are good.*

*You are kind and I know with all my  
heart that You have a plan for my life.*

*Oh, Eloah, take my life and unfold it  
before You as a story that praises You!*

*You are worthy!*

*You are wonderful!*

*You are glorious and all Your ways*

*are past finding out and knowing this I  
only want to be in Your presence more  
so that I might know You!*

*To know Your ways!*

*To be like You!*

*To serve You!*

*And above all I wish to please You!*

*Creator of my heart I adore You!*

*I've seen the beauty of Your  
handiwork and I want to know You like  
You know me.*

*Not that I could ever be worthy, but I  
love You.*

*I love You my Elohim and I earnestly  
need You!*

*Please never leave my heart!*

*Please never forget Your promise to  
save me from all my enemies!*

*Not only my life do I beg of You!*

*I fall to my knees now before You the  
Most High as I beg of You mercy for all  
those who desire to live in Your perfect  
ways even so I beg of Your lenience.*

*I beg You for Your intervention and  
the peace that only You can bring.*

*I need You!*



*Your people need You too!*

*So many have been lost, but I know  
that if You will it there will be a final  
harvest unlike any other ever told of.*

*Humbly I ask of You for Your mercy.*

*May Your will be done in me and may  
Your Kingdom come!*

*Here my prayer oh Ancient of Days.*

*There is no one else I pray to!*

*Bless Your Name, I bless Your Name!*

*Though I lose all that I have, I will  
bless You who gave me my breath.*

*To the last breath I praise You oh  
Most High Elohim.*

*Eloah, You are my everything and I  
sing to You with all my heart and now I  
wait upon Your Spirit to move me in the  
ways that please You.*

*May I always please You, Elohim,  
Most High.”*

My voice trailed off as words left me to express anything further and quietly I knelt face down in the dark as I both shook and felt in awe at the presence of my Eloah that had descended upon this secluded valley in a range of mountains I had never heard of.

**“Come to Me, Tarik. Rise my son and come.”**

I glanced up shaking and watched fire that did not burn the grass that it licked

across as it blazed a trail out ahead of me only to split and then trail up over a carved archway of a tunnel situated in the side of the mountain. The highlighting fire glowed brightly as it lit up the symbols written in stone that adorned all about the doorway set into the side of the mountain.

Compelled of spirit I rose up and moved forward to behold the symbols for what they were. They were the Words of Eloah and the power of them seemed to echo out at me as if the mountain vibrated with the life of what was inscribed upon it.

**“Come. The way is open before you. I desire to speak with you more clearly, as much as you are able to bear. Do not fear for I love you with a love that you do not comprehend.”**

Stumbling forward through the archway I beheld a staircase that spiraled upward and upward as far as the eye could see. As I looked figures I recognized as angels descended and ascended the stairs set in a dimensional aspect apart from my own, but one which for the moment was being permitted for me to see.

**“Come child.”** Came the reassuring voice of my Maker and I moved forward feeling completely unworthy of the honor of being in this place that I took to be a gateway to Eloah, Himself.

As I stepped onto the first stair the tread lit up with a fiery glow and there before me was yet more of the Words of Eloah outlined for me to see and believe for the truth that they truly were the building blocks of all creation. Those

already upon the stairs stopped as a deeply resonating voice began to hum a deep melody that was so perfect that my ears had never known anything better as it was impossible to improve on the perfection that I heard.

As one the angelic host moved to the side of the stairs they stood upon and looked upward in wonder as the humming cadence that filled this spiraling void in the mountain turned into words. Words spoken by the Master of everything, who by His words once spoke everything that is into existence. Having no start of existence Himself, but rather one of never-ending eternity.

The Master of Time was singing! To me of all people!

Breaking down I fell in a sobbing ball as the words of my Creator echoed

down to me, myself being but a recently made work of dirt and water with the eternal breath of the Almighty breathed into me that endowed me with a spirit that alone of all that was me was eternal.

*“Before time, I was.*

*I made time to begin.*

*I made all of creation for My desire is to create a perfect harmony and I did.*

*My plan has always been that those born to women should know Me and by knowing Me and keeping My ways they will go beyond time and time will be no more in the fullness of the hour that is coming upon all mankind.*

*Those ways of old lost within the scope of time shall be reborn even better than before and this time it shall not end.*

*It is left for those of My handiwork, in whom I blessed with eternal souls, to believe in My Son whom I sent to die for you so very long ago.*

*So long ago and now so many have forgotten that I love them.*

*How can they know My love for them when they are blind and only see the things of this present time.*

*I made all of My creation, even you Tarik, to go beyond time, for all of eternity, but what do I see.*

*Only a few remain who seek My  
ways.*

*This was not My plan.*

*I have a plan and you have always  
been in My mind and now I am  
moving!*

*I am at work and know that My will  
shall be done!*

*There will be rain and many shall  
come to remember Me and truly I tell  
you that My harvest is great!*

*I AM that I AM and there are none  
before Me and none after Me!*



*I AM that I AM has spoken!*

*Now come, young man, for I see  
how you are knit together and I am  
pleased for you are a work of honor by  
which I will fashion to My everlasting  
Glory.*

*Well pleased am I that you've  
chosen Me.*

*You are blessed son.*

*Come and see more than you ever  
knew could be and know that I am  
near to those who call upon Me.*

*I hear all.*

*I know all.*

*I love you, even though My only begotten Son had to die for you.*

*Come see what you have believed.*

*Come and see how I love you.*

*Come and see what I am doing.*

*I wait for you My son.*

*I adore your ways as they are right  
before Me.*

*To your last breath, son, know that I  
am able to do all that I have promised.*

*You will see miracles and wonders  
as darkness falls to the Light of My*

*Presence enabling you to do all of My Will that I have purposed since before time to occur before the end of time can come.*

*Come to Me now child!”*

All along the song that came resoundingly all around me I had been crawling up the stairs. Now, at the imperative command from on high, I was driven up to my feet to ascend up the stairs at high-speed as if compelled to do so by some unseen force.

Then suddenly they were no more stairs. Slowly moving forward I stepped out through a fissure in the side of the mountain.

Fire outlined the way before me and I stepped out over the level terrain that seemed to be located on the very peak of

the mountain and yet I did not feel cold. In fact I wondered if I was dreaming, but how could that be? Still nothing of the here and now was explained by previous life experiences.

A great panorama of expanse was viewable, but as it was night, all I could see was the outline of the nearby mountains. Everything else was cast in shadow.

**“No, son. Look now.”**

I blinked and then in astonishment I was looking through the mountains. Whether what I saw was in real-time or the imagery of a previous moment I did not know, but the sun was shining in it.

My eyes took in the sight of a great dusty plain that had dust billowing up to the sky. What mystery was beyond this dust?

A breeze blew and the dust vanished away and shocked my eyes took in the pressed rows of an enemy host to many to number. Their columns stretched out as far as the eye could see in this closed off view through dimensional time and space.

Breathing out I whispered in the anguish of spirit that I felt, “When will they reach the forest?”

**“Three days, which will give you the time needed to get clear of the forest.”**

Dry mouthed I croaked out still transfixed by the imagery of the epic scaled army on the march, “Where is there left to flee to, my Eloah?”

**“Who said anything about fleeing son of man? No, son, you will journey forth and meet them on the way! Am I**

**not the God of Battles?”**

“You are!” I whispered earnestly even as in anguish brought about by great fear I waited to be struck dead. There was no doubting the presence of the great I AM and just as assuredly the greatness of the army that lay before me was no match and yet I had looked upon the army and doubted in my heart that such a foe could be overcome. What a wretched man I was to doubt the power of the Most High that was all about me!

**“Son, all that you see in the distance marching vainly in all their fallen glory is nothing, but so that you will know My full power I am going to use you to overcome this upstart of a fool’s dilemma so that it will be said by all that hear of this event that there is indeed a God in Heaven and that I**

**AM that I AM is He who now speaks to you.”**

“Why me?” I whispered.

**“Why not? As a man you are weak like any other and yet you’ve embraced My Spirit and have allowed Me to work through you more than you could’ve ever done by fleshly strength alone. Truly My strength has been made manifest through you and it has been because you have chosen to allow Me to do so. You are a chosen vessel by which I will gain a great many and yet in the eyes of those who oppose Me what I do seems as foolishness because I have hidden truth from the wise and revealed it unto children.”**

Humbled beyond words I felt the certainty of all Eloah had spoken even as

I reacted in surprise that simple choices could have such unexpected grand outcomes. I continued to stare out at the great host that continued to move past my field of vision afforded me in this very special place.

Time passed and yet it only felt as a short moment and then I felt my lips move and utter forth, “What are your orders?”

The ground shook beneath me as a great rumbling sound moved the entire mountain. Shaken I crouched down only to realize that what I heard was laughter.

**“Oh son, how you please Me! One moment downturned of faith and yet in the next willing to shake mountains at My request. Stand up!”**

I did still feeling shaken as the mortality of my form in the face of the



presence of an all-powerful Elohim became only too real to me in the here and now. I waited in expectation of what I did not know as the cold winds of the mountains blew upon me.

A blast of air half turned me about and glancing that way I saw a crack in the rock.

**“Go.”** Urged the Fire Spirit in an easy command and I did so quickly.

I climbed into the crack in the mountain's peak only to witness an even greater shaking of the mountain than before only this time it was not from laughter. The very rock about me vibrated as if it couldn't contain itself even as lightning streaked all around as a cloud of heavy darkness, darker than the night settled down upon the top of the mountain.

I gripped a hold of the rock desperately as light so bright flashed all about me that it left nothing untouched. Truly, there was no place such a light could not reach whether it was to see into a man's soul or the deepest reaches of hell.

Drawn to it from within I turned my head and started to look out of the fissure in the mountain that I was hidden in, but the voice of my Maker stopped me as He said, **“No son, for you to look upon Me as I appear in form would be too much for you to bear in your unglorified state. One day, one day though, you will be able to and in that day I will hide nothing from you that I have prepared for those who serve Me through the belief they place in My Son Yeshua. Indeed it is My**

pleasure to give those who overcome in this life the reign of all eternity. Now, son of a fire warrior, even as a commander issues forth a plan of attack know that it is to be obeyed at all costs. March out of the forest you and your brethren and take none with you to offer support save for the kind that brought you here. There is nothing in this battle to come that is withholden from you to do for behold My Spirit is upon you. I have brought about this battle to occur and even so it will take place so that My Glory will be established firmly not only in the hearts of My saints, but also in all those who do not believe that I exist because of the many lies that they have been told. The strength the enemy possesses was given to them by

**Me so that My people might be proved and yet My adversaries sought to make an end of My people, but even as I have spoken there is yet a remnant of those who believe and truly I have set you in leadership over my people to act as a guide to them and a teacher of My ways. Even so teach them either by fire or sword and show them who you see Me to be, that none of them be left with doubt in their hearts even as I now purge it from your own heart. Truly, I am a God that saves and just as surely know that the day and hour cometh that I will be worshiped in spirit and in truth for the glory of who I am even as I purposed from the beginning of creation and there is none that is raised up against Me, capable of**

**stopping Me! Do you yet doubt Tarik?  
I demand an answer!”**

Sputtering out against the rock before my face I exclaimed, “No, my Elohim! Not one!”

The fury of the brightness about me began to diminish then and I was left once more in the darkness of the night and yet the rock against my cheek continued to tremble. I did not know what was expected of me and in the angst of the fear of displeasing my Creator I waited silently in the darkness.

The Fire Spirit’s voice from within the very temple of my body whispered in a soothing balm across the length and breadth of my being, **“Open your eyes.”**

I did so and with a gasp I found myself standing on the battlements of my own castle once more. It was dark and

only Feveren remained present and yet to my astonishment he glanced away from me.

Then I saw the reason for it. Holding a hand up in the dark I saw that I was glowing!

“Feveren.” I whispered, as I gazed down upon myself shaken as a full memory of everything I had experienced in the presence of Eloah came back to me.

“Yes, Master?” He said and to my astonishment I detected a hint of fear within his voice. Were my friends now afraid of me too?

“Go, out into the night and assemble all of my kind who’ve come to these lands. Do not rest until it is accomplished. Enlist as many as you have need of to spread the word and tell

them to come to the edge of the savanna by the way that leads to the other lands of Walenthyana.”

“Yes Master!” Feveren deeply intoned as he started to turn away to race off into the night.

“Only the humans are to be summoned Feveren. The beasts of the forest and plain are set to enjoy rest in the battle to come and that includes you too my friend.”

Feveren nodded his head in acceptance of the fact of that and then he was off in the night. He squealed out loudly in the night and his cry was picked up by several of his kind within the castle and once gathered to him they streaked for the gate of the castle that was shut and barred for the night.

The level of faith these creatures

possessed as beasts was unimaginable and yet I rejoiced in it as I prayed for the equal of it to be made manifest within the hearts of those I had been placed over as a caretaker of. Feveren leaped, followed by the others and passed through the solid material of the gate to pound down upon the path beyond the wall as they went all out paying heavy credence to seeing that my words were fulfilled.

Truly where there is faith in Eloah the ability to do absolutely anything exists. I stepped to the wall and watched as the Horses of Zavorra streaked out in every direction.

Ever mindful of the slightest of changes, Pith, observant as usual, began to drum forth a staccato beat by thumping his heavy branches against the bulk of



his trunk. I smiled even as the garrison of the castle came alive with alarm.

Warriors rushed to their posts and I was abruptly noticed. How could I not be as I stood glowing in the darkness of the night, although it seemed that I already glowed less than I had at first.

I turned to the gathered host of warriors only to see them on their knees with eyes affixed to the ground as a heavy fear fell upon all of them because of my appearance. I did not wish for such an effect upon them, but I could not undo the workings of the Most High and so I simply said, "Every man and woman who is able to fight and has a spirit that is set to serve Eloah prepare to leave this castle when the sun rises and march into the destiny that Eloah has for our people."

They scattered like sheep and not one soul knew a minute's sleep the rest of the night as provisions were made to set forth in the morning.

## Chapter Ten

# Winged Savagery

It wasn't a large army, but then it didn't have to be. All those able to fight stood gathered before me on the savanna as I sat astride of Feveren.

I road forward along the ranks and called out, "Whoever doesn't want to participate in the fight to come fall out of line and leave now."

With furtive glances cast about upwards of a hundred people fled from the ranks of the army.

"Good, I appreciate your honesty, but

know this, you are no longer welcome here. If you won't fight for your freedom then you have no part in being here to enjoy the peace set upon this land to enjoy. I give you two days to be gone from this land along with your families, after that I give charge over you to be enforced to the death by the creatures of the forest.”

Utterly crestfallen, faces now steeped with both the embarrassment and hard reality that came with their act of cowardice those who had fallen out of the ranks quickly hurried off still eager to save their lives that they had sacrificed a good home for along with their honor.

“The rest of this army moves out now. In two days' time I expect us to reach the outskirts of the forest to the East. The

trees are doing their best to open up a road for us, but the way will still be full of obstacles and I expect you to handle those obstacles well when encountered and benefit yourselves as the men and women of courage that I know you all to be. Now I am not a commander of harshness over you that is devoid of knowing how afraid so many of you are as to what you perceive the outcome of any engagement with the superior numbers and in some cases superior training and abilities that our enemies possess. No one is telling you that it's wrong to be afraid. The reality, though, is for us who believe in Eloah and refuse to serve any other, there is simply nowhere else for us to run to. This is it. This is our last stand. If it was up to me I would wait for the enemy to reach us

here and fight on friendly ground with the benefit of a forest of allies around us to give us aid, but thankfully I'm a servant of the Most High and I don't have to rely on what I think would be best, because as a human I'm prone to mistakes and errors just like all of you are. You all accept my leadership here not because I have demanded it of you, but rather because the Creator has placed me in a position of watchful headship over you and His Fire Spirit has gone out ahead of any action of mine and verified it within your spirits and so you listen to me and have faithfully all gathered here at my request. I appreciate your loyalty to the Fire Spirit's urging, more than you know, and even as you see the Creator's Spirit at work in me and respect my leadership over you because

of it then also respect that I have been told to do by Him just as I am commanding now. Our Elohim is a jealous God. He does not want a people who praise Him only with their mouths, but in order to please Him He requires an aspect of faith from each of us. This is what we all have to do now. We have to take faith in that our Creator has a plan. He has always known that this day was coming and if we stand united in the faith of His deliverance of us and do as He asks of us then I tell you that there is nothing that will be held back from us! Our Elohim desires, no, is worthy of, a people willing to do all that is asked of them. I have been asked to lead you and I have answered that call and with the Fire Spirit's enabling I will lead you well, but each of you needs to look

within and seek the Creator's enabling fire for yourselves! My absolute belief in Eloah is not enough for all of you. I am but one man on a journey to please my Creator and so should you be as what higher calling in life could any of us have other than to follow the bidding of the One who made you and made it so that you could taste the choice of true freedom. In the tyranny that is marching against us now there is no freedom and yet we live daily with the freedom to choose as each one wills to and I now plead with you for the benefit of your immortal souls to take up all your doubts, fears, and anxieties and cast them at the feet of the Savior Yeshua and leave them there, even as you put on the full armor of Eloah and take up the shield of faith that through belief in



Yeshua has been authored in us, even as we by choice wield the sword of the Spirit of Elohim which are the very Words of Eloah, Himself. We cannot fail in any battle we face if such is our dedication of purpose. Though we all die and the last spark of freedom among mankind be lost, we have not failed! We can never fail if our hope is in Elohim for if we gain Him over all this world has to offer we have received the better prize whether in death or in life for this present time we live in is but a vapor of temporary moments. Important moments though, that have the potential to affect all of eternity. Now is such a moment! I ask this day that you take faith in the Most High Elohim who made you and march forward into the blessed destiny reserved for those who put their faith in

the Ancient of Days!”

The army before me that did not find it strength in numbers that it could field, but rather in the Spirit of the Creator they possessed within them practically growled back at me with impatience to already be gone, “Yes, Sir!!!”

Just like that they were on the move and I could ask for no better group of warriors. As one they began to sing as the fear within their hearts of certain death was replaced instead with fire from on high.

My heart rose with exaltation at hearing so many openly praising Eloah in both song and action. My attention was drawn from the quick marching force of about 5000 souls to Rafargan who had sauntered up before Feveren and now sat respectfully waiting for me

to notice him.

Gazing into the eyes of a friend I said, “You’re in charge in my absence Rafargan. See as you are able that no harm comes to the children or elderly.”

He nodded solemnly. I knew more than anything that he wished to accompany me, but my orders had been clear, only the eagles and other birds of prey from the northern mountains were to be of aid to us in the fight to come.

Slowly Rafargan spoke, “I await your return with eagerness my liege. Truly, if there was ever a son of man born to rule in justice and peaceableness of faith over my Creator’s handiwork it is you. With you goes all the heartfelt wishes of your friends and indeed the forest itself to the successful accomplishment of all that Eloah has decreed must happen. To

this end may Elohim Most High smite all your enemies before you, Tarik.”

I nodded emotionally and eased Feveren away after the army that had disappeared into the forest. Though they had disappeared from sight they could still be heard.

I'd heard no better sound in life up till now save for the voice of Eloah, Himself, of which I would never forget and that was a constant aid to take faith in as the divine injunction of the plans given to me for us to face the enemy beyond the shelter of the forest that had become home to us all laid heavily upon me.

Riding up to the rear of the column I was joined by Jafina riding upon Soranya. She wore a smile on her face and as we rode I asked curiously as she

continued to stare at me, “What?”

“Nothing my Liege.”

“Don’t lie. What is it?”

“I was just thinking to myself what a wonderful father you’re going to make one day.” She rode ahead then with a broad smile and blinking in the wake of that statement I idled behind.

Feveren made an odd choked sounding noise and I realized that he was laughing at me. I blushed slightly as the imagery of what having children meant must happen first and with a draw to his voice Feveren commented, “Though it is usual for the act of procreation to be sought out by the stallion, as it may be, I have known the odd filly here and there to select her own mate with neither a bye, nor leave, to anyone. I have found that to be a good thing in the past, as I

appreciate the fine mind evidenced in such a one as that as a sure sign that her offspring will be of a sturdy build and fit for the tests of life. You would do well to be her mate, Master.”

Gazing at Feveren irritably I said, “Perhaps we could talk about this some other time.”

“I rather fancy the here and now. I can tell that you have little going for you in terms of experience when it comes to females. Granted though she not be of my kind, I see much that is similar within the makeup of the mind and emotion that rules the female in general. If ever you should require from my far more vast array of experience to glean some insight in regards to all that is female, you have but to ask.”

“Big of you Feveren, but tell me all

this interest in securing me a mate couldn't have something to do with Soranya could it? She has adopted Jafina as her master and should I be with Jafina well then that would put Soranya and you in rather close proximity for years to come now wouldn't it. She is a fine looking filly to be sure."

Feveren chuckled good-naturedly and huffed, "I have been found out it would seem. Still my offer remains open."

"Thank you Feveren, but I really can't think of that kind of a future right now. Not with all of what lies ahead of us to be accomplished."

Feveren idly commented, "Sometimes pondering on such things is exactly what one needs when in the midst of a great turmoil. A way of seeing something positive in the future in a moment that

only seems bleak in the here and now.”

Wryly, I acknowledged that he had a good point. We took off with greater speed and before long we were caught up with the column and Jafina riding upon Soranya lay just ahead of us.

Feveren spoke, “She is quite beautiful isn’t she.

Nodding my head I said, “Yes.”

Blinking my eyes I took my gaze from off how well Jafina’s bottom filled a saddle to glance at Feveren. With a chuckle I said, “I don’t think we’re talking about the same female.”

“No, decidedly not.” Feveren commented in a low tone.

I patted his neck and together we rode past the objects of both of our affections and gained ground till we were at the head of the column. The future did seem



brighter with the hope of something fine occurring should the battle be won.

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## **Two Days Later**

We had pressed through the forest at a high rate of speed even as the forest had done its best to open up a way before us. It was early morning of the third day when we reached the Eastern area of flat lands that lay beyond Angarta.

It was with an odd reluctance that I left the forest I had once feared behind me. To me there was little left to fear in the forest and what was of concern was manageable.

Stepping out on foot I looked back and caught sight of Feveren's glossy blackness set against the greenery of the

forest edge. I lifted a hand and he tossed his head.

It had been hard for him to stay behind, but he feared the Creator as did I and my directions had been specific. We were permitted no allies save for the eagles of which I had seen nothing of.

Over half of the army I could have fielded was being left behind me in the forest and yet instead of questioning it I accepted the fact that Eloah apparently intended to do more with less. Looking forward once more I whispered out as the column moved past, “Thy will be done Father.”

**“So it shall be.”** Came a whisper on a sudden breeze that warmed my heart.

The breeze brought something else though along with it, the sound of drums. Looking ahead I saw on a rise of the

rolling terrain a group of riders skylined against the horizon who appeared to be talking in an excited fashion among themselves.

They disappeared from view. Time passed and we moved steadily farther out into the grassed hills beyond the forest.

Abruptly, then in the distance the sound of drums picked up to a fever pitch. The word was out and soon there would be battle.

The sky was behaving strangely overhead. On the one end it featured a bright cloudless blue going on that radiated out from Angarta and then to the other horizon we marched toward showed the evidence of a storm fast approaching. Was it a storm of nature or something else though?

There was an electric feel in the air and not moving a step farther I made the signal to stop. An uneasy silence settled upon the column as the drum sounds grew closer, but more threatening still where the storm clouds invading into the blue of our sky.

There just wasn't something right about these clouds. Every part of my being vibrated with an intensity at something going on unseen in front of my eyes.

My group of seven had come to stand behind me and they, like me, watched in silence as the invading storm front came ever closer as even the front lines of the enemy army became visible in the distance. Closing my eyes I stretched out a hand towards the troubled sky before us and prayed, "My Eloah, I ask that You

would reveal what is hidden from our eyes. I ask in Yeshua's Name, by which I have authority, to command over all the powers of darkness.”

Those behind me echoed in likewise fashion and as one we saw transformation take place overhead and with a general outcry of alarm the army at my back cried out as the foul and despicable imagery of incarnate demonic entities ran back and forth overhead in what looked like chariots wreathed in black fire. Darted arrows of the spirit seemingly apart from the physicalness of our perceived existence were raining down on us from above, they plunged unerringly right into those within the ranks who seemed to be afflicted the most by doubt as to why we had come here to engage in war this day.

I turned and saw consternation upon even the faces of the seven who had followed me from the beginning. Jafina's worried gaze found mine and she flinched as something within my gaze was in sharp reproof of the doubt I saw within her.

She seemed to sense my displeasure and I saw her start to dig down for reserve to cover up her momentary lack of faith, but I lifted a hand to silence anything she or any of the others who also now appeared to be ashamed were about to say. They knew above all others how little there was to fear and yet the sight of the demon host in high places, had for a moment, overwhelmed them as truly it would have for me too, but I had seen something greater, and now the greatness of Elohim lay all about me as a

security that I did not question even in the midst of all hell raining down upon us.

Softly I spoke to Jafina as the Fire Spirit gave me leave to do, “Do not be afraid for what you see cannot stand in the face of Eloah’s Will. Jafina, you are a warrior of great standing, but in one thing you are lacking. That said it is the Glory of Eloah to use those like me and you who are not perfect, but willing to choose to believe in Eloah and thus through them accomplish great and mighty things far beyond our own abilities.”

As I spoke I saw confidence reenter into her eyes as faith remembered shined out with a determination that accepted the reproof of the Fire Spirit and was willing to try again as a loyal daughter

of the Most High. I had never loved her more than I did in this moment.

Wiping at the tears on her face as she regained her composure she straightened and spoke in a husky tone that said she was ready to try to the accomplishment of anything, "What are your orders, Sir?"

Nodding in acceptance of her leap back into faith I said, "This army cannot march forward any farther without faith so it shall not move at all. Instead I give over command of the army to you and I ask that as much as it is able for you and the others to do that you stand right here and not be moved. Truly, this is a battle that must be won in the spirit before ever it is won in the flesh."

Jafina's eyes widened with alarm as fresh tears threatened and softly she



begged in question, “Where are you going?”

“Wherever the Fire Spirit leads me. Take command of the army now and serve your Creator well!”

Pulling in a measure of reserve that looked like it wrenched her soul apart to do so, she saluted and said, “Yes Sir!” And turning she cried out to the army to form a circle formation.

At the questioning looks of my other six friends who showed the same alarm as Jafina had that I soon wouldn't be here I said with authority, “Serve her now in my absence! Go!!!”

“Yes Sir!” They all quickly assented and left to do what they could to mobilize an army stiffened in fear by the awfulness of all that lay around and above us.

I stared upward at the host of darkness that danced overhead of us within the storm cloud masses, even as darts of dark spiritual sorcery and spiritual enmity continued to rain down upon the army shakily reforming around me in outward facing circle formation with me at the center. Wrath steadily bubbled out of me until it became a flood from my soul as the jabbering squeals of darkness overhead registered and the sounds of an engulfing army on the move over a thousand times our number swept around us like an encircling ring of hell.

I took my gaze off of the tumult above us that showered down darts of despair and fear in ever-growing numbers to behold the hosts of all the armies of darkness that the enemy could muster that now encircled about us upon this

shadow cast grassland of eternal consequences. Giants that stood forty feet at the shoulder roared out with the magnitude of a hundred bulls enraged to the fullest even as the air was filled with the howls of the wolfmen and every other twisted creature of darkness that had been artificially honed off of the original goodness of creation even as the ranks of the enemy were filled out by the many thousands by the ordinary humans who had accepted darkness's reign and had invited it within their souls to their eternal demise and destruction for the satisfaction promised to them in the day of this momentary existence.

Still, worse than all that I saw of the enemy was the utter looks of despair upon the gathered ranks of my army that had followed me here to this moment of

faith tested to the extreme. Truly, as I now gazed upon them I saw that they were all sheep set for the slaughter.

I wanted to yell at them to somehow make them remember the faith that they had set out upon this quest with that no army under heaven could have vanquished, but the Spirit of the Most High bid me to silence. I closed my eyes and in silence I realized that I too had my own moment of doubt as why else would I be threatened by the knowledge that I seemingly was alone in believing that victory was possible.

Did I need an army to believe in the destiny of faith that I had outlined in order to be victorious or was victory to be found in that I believed that victory had been promised this day by Eloah, Himself? I knew the answer and

excepting it I was immediately set free from the cloying anxieties and spirit of fear that had come to press in all about me.

Softly then I felt the fire of the Most High's Spirit breathe forth, **“Lead them. Show them. Fight for them. Intercede for them. Show My power to them. Indeed, breathe out My fire upon them.”**

“As you enable me so I will do Eloah!” I said in acceptance of my orders.

I opened my eyes and turning about I called out in a voice that carried about the gathered ranks, despite the clamoring din of the host encroaching upon us from all corners, “This day my friends your faith will be perfected! Kneel all of you!”

The army practically fell to their faces in their haste to obey and I realized for the first time that I was engulfed in flames. Turning about I gestured to them all and sang out in a voice that caused cracks of light to stream through the dark swirling enemy laden clouds overhead, "Ancient of Days, we your servants are set before You this day, not only to do battle, but to win against our enemy. Not by might! Not by power, but by the Spirit of the living Elohim, do we overcome this day! Even so as You promised to deliver us when we call upon You through belief in the Name of Your Son Yeshua, I now claim Your peace that passes all understanding to be at home in our spirits! I claim strength for our hearts to achieve what You have purposed to occur! I claim victory over

the enemy even as You have purposed this battle to occur so shall victory be found for all those who place their trust in You as we do right now in the name of Yeshua, the risen Savior, the King of Kings, and the Redeemer of us all!”

A silent hush filled moment as it seemed, passed by in the ranks of Angarta and then opening my eyes I roared out with, as an urge from within me bade me to, even as I knew that the host of my army was not yet convinced in faith that they could indeed overcome, “Where are my fire warriors?”

A deep voice from nearby spoke up even as the speaker and six other cloaked men rose up to their feet and threw back their hoods, “Right here my son!”

In amazement I beheld the scarred

face of my father along with six other warriors of my people that had been among the greatest and now they were never more so than right now. Flames cascaded off their robes as each drew his sword as their faces reflected a complete lack of fear for anything on display around us.

I wanted to ask so many questions and more yet still just run into the arms of my father whom I had thought was dead, but now was not the time. Drawing my own flame kissed swords I said in the voice of a warrior even as I was the son of one, "To war!"

I turned and started walking as the men of my childhood followed along behind. My gaze was focused on the host above that had grown silent.

Jafina glanced from me to the sky



overhead and asked, “How can you fight them? You’re but a man!”

I stopped and reaching out I laid my hand on her shoulder and said, “Only have faith and nothing shall be impossible for you Jafina. Hold the line. I will return. Hold!”

Jafina nodded and I let go of her shoulder and began to run. The army ranks before me started to pull back in fear of being scorched by the fire that lay upon me, but stopped as a staircase wreathed in flames burst forth into existence before me that led straight up into the heavens.

In jubilation of spirit I charged upward along with the old guard of elite warriors I had thought all long dead, but that somehow Elohim had preserved. Preserved for this day, this moment,

when faith was being tested the most I had the privilege to be in the presence of men greater in deeds and in honor than I was.

Upwards we charged even as the staircase of fire dissipated behind us, but the imagery of eight warriors set ablaze, but not on fire, by the Spirit of the Most High completely galvanized the army standing below that gazed upon us in stupefied amazement as they witnessed that truly Eloah was in this moment supreme and that they were supposed to be here and engage in this battle of the spirit played out into the fleshly existences of mankind.

Overwhelmingly, pulsed in spirit by what she had just seen Jafina raced forward to cry out at the rank-and-file of the army, “Who among us can doubt now

the supremacy of our Elohim! Men and women of the Most High, face the enemy!”

As she cried out the Fire Spirit's presence broke out upon her as He had upon the figure of her beloved and as one the army given over to her command with a great shout turned and faced the enemy that was charging in on them from all corners. Shields were braced and spears lifted. An electrical ball of flaming energy encircled the pressed wall of shields and emboldened the hearts of those who held them only further.

Like a cascading wave of dark filth the front line of a host only measured by the hundreds of thousands smashed into the shield wall of the army of the last free land of Angarta. The braced feet of

those manning the shields slid backward across the grass, but the wall did not fail.

Crying out with a great shout Jafina and her six generals cried out, “Hold, in the Name of Eloah!”

The in-pressing slide of feet stopped as each man and woman braced against the back of the soldier in front of them and then with a strength, only explained as supernatural, those holding the shields on the outward perimeter slammed them forward against the press of the enemy and the front line of assault was sent reeling backward onto the weapons of their fellow host members. With a cry of rage the forces beyond the shield wall surged back over the bodies of those crushed or knocked unconscious, but the shield wall was set and the protruding

spears shot forth in blood spurting jabs as a host unified in faith, fought forth with a fervor unmatched by the emboldened horde of a foe surely too numerous to fail in winning such a lopsided battle.

Arrows began raining in all around and like angry hornets they whizzed about Jafina and with a greater skill than she had ever before manifested, she picked the arrows on target out of the air with the blade of her sword all the while calling out commands to where the line needed strengthening the most. From her vantage point in the center she saw the newest threat to emerge in the form of great winged birds that were part bird and something else.

They came winging in from above only to dive down upon the circle of the

army from within. Warriors were torn away from the ground and lifted aloft as the flying monsters beat the air with their wings intending on fleeing away only to drop those clutched in their talons down into the pressed masses of the enemy host where they would soon be hacked to pieces. It never happened.

Out of the north swept a shrieking cloud of avenging fury that dove downward from a great height at breakneck speed to crash, talons first, into the hybrid monsters about to release their captives to be devoured below. The monsters did release their captives, in their shock of being attacked from above, but as the warriors fell they were swept up by the eagles and other great birds that had come from the northern mountains.

The eagles with unmatched savagery tore into the unholy offspring of evil's conception and the beasts fell heavily within the host of their own side crushing many in the process even as other heavily laden eagles fluttered down to land warriors back upon the ground at the center of the tight pressed jabbing wall of shields that claimed more and more of the enemy as they were pushed forward to be impaled upon the righteous driven fervor of an army that would not be overwhelmed.

The missiles from the host of demonic origin in the dark clouds of war overhead had long since ceased and in wonder Jafina looked upward as the battle raged all around her. The column of eagles spiraled around in a tight vortex above the army of Angarta even

as a greater number of hawks and falcons more nimble in size, swerved and derved about in a dazzling display of aeronautical wonder as they seized ahold of inbound arrows that might've killed a warrior below. It didn't stop there though. If they couldn't catch the arrow then they outdistanced it at the last moment and dashed into place to take the killing stroke meant for a warrior upon themselves.

Overcome by the emotion of the sacrifice all around her, Jafina reached her hand up to the sky and prayed, "Oh my, Elohim help them! Help us to overcome before all are lost!"

The scenes of a vision caught her with a violence then that left her amazed. The imagery of children playing and laughing assailed her with such a moment of



peace as to be the essence of comfort itself and with an in-pressed sob she smiled because the children she saw were all hers. A little boy ran up to her holding a bouquet of fresh picked flowers and smiling down at him she accepted them as she took in just how like his father he looked. With the peace of that realization firmly seized upon within her heart the vision faded and once more all around her was war and death brought on by it.

An arrow she hadn't been looking for was snatched out of her face by a small falcon that seemed to grin at her as if everything going on was but a game. A game of war and as Jafina looked outward she saw that the enemy in impatience had given up on the slow approach to victory for they had

unleashed the heavily armored battle giants and cave trolls that were numbered within the ranks of an unholy army fit only for the workings of hell.

Berserk with demonic rage, the giants and trolls trampled over their own contingent as they screamed absurdities in their mad dash across the battlefield to feast upon the flesh of righteous people. Jafina poised with confidence glanced to the other six of her brethren tasked with leadership only to see the look of despair they had as to how this new threat was to be dealt with.

Seemingly drawn magnetically they all glanced to her and Jafina smiled. With authority of spirit Jafina called out to a group of warriors held in reserve, "Shields up!" and abruptly started running right at them.

Somehow driven to do by a guiding force from within, the nearest to Jafina knelt to place his shield above his head facing skyward even as the next several warriors formed a line and replicated in stairstep formation with shields held aloft. Jafina leapt up onto the first shield and then the next as the warriors below braced hard in unity to the divine direction being given them to play their part in the greater scene about to unfold.

Jafina shrieked out a cry that seemed right to let loose with as her feet graced the last upturned shield and pushing off she leaped upward. Almost in echo to her own cry there was an answering shriek from the encircling tornado of feathers hovering above the Angarten host and an eagle of great size and majesty dived out of the spiraling

maelstrom of talons that kept all the winged monsters of the enemy at bay.

Jafina somersaulted through the air and drove her feet upward towards the sky. With a shrieking cry of joyous savagery the king of the eagles latched about her ankles with his great talons in a secure but harmless grip of both of her legs.

Jafina hung upside down and with both hands gripped ahold of her sword as her long hair flew out behind her as the eagle swooped out over the host of the tight packed enemy. Up ahead of them surged a giant unmindfully through the ranks of his own forces trodding them underfoot with his haste to smash through the shield wall of Angarta.

He saw Jafina and with an enraged squeal that seemed to issue forth from

the bowels of hell he swung up his sword that was the length of two adult men and with muscles rippling he sliced it through the air at them. The eagle sliced sideways and the blade swept down past the eagle and Jafina by a hair's breadth only to cleave through the bodies of half a dozen hysterically screaming men below who were in more fear of being squashed by the giant than of anything else in the moment.

With a savage cry the eagle swerved in towards the giant's head and with a savage cry of her own, Jafina, while staring full into the cat slitted eyes of the giant that were the size of her own head, plunged her sword in deep and held onto it with both hands as the eagle spiraled down around the giant's immense form at breakneck speed. Jafina's blade had an

electric like quality to it as flames kissed the air as the blade drug through armor, bone, and flesh alike as if she was carving a hot knife through butter.

A spiraling cascade of blood showered down upon the shocked enemy at the giant's feet and moments before Jafina would've smashed headfirst into them her blade left the flesh of the giant's leg and the eagle lifted powerfully into the air even as the stunned giant continued to spurt blood upon those below. The spiraling cut had been deep and already the damage done was to massive as to be recovered from by even his immense regenerative powers and with a cry of remorse that did more to demoralize the outsized host below the giant toppled over to his death squashing upwards of a hundred more of

the enemy forces.

All through the attack of Jafina's moment of winged savagery her six contemporaries had stared in amazement, but now with one cry they rushed towards the upraised shields still facing the sky and made their own leaps of faith as more of the most daring of the eagles swept down and snatched them up to then swoop out over the battlefield that raged on all sides. From one giant to the next with trolls in between the generals of the Angarten host led by example and felled each and every last one of the greatest of the enemy's forces before even one could reach the shield wall that held true against the pressure of thousands as they were emboldened with a savage zeal brought on by unity within the Fire Spirit

in their belief that Elohim had purposed this day to be one of victory. Even so they fought all the harder and the line held as they waited out their expectation of deliverance to break forth from the heavens above as extreme faith became a concept realized in the moments of their greatest trial and yet their greatest moments alive.



## Chapter Eleven

# A Father's Blessing

Dimensions flashed and I and my warrior brethren with me ascended to a higher plain above the world of men as we were borne aloft by the Spirit of our Creator who rules across all dimensions. I started forward with flaming fervor to destroy the gathered host that stretched out as long as the eye could see upon this interdimensional plain of existence.

They stared at us with curiosity as if witnessing something unseen before to

them, but they had no fear of us, for truly, they possessed great power and the arrogance of it bade one of the chief most demons to utter force with, “You have deserted the battle below but to come up and face us? What do you hope to do, puny human made of flesh, against the powers of this world? Our master alone rules these regions beneath heaven and how dare you to presume to achieve otherwise as it is not yet our time!”

A great uproar followed amongst the statement as those demons closest patted the speakers back. Shaking my head I stopped advancing and spoke out as my father and the others came abreast of me, “We are not of the world, for the Spirit of the Creator we possess within the temple of our bodies, is heir to the world that is to come. Even so our

spirits are held by the Father in expectation of that eternal future of glory yet to come. Truly, we who believe by faith in the Name of Yeshua, the Name placed above all names, in whom even you fear and tremble at the mention of, are never alone.”

The sound of an even greater host than was before us made noise in readiness for divinely appointed conflict as the ranks upon ranks of heaven's elite angels drew swords at our backs in an unbroken line of ministers of the Gospel wreathed in fire, made clear their intent to stand with us against all enemies of The Truth and those who would pollute The Way. Lifting my swords, I called out upon the now despitefully cringing host before us, “This day we do battle so that the Words of Elohim Most High will be

fulfilled in that the Light of His Word will not fail from the mouth of the righteous until the appointed time of the end of the world comes. This day is not that day, but the day of all those who oppose us to live in the Light of the Most High has come! Angarta is a land ruled over by the Most High and this day we defend the lives of all those who call it home and will call it home for however much time is yet to come, even as our Eloah enables us, even so we fight in the name of our Savior who makes victory this day possible! Yeshua is His name and victory in His name we now claim!!!”

The sound of ram’s horns broke forth out across all the length of this dimension above the physical realm below and the host before us visibly

shook in petrified horror at what was coming about this day. From within my orders came, **“Seize the day in My Name, Tarik!”**

Raising my swords high I yelled, “Yeshua!”, and charged even as the power of ultimate authority granted to the Son by the Father swept out across the plain before me and did the work to be done.

In an echoing reverb of unmatched magnitude the angels spoke along with the voices of my father and the others in continuation of my words, “The Name above all names!”

With one accord we charged and the enemy ran before us as they could not stand in the face of the authority of Him who is greater than all.

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Splattered with the blood of giants and foes of all kinds, Jafina looked up with wonder, as did everyone else as the sound of deeply blown horns came ringing down out of the heavens above. A wave of light crashed forth from the one end of the horizon to the other and the sounds of warfare from above could be heard and all the host of the enemy gathered about the Angarten host trembled as the skies twisted and burst forth with light from overhead.

The clouds parted over the Angarten force and light cascaded off of the swirling eagles above the battle lines even as the sky abruptly darkened over all the stretched out host of the enemy. Then the rain of fire began.

Chunks of burning rock shot down out of the clouds with fiery blooms of smoke trailing out behind them even as lightning bolts crashed through the air with pressed savagery. All that gazed upward of the enemy shrieked out as judgment fell from on high, even as their judgment was the evidence of deliverance that those who had fought by faith now saw the evidence of their hope being achieved.

In stunned awe Jafina watched a ball of fire not that of a rock, but of the form of a man descend down even as the first bombs of brimstone let down upon the enemy host within the fiery death wracking display that stretched for as far as the eye could see of the enemy host. Her eyes traced the descent of the man on fire who was but one of several

others also raining down upon the battlefield and her heart swelled even as joy swept over her womb as the promise of what was to come became all the more real to her for the reality of the blessing that it was to be who she was.

Crying she blessed the Name of her Savior Yeshua, even as she watched the fiery form of the man who would soon be her lover and the keeper of her heart land down with a force that knocked down the close packed enemy around him. His swords flashed upward to the sky and fire fell down in two whip like electric arcs of energy to pulse into the tips of each of his swords.

He moved and the arcing length of flame now issuing forth from the swords flashed out like whips of living flame to carve through all the host around him



even as more and more fireballs of brimstone rained down out of the sky and yet not one fell on the forces of Angarta that had seized this day by faith.

Lifting her sword high Jafina cried out, "To victory my brothers! To victory my sisters!"

With an answering cry of overcoming zeal that stretched them beyond all concept of fatigue and injury, the battered wall of shields was thrown down and every Angarten drew forth their swords and raced outward into the fleeing masses of the enemy that stumbled to and fro at a lack for direction of any kind as they were utterly destroyed by the thousands with each passing moment. Judgment for them had come even as a greater realization of faith had come to those who had seized a

hold of it and not settled for the complacency of fear.

Joy at the freedom that was theirs drove the Angartens out after the enemy and towards the men, who by invitation of the Creator's Spirit, had won a victory in the spirit that was now being completed in the flesh. The heavens above yet flashed again with the movements of a great host only this time it was in their favor as a spirit of derision was cast down upon all the panicking masses of the enemy to the point that they could not lift a weapon to defend themselves.

They fell like overladen wheat shocks before the scythe and truly the battlefield was burned clear of them until the balls of flame falling from the sky were all that pursued those stragglers not yet slain

that ran for a place of peace that they would never reach even as hell opened wide to receive the souls of thousands who were self-appointed by choice to eternal torment and the anguish to be forever separated from the Light of Eloah.

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Ryntal ran for all he was worth. There was no sense to this day!

How had the tables turned so suddenly? They had brought all the lands under subjection with the exception of Angarta that they had bypassed for the moment only to see it become a sort of promise land for all the bitter dissenters of the New World Order to flee to.

It had to be crushed and made an

example of and so an army over ten times that which was needed had been assembled. Now where were they? Ashes!

How could it be? The war giants all slain! Three legions of wolfmen! All the trolls from the Segundy Mountains gone! Human regulars the victors of a dozen conquests, all slain!

Could the God of these escaped people of faith really be preeminent in power and if so why had he pledged his allegiance to another god that had promised him victory only to now be brought low in defeat? All was lies!

“Ryntal!” Rang out a voice from behind him.

Shaking so badly that he peed himself, Ryntal looked back to see one of the fire warriors that had descended out of the

sky. All the legends of old had been true. No greater warriors existed than these and Ryntal rued the day that he had ever laid a campaign against the last holdout of a culture that such men existed in.

He thought he had wiped them out, but a remnant of them had remained. A remnant that had destroyed them this day!

Without the soldiers that had gone on this campaign the Empire of the Dolerian Auranto would falter, if not fail altogether, as insurrections flared up and loyalties were tested. No this battle had been the end of the quest for world domination for the moment and if the elite should ever lay hands on him he did not doubt with what savagery they would exact upon him for failing them.

That grim reality though, paled in

comparison to the here and now though, as he was faced with a warrior wreathed in flames and yet all the more familiar for it. Suddenly then he realized who the man was and his heart took flight all the more.

In terror he turned to run all the harder, but with a twisting snap a molten cord of fire clamped about his waist. In scorched agony Ryntal tried to break free of the encircling band of fire that was putting him entirely ablaze.

Screaming he fell, but there was no escape from the torment of the flames and then the ground beneath him fell away and with a scream of terror he fell only to be brought up short by the cord of living fire wrapped around him that seared him to the heart. Flames leapt up at him from the hellish portal below

opening up to receive him, of which the very sound of threatened to stop his heart.

In mind numbing terror he glanced up to the world above to hear the man that he had once burned alive say to him even as he now burned, “For my wife and my people. Your deeds Ryntal are done and your life is over. Now hell opens up to receive your soul and you shall wish a thousand times over that you had chosen otherwise in life then you have.”

“No!!! Please don't let go!!! Have mercy!!!!!!”

Sayul shook his head no and with an awful finality said, “Your time is up now enjoy the reward that your actions in life have brought you for all of eternity to come.”

The encircling band of fire released and electrically shrank back up to dissipate into Sayul's sword even as arms flailing through space and time Ryntal fell downward through rock and stone toward an eternal abyss of fire and torment.

The shock of all that was to come was too much and bug eyed still staring up at the figure upon the rim so far above him now Ryntal's heart stopped and he died. The moment of death was marked by no joyous passage to heaven in the company of angels, but in that moment his soul which could feel and sense pain, now freed of its mortal body, was set upon by demonic spirits that laughed and chortled as they drug the only thing eternal about all men down into the crimson awful light of hell.



Ryntal's torment had just begun along with the thousands of men that he had led to their deaths because of the intervention of a higher power that now he only to truly knew existed, but was forever held apart from in burning anguish.

An earthquake shook the surface of the world as the flames of hell and the torments of the demons and fallen angels trapped there pulsed with the expansion of souls to feed upon. Indeed the boundaries of hell itself expanded to the tune of the high-pitched shrieks of torment expressed by all those forever bound there. It was with relief for Sayul when the chasm to the lower most parts of Walenthyana were closed up and he no longer had the look upon the torment of those who did not know his Savior,

Yeshua, as their Redeemer.

Sayul looked about over the field of war that had been won in the spirit before it had been won in the flesh and said, "Thank you, my Eloah, for allowing me to live to see this day. I confess I did not think it possible to ever see restitution such as this upon seeing the destruction of my people, but Your Word, truly, will always be fulfilled and this warrior, for what little consequence that I might be, praises You!" Sayul said at the last with a great shout.

A breeze blew and with it Sayul's gaze was directed to a promontory of stone that overlooked the battlefield in which lay the ashed remains of an innumerable enemy that Eloah had slain this day. Upon the rocks looking out over the valley of death stood his son.

Tears sprang to his eyes and coursed down the burnt ravages of his face. His son!

So strong and tall. A man fully grown in flesh and maturity of spirit to have done and been used by the Most High as he had been this day. The knowledge that this leader among men had come forth from his loins was the ultimate in humbling gratitude to think that he had helped and nurtured such a one into the world so that this day could happen.

Sayul sank to his knees still crying in profound gratitude of his heavenly Master as to have been so blessed by having such a son as he had, who not only had followed him in example, but had eclipsed him in every way imaginable. It was all a father could ask for and Sayul cried out openly to his

Creator with the joy of his gratitude for being allowed to live and take part in this day as he had been permitted to.

The breeze blew again and Sayul's tears stilled as the Fire Spirit's presence blew around him in a comforting current of love and power. Sayul closed his eyes and rested in the moment and when he did he saw in what he knew was a vision of the future the image of his son as he was now fully grown up walking towards him carrying something within his arms. It was a newborn baby.

A baby that his son carefully laid into his burn scarred arms still strong enough for war, but that now felt inadequate to hold the slight weight of a baby that rested comfortably against him as if in comfort within his presence. Looking up into the smiling face of his son he heard

him say, *“Will you help me teach him to be a Godly man even as you were faithful to do with me?”*

Subconsciously Sayul’s arms secured gently but firmly about the baby even as he affirmed, *“I will, my son.”*

The vision drifted away and with a wet eyed gaze Sayul glanced once more toward the stone promontory his son stood upon only to see that he was no longer alone. A woman stood several paces behind him yet unseen by his son.

Sayul leaned forward to place his hand upon the ground and in his deep voice he spoke out even as the ground rippled at the utterance of a man of faith’s blessing, *“I bless the name of she who bore you into the world, my daughter, even as I give you my blessing for you to be my son’s wife. May your*

days together be long and peaceful and filled with too much joy to ever store away, even as I ask that Eloah open your womb to my son's seed in order to bring forth children that will be reared in the Light of The Way of Eloah so that this world will be conquered by the power of the Name of the Son of Eloah for by His great redemptive love we have all been given the chance to do great and noble deeds for the Kingdom of the Most High. May the Ancient of Days smile upon you both even as I do in joy that what was broken has now been fully restored by the hands of the Great I AM.”

## Chapter Twelve

# The Way of Eloah

I stared out over a field of burnt ashes already beginning to blow away. How many of them had I slain today?

So many lost to hell and yet perhaps today would serve to make the world at large wake up to the realization that Eloah was still on high as the supreme ruler of all. Regrettably I had doubts within my spirit of that occurring.

The Fire Spirit spoke, **“Now is not the time to dream and plan for future wars, for wars will come and times will**

**grow hard for those who have taken faith in the Words of the Most High, as you have. Those days will be fulfilled, but not in this day. This day marks an era of peace. A gift from the Father for all who had been loyal to Him through great adversity. Return to the forest and rule your kingship over it well.”**

Softly I said, “Only if you help me, Spirit of the Most High, can I hope to be a leader fit for the role of doing what needs done.”

**“I’m not going anywhere, Tarik. I’ll always be right here with you every step of the way. Your humility is what makes you a great King, so may you always be a man in love with the ways of the Most High.”**

The Fire Spirit’s voice had stopped,



but not His urging. Feeling compelled I turned and saw Jafina standing there.

Tentatively she reached out a hand as if unsure if she was allowed to touch me. The time for such reserve as that was over!

Stepping forward I startled her by seizing her face with both my hands and then before she could speak I kissed her with all the passion I had for her and in turn she kissed me with all the passion of her heart. Her legs lifted to settle around my waist even as her arms hugged about my neck as a kiss that promised to never end went on and on as I let my hands lovingly roam over and support a treasure that had been well worth the wait it had taken to reach this moment of pressed down divine favor upon our lives.

A snickering snuffle registered within my mind, Jafina's as well and our heavily passionate kiss ended as we turned to view the source of the sound.

Feveren and Soranya stood there with humor plain to be seen upon their faces as well as something else. Love, love was in their eyes for the two humans they had adopted as masters over them.

It was humbling to have such majestic creatures as these in direct abeyance to one. Words were difficult and I struggled to come up with anything to say other than being glad to be alive to see them. All that said I wished that they would go away so that we could go back to what we had been doing.

It was Soranya that spoke first though, "Master, I think what has needed to be accomplished has been done here this

day. The eagles are carrying the wounded back along with other members of my kind. In turn the army is carrying the wounded eagles back and we are here to carry you back..... back to your home. Our home, long may it forever be.”

I nodded my head as I became a little more familiar with my surroundings. Feveren then added, “Might I add that I think it would be best for the two of you to be together, shall we say, somewhere more fitting than this place.”

Jafina blushed and Soranya bumped Feveren on the shoulder in defense of her mistress’s sensibilities, but I laughed.

“That sounds like a plan, my friend.”

Moving forward I settled Jafina astride of Soranya. Looking up at her I

said, “We’ll have to continue this moment in a bit my love.”

Jafina arched her eyebrow playfully and retorted, “Only if you can catch me, my Lord.”

Soranya took that for the challenge it was and with a squeal bolted forward as swift as any horse that had ever been created could be. Feveren and I watched them go for a moment and then glanced at each other knowingly. What male doesn’t love a good pursuit?

Smoothly I mounted up and clamped on as Feveren tore off in a pursuit of the other two that caused the ground to shake. They didn’t stand a chance and they both knew it.

Before long the thundering hooves of our mounts shook the forest floor as the playful chase continued unabated.

Feveren had steadily been gaining ground and now I could hear Jafina's laughter echoing back to me.

Her laughter seemed to be all the forest around us needed to spring forth into bloom. Flower petals rained down upon us in a display of shimmering beauty only befitting the earliest days of creation.

A tranquil lagoon appeared in the midst of a sudden blooming paradise as all the forest rejoiced around us at a battle truly won even as Eloah's blessing fully once more settled upon the forest as it had in the days of old. At the last moment Soranya swung to the side and Jafina went flying into the water with a squeal.

In a way I knew what to expect before it happened and I willingly let myself

slide free of Feveren's back as he performed the same maneuver that Soranya had done to her mistress. The water was cool and yet very refreshing after the grueling heat of a battle such as had been fought this day.

With a splutter for air I rose up to my feet only to see the two traitors snickering with each other as they headed off together without another word spoken to us. Fondly I watched them go. I loved this forest of talking trees and animals with savannas that glowed at night and became great big fish bowls.

I wouldn't live anywhere else in the world. I turned to Jafina only to notice immediately the sight of her bare shoulders sticking above the water.

With a smile that enticed, she ducked

her head beneath the water and busily washed her long hair. That done she straightened and wiped the water away from her dazzling eyes.

Everything about her utterly enthralled me and with a distracted attention of focus I dimly heard her say, “There that’s better. Things were a bit bloody.”

Dawning realization took hold of me then, “You told Soranya to dump you into the water!”

Jafina shrugged her bare shoulders and with a smile said, “Got to love me.”

Indeed I did. She came close. Very close.

Her fingers began to work at my armor as she said with a wry tone, “You’re a bit bloody yourself, my Lord.”

That I was, but moments later I was free of all the residue of war and

washed clean by the purity of a spring that was only a physical echo of a spiritual reality that I possessed from on high. We stood in the water staring at each other suddenly as shy as strangers not knowing what to do next.

Something made me glance to the shore of the lagoon and I did a double take as the image of a man I had seen before stood there. Jafina gave a squeal and ducked lower in the water, but taking her hand I shook my head negatively for her not to be afraid even as the warm voice of the stranger said to her, **“Daughter, I mean you no harm.”**

He gestured with a hand in openness of gesture and with a gasp Jafina saw the scar that was there and looked to me and I nodded affirmatively. Both shaken we looked to the man who'd once died so



that we could know life and the hope of eternity spent with the Father, even as He was the Son of Eloah, who had chosen to come and walk a mortal life in the flesh and perish so that we could know forgiveness because no man had ever lived a perfect life, save for this man, and so by His sinless death He made a way for the judgment of Eloah to pass over our heads even as He had taken our sins upon Himself. Our sins were dead and buried, but He was alive because death couldn't conquer Him and even as we walked in belief of what He had done for us so always would we be with Him and the Father for all of eternity to come.

**“Come children.”** Yeshua said.

Jafina hesitated for a moment, but with a gentle shake of His head and a

knowing light in his eyes of living fire He said, **“There is no shame Jafina in this for all is in this moment as the Creator first made it to be. Man and woman together in a garden of delight and behold it was very good.”**

Jafina and I both still holding hands walked up out of the water and came to stand and then kneel down before our Savior. A silken feeling of the presence of the Most High issued forth through the Fire Spirit to encircle our clasped together hands in a threefold bond.

Yeshua spoke, **“This day you will become one, even as in Spirit I am one with the Father. I speak a mystery and yet the bond of love you hold for each other this day only testifies to the love that My Father and I have for the both of you. This day is blessed even**

as the Father fore-destined for it to be. For those He foreknew, He predestined, and now together helping one another I commission you to be one in heart, mind, and body to do all that the Father commands. You are now man and wife. Be one, children. This moment is a joy not only for the both of you, but also all of Heaven. One day I too shall have a bride, but that day is hidden from Me by the Father just as the reality of this moment so longed for by the both of you is now a reality even so shall it be one day when I return for a bride willing and held in watchful readiness to be my wife. I leave you now, but the eyes of the Father are always on the ways of the righteous and even so as He and I are one so I am near to you

**always.”**

As we continued to gaze upon our Savior He disappeared from view. Tears on both of our faces we glanced at each other completely overcome.

“I love you.” We both whispered at the same time.

We laughed and then I kissed her. The petals continued to rain down upon us and the gossiping leaves of the trees were silent as to all that transpired upon the petal strewn forest floor.

A new era had begun. One faithful to The Way of Eloah and all of creation rejoiced!

## A note from the Author

*A little bit about what went into influencing*

*the story.*

- I've always stayed away from aspects of the 'magical' realism to be found in some Christian fiction. I'm a fan of Donita K. Paul's earlier series and yet I never pictured myself writing anything that fantastical and in a way I still haven't, but for me I got out of the box a lot more in terms of expressing the growing consciousness that I have of the surroundings of our environment (God's creation) being much more aware of 'being' than I ever previously imagined it to be. As humans we can say we're the height of God's creation, but it is clear from Scripture that other entities exist for if no one will cry out with praise at Jesus's return then the rocks themselves will. If rocks can cry out with praise it's safe to say then that there is a lot that we simply do not see or comprehend of the governing natures of the elements of creation on display all around us. It is this richer more three dimensional picture of

a creation that is awake to the knowing of its Maker that I am wishing to portray in this series and just maybe one day a tree will open its eyes and carry on a conversation with me. It's not about magic or sorcery or any of that garbage. The more I walk with God the more I realize of the intense layering of the supreme structure of His incalculable creativity and intenseness of character as to have done so much beyond what can first be seen on the surface of things. Truly to love God is to know more, because the more you love Him the more He reveals and to know the truth for me is to desire to share it with all those willing to read it and so read on and I will do my best to be a willing vessel of the Most High to write what He wants to be known.

Reviews are Greatly Appreciated! I'm a self-published author and without you the reader letting others know what you think of what I

have written I have only the Grace of God to see that my work reaches those it needs to the most. If you enjoyed the book and have found it meaningful please let others know about it.

If you'd like to be informed about new book releases and the availability of free review copies then drop me a note and I'll put you on my fan list and send you updates as they come available. Contact Info:

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Guy S. Stanton, III

*A few important things to know about  
me*



*I love my family and I love my God.*

*Without Him and His Son, Yeshua, I would  
have nothing.*

*Because of that I continually wish to give Him  
everything.*

*He's blessed me to write some amazing  
stories, but truly the best thing in life is that a  
loving experience with one's Creator doesn't*



*have to only last for the length of the story within the pages of a book, but that it can exist written across the plains of your heart each and every day of your life. It's this story I hope you'll experience fully for yourself, as there is no better story than being in the presence of the Father and seeing what He'll do next. The best part of this fantastical relationship is that it's a story that will never end and only grows sweeter as it flows on through eternity.*