

The background of the cover is a photograph of a person sitting on a hill, silhouetted against a sunset sky. The person is looking down, and the sky is filled with soft, golden light from the setting sun, with some clouds visible. The overall mood is contemplative and somber.

The Broken Wings of
Forgiveness

Seven Beacons of Hope

RICHARD SHEKARI

The Broken Wings of Forgiveness

By Richard Shekari

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication

Michael

The awakening

Shelter

The headrest

Error in terror

The guardian

The dimming eye of sunset

The journey of journeys

The camp

The day of days

DEDICATION

To all the innocent children caught up in the unjust wars around the world, and to the beautiful people who work day and night to make the world a better place.

MICHAEL

As the elevator doors slowly slid open, Michael stepped out with a rush, navigating through cubicles with no time to answer the greetings from his office colleagues and as the secretary spotted him smiling with a concerned look she said, ‘Hey Michael, the senior has been buzzing for the past thirty minutes and everybody is worried! Is everything . . .’

‘Yes, Clara, everything’s fine! Thanks for asking. Traffic was hell!’ He interrupted as he panted; Michael hurriedly picked a piece of candy from a bowl on her desk and threw it into his mouth.

‘Bad boy!’ Clara said, smiling as he made his way into the conference room. ‘Well, don’t give Junior an edge to uproot one of your plants, darling!’ she added, then they both giggled.

A text came into his cell phone, he checked it and sender ID read ‘P. James’ he ignored it, putting the cell phone back into his pocket as he opened the door and shut it behind him. Clara bit her lower lip suggestively, staring at his bum but he didn’t notice.

Michael bent his head and quietly manoeuvred to locate his seat in the boardroom, the board stopped chatting, setting all their eyes on him until he sat down. The leather chair made an awkward squeaky sound but he sat down anyway, forcing the candy down his throat. ‘Well, the golden boy is here so shall we begin now . . . Poppa?’ said Cannon Johnson Jr., also known in the office and popularly addressed as ‘Junior’ but no one dared say that to his face, of course.

Cannon Johnson Jr. was the only son but not a single child, after securing a degree in a course that did not relate to his current post, his father Cannon Johnson Sr. made him the head of human resources for the company and since it was a family business, Junior got to do whatever he pleased with the staff, especially the females in a dishonourable manner and got away with it. This never brought pride to his father but Cannon Johnson Sr. still lives with the hope that one day his son will turn out to become a man of integrity, but for how long? Time waits for no one.

Cannon Johnson Sr. was going through his new high-tech touchscreen phone, swiping his finger across the screen and scratching his nose at the same time. Seated opposite Cannon Johnson Jr., he took off his reading glasses and placed it on

the table yawning, ‘Freaking tech stuff, they keep evolving! Clara should have gotten me a much cheaper easy-going and user-friendly gadget. I’m too old for this you know, one of those 2002 or the earlier versions would do just good!’ said Cannon Johnson Sr. as he dropped his new gadget on the table staring at it.

‘Well, Dad, I think we can talk about that later and this is the future, you’re going to have to adjust to that. Gentlemen, shall we? I’ve got a plane to catch!’ said Cannon Johnson Jr.

‘Huh! The only thing you would have been able to catch, Junior, would be your broke behind on the streets, under the bridge if I hadn’t made the move to secure this future for you! Huh! Plane to catch?’ Cannon Johnson Sr. remarked as he shrugged, the entire board members burst out laughing but went hush suddenly when Cannon Johnson Jr. frowned, staring at them from his seat opposite his father. ‘Michael, out of the thirteen-member panel set up to decide the future of this company, six have voted in favour of selling our largest portion of shares to Cranum-Tech Group of Companies, and six voted against it last week, even though one vote from the...pro Cranum-Tech team side had a sudden change of heart, but like I said earlier, we are not accepting changeovers

once a vote is cast, so all that is left now is your vote Michael. I'm trying to be fair here, so today, your vote seals this deal forever! Cranum-Tech Group of Companies or not. Period!' said Cannon Johnson Sr.

Michael stood up, rearranged his necktie looking straight at Cannon Johnson Jr. then set his eyes on the entire board members saying, 'I'm not in favour of Cranum-Tech Group of Companies, sir, with all due respect we can put this company back on its feet, and it's just a tiny blip. It's a usual thing, we have been through this before several times and got back even stronger, and my vote stands against CTGC. Besides, we all know what they intend to do with this company.' He then sat down, fixing his necktie as majority of the men in the boardroom clapped, nodding in agreement but Cannon Johnson Jr. was not pleased.

'Wise decision, Michael, men like you have given this company a firm footing to stand on even in the deepest of oceans, I am proud of you, thank you very much!' Cannon Johnson Sr. remarked. Michael nodded honourably.

'This is cowardice, you are all afraid because you are too old, too weak, and stone-aged to face the future.

Look at yourselves . . .’ said Cannon Johnson Jr. who didn’t hide his intentions and disappointment, ‘and you ...’ he added, staring at Michael, ‘the future of this company is in my hands or at least it will be . . . soon! I will decide at my own time what should be done! I brought a good idea to this table, to this company! Sooner or later the man that always stands for you would not be here anymore and . . .’ before he could say what was next on his mind, his father interrupted saying, ‘And that’s why the future of this company has no room for your arrogance and incompetence, Cannon Johnson . . .Junior. I choose and have appointed Michael Henning to lead the company as the new GMD/CEO starting from Monday!’ This statement sounded unbelievable to Junior’s ears, Michael himself was surprised but remained mute. ‘I am speaking on behalf of the board, let it be known that it is my will and order that Michael stays as GMD/CEO for eight years before the board can decide on whom next to head the company unless Michael himself decides to resign on any reasons or terms best known to him in the future, and as for you Junior, you are the new Assistant Human Resource Manager. Your assistant, Mrs Shawn Kipola, will head that department, this should remain so until there is found a suitable position for you at the

appropriate time by the board,’ added Cannon Johnson Sr., who stood up and walked toward the thick glass window viewing the city.

‘You’re all dismissed!’ Were his last words, the men silently found their way out of the conference room happily.

After the meeting, while in his office, Michael pulled out his cell phone, scrolled through his contacts and dialled the number from the text he got earlier, telling the man that he and his family would be traveling the next day, which was a Saturday but would be back Sunday evening. The man wanted them to meet but Michael told him he would check on him as soon as he gets back from his short trip.

Michael almost changed his mind minutes later to go visit the man he just spoke with but remembered that it was time to go pick his daughter from school. On his way out, Michael stretched for more candy on Clara’s desk, at the same instant politely uttered, ‘Have a nice weekend.’

She replied, saying ‘thanks and you, too, handsome!’ while her eyes and attention was soaked in her dirty imagination about him yet again.

While on his way to the school, Michael tuned different radio stations and one of the stations had a prerecorded talk

show and the host was talking about a man named P. James, who happened to be the man Michael spoke with over the phone earlier. Michael giggled as the host over the radio was talking about the time P. James was once the most charismatic presidential candidate the country ever had—a true democrat, a potential leader—until the day he decided to abandon politics about seven years ago, withdrew his entire money from his banks, gave half to charity and opened up a church in the city close to the hill. The host made fun of the ex-politician now preacher saying, ‘P. James said he had to answer his call, which was to become a pastor and lead God’s people. If you really wanted to lead God’s people, what better way than to be president and not fail the millions of citizens who trusted you to lead them as the good leader that you claimed to be, only to disappoint them and step down as the man of the people on the eve of election? I’ve never voted before because I don’t believe in demon-crazies, whoops! Pardon me, I mean democracy! But when I heard P. James was up for presidential I even encouraged my friends to stamp their thumbs for the man, could you believe that? Now he opened up a church to rob the poor . . . the real God be praised, he would have turned the country’s budget into his

personal piggy bank and the country would be as broke as this hopeless fellow . . .’

Michael laughed, shaking his head, driving through the city as the host over the radio continued saying, ‘now the country is being run by the opposition and I heard he goes to see the president once every week, for what? Are you broke, Pastor James?’ The audience over the radio laughed, Michael changed to CD player instead and played some cool old school music as he tried to catch up with the lyrics of the song.

Michael picked up his daughter, Gillian, from school and as they headed home, Gillian spoke excitedly about a recurring dream of a man in a shiny white garment, who always come to save her from a pack of lions in her dreams and that she had the same dream the night before. Michael smiled and asked her, ‘Was it Simba and his friends, the warthog and meerkat, again, darling?’ He laughed and Gillian hit him playfully saying, ‘Daddy, that’s not funny.’

Squeezing her lips, he then kissed her on the forehead and told her he believed her, Gillian turned the volume on the radio up and the two sang along happily on their way home.

He parked his car behind a minivan in front of the house, the minivan had a deflated tire. Michael frowned at it, shaking his head. His wife, Jana, was watering the beautiful flowers in front of the house on their arrival. Michael reluctantly picked his briefcase walking towards the door while Gillian kissed her mother and ran into the house.

‘Not even a kiss, honey? How was your day and what happened? Who messed with my hero again today, huh?’ said Jana as she wrapped her arms around him and kissed him on the cheek. He stood there without saying a word.

‘Now give me a smile, honey, I know that kiss found its way into your beautiful heart,’ Jana added smiling, he smiled back and kissed her on the lips.

‘We’ve been promoted again!’ he said, looking into her eyes.

‘Oh my God, honey, for real?’ she asked and he winked.

Jana was so excited and happy for him.

‘You are looking at the new GMD/CEO, better give me that sweet and luscious kiss again, darling,’ he said, as he bit her left ear. The couple kissed and Jana held him firmly in a tender way.

‘Come in, my king, your meal is waiting for you,’ she said, Michael pinched her and hit her on the bum lightly and said, ‘Which one?’ They both laughed as she ran into the house with Michael running after her.

‘Mom! Dad! Get a room . . . please!’ Gillian voiced out.

The next morning was Saturday and the family had a tradition of paying homage to Michael’s parents by placing flowers on their grave at the cemetery every anniversary of their demise. Michael lost his parents in a tragic accident seven years ago, in a hit-and-run by a drunk driver when Gillian was only seven, and what made the visit more meaningful to them was that the family always embarked on a vacation and picnic at the lake close to Michael’s hometown—the place his parents were buried side by side, which was about an hour flight from the city. It was a beautiful cottage left for him by his parents in his hometown and it was not far from the cemetery and very close to a lake, the beautiful couple packed a few necessary things and made love that night like they have never had.

The next day, the family took a taxi to the airport and boarded an early morning flight to Michael’s hometown. Gillian wanted the family to stay at the motel in town because

the cottage home was on the outskirts of town but she had to put up with the family rule of ‘sticking together every time, everywhere, whenever!’ The Henning’s were a lovely and adorable family; Jana and Michael lived like a newlywed couple all the years they’ve known each other, since they met at the university about the time Michael was graduating, coupled with a year and a half of courtship these two butterflies flit their wings together. Jana was a florist and a landscape architect by profession, she loved her work very much and she was the only woman on earth as far as Michael’s eyes could see, and as far hard as her heart could beat, the only drum stick capable of making that heart pound was Michael. The two were good to each other, they certainly had their share of ups and downs like any other married couple, but they were more of friends than husband and wife and always made it through.

The two-day vacation was superb, the couple made love with the little alone time they got away from Gillian and they, too, had to put up with her constant nagging and presence in their bedroom as she claimed to be scared of the place unless they moved to the motel in town though her phone kept her busy, as she was constantly chatting with her friends online.

The family also took a trip on a boat down the lake together where Michael tried to teach Gillian how to fish and later went to the grocery store where Gillian saw a boy she liked, the teens exchanged phone numbers unknown to their parents. After the Sunday service the next day, the young boy drove to the cottage home to see Gillian in his father's pickup van but he reversed as soon as he saw her parents sitting outside the house. Gillian stepped out and mentioned she wanted to take a stroll but Michael refused, Gillian ran and whispered a few words into her mother's ears and the mother whispered to her as well then Jana turned to Michael and smiled after giving him a warm kiss, he raised an eyebrow but didn't protest. She yelled at Gillian to be back in thirty minutes and in a short while the boy walked Gillian home and introduced himself to her parents. Michael wasn't comfortable with it but Gillian kept squeezing her face at him to look friendly until he successfully masked his true feelings with a friendly grimace.

The young man left after having lunch with them but before Gillian saw him off to the door, she whispered into her mother's ears again and got a negative response, she then walked away and didn't say anything. Michael had no idea what the two girls were up to but he was sure he didn't like it.

‘Let’s just hope she didn’t ask you if she’d kiss him,’ he said, staring at Jana. She almost choked to his statement while she was drinking juice from a glass cup.

‘Darling, come on, she’s 14 . . .’ said Jana, ‘besides, she will become a woman just like when you met me and would get married when she meets the right man at the right time, cheer up!’ she added, blowing him a kiss. Michael was not comfortable with it but he knew his wife was right.

The family took the evening flight back home that same day, Gillian slept in her father’s arms from the airport that night on their arrival. The family took a taxi from the airport and on their way home, they saw a lot of police checkpoints with long hold-ups and heavy traffic but they managed to get through wondering what was going on in the city, the scenario was unusual but calm. The cabman said he had no idea what was going on, he was just out to make ends meet, when asked if he knew what was happening.

The family got home safe, Michael took Gillian to her bedroom and tucked her in bed, he kissed her forehead and switched of the light in her room. As he shut the door to Gillian’s room behind him, he overheard a thud from the master’s bedroom, assuming it was a bag or an object that

dropped, he walked down calmly whistling their favourite love song when to his surprise, he saw Jana lying in the pool of her blood on the floor of their bedroom, calling his name in agony. Out of shock he rushed toward her, shivering in confusion, but was hit with a bat on the back of his head, losing his consciousness.

Michael was awakened by the sound of sirens, his vision was blurry. All he could see was blood in his hands and his own house on fire. Quickly he was strengthened as he stood up and staggered toward the house, missing his steps, falling and rising along the way, a fireman held him.

‘You can’t get in there, sir!’ said the fireman. ‘Gillian, Jana . . . honey! Darling?’ said Michael.

‘What? I can’t hear you, sir. Come with me, sir, please!’ said the fireman, as he ordered another officer to grab hold of Michael, who guided him to a nearby ambulance. The firefighters arrived at the scene but came late to put off the blazing flames that engulfed the house. Michael could not breathe so he passed out again in the officer’s hands.

THE AWAKENING

Michael found himself in another world; the place was dark and he was surrounded by a mob all dressed in black yet none amongst the mob uttered a word to him, their numbers felt like sand spread around him while their eyes all fixated at him. He studied his new environment and realised that it was some sort of an underground world, he had never seen a place like it in his life and could not recognise anyone, he then felt something mysterious slowly making its way behind him through the mob from the back and paving its way like a snake through thick shrubs in the dark. Michael did not turn back to see what was coming and neither did the mob that surrounded him but they gave way for it to pass and as it got closer to where Michael was standing, Michael felt its presence and tried to stand his ground. It occurred to Michael that even though he had no eyes behind his head, he was aware of what was going on behind him and around him, he was totally conscious of the world he found himself in. It was so surreal he could not fathom whether it was a dream or real. Michael then heard a voice whisper his name, he turned around but could not see anyone.

‘I’m here!’ said the voice again but this time, it sounded very close and behind him, Michael turned quickly and was simultaneously levitated. Below him was a man in thick-decorated dark red robe holding his finger as though controlling Michael’s flight in the air; Michael’s body defied the gravity of that world and he floated in the air and while up, he got a clear view of the great number of population of the people that surrounded him all dressed in black, the man in robe drew Michael closer to him until they were face to face. ‘Oh, Michael, and I thought you’d be hard to find! Now, I’ve got many worlds to seize therefore, have got little or no time. Something special is planted in men like you and I want it!’ said the man, Michael felt as if his body was trapped under the sea but he could breathe, he begun to get angry but was helpless. ‘Join us, Michael, and I shall open your eyes to much greater things and place in thy hands much precious things than the ones the worlds have seen and would give you a portion of the worlds I shall own to rule to eternity, don’t you want to see her again, Michael?’ added the man, as he turned and evoked saying, ‘come forth!’ Michael was about to speak when he saw someone that looked like Jana stepped out from the mob that surrounded him and she stood next to the

man in robe with her head bent, the man in robe with his left hand controlling Michael's levitation used his other hand and touched her chin then lifted her face up a bit for Michael to see, but her eyes were like that of a serpent—it looked dark and she seemed sad, the man turned to Michael saying, 'Gillian is here too, want to see her? Join us! I've got many secrets to reveal to you! Secrets that would blow your mind and turn you into the god that you are Michael, after that you, your wife, and daughter would be worshipped and not be slaves to the one you and your kind called God!' The man spat on the ground.

Something told Michael that who he saw was not Jana, but all he wanted was to be out of that world at that time and wanted nothing to do with it. The man understood that Michael did not have any interest in the woman he summoned so he got mad and cast a spell on Michael, releasing him from the air to fall down to the ground. The man ordered the woman to leave, she walked back and disappeared into the mob as they murmured, he then turned away from Michael and yelled, 'Can't you see? Don't you understand that this world and its people are mine? If you stand with us, Michael, I'll give you the world to own and everything in it!'

Michael realised he was too weak to stand up, his body was becoming one with the ground and was sinking, the man stood still with the entire mob staring at him, Michael struggled but his entire body sank into the ground leaving his head which was also slowly sinking. The man in robe stretched his left hand toward Michael and said, ‘Hold my hand, Michael!’

Michael got terrified, his head sank underneath the ground and could no longer breathe but he could see the mob and the man in robe standing above him looking at him, his eyes could see through the ground like glass, Michael tried so hard to breathe but there was no air, he felt his lungs squeezing in and expanding at the same time as if they would explode, the man in robe bent down a bit stretching his hand further; Michael tried to scream God’s name but his tongue was stuck to the roof of his mouth, his entire lips were glued and so were his nostrils, in his mind he cried out God’s name but all he could hear was a big bang that shattered his ears.

Michael woke up to the sound of the electrocardiograph machine, his eyes popped open and he was sweating, he got up ripping the syringe off him; he fell off the hospital bed and was trying hard to breathe. An old man lying on another bed

next to him who was shocked, groaned as his heart almost leaped out in fear but Michael ignored him as he moved out of the room in his hospital gown with a bandage wrapped round his head, he pushed his way through the hospital passage—pushing the stretchers and an empty wheelchair on his way, scaring some of the patients. A nurse rushed towards him to stop him, while some other workers didn't mind about Michael, they set their eyes on the television at the reception with the news channel broadcasting breaking news of numerous attacks around different states in the country. Michael ignored the nurse, pushed aside the security man by the entrance and hurriedly entered a cab that was standing by.

Michael got to his home hoping that what he thought he had seen earlier that night was just a dream but what awaited his arrival was nothing short of a nightmare—a cold shattered burnt house. Right after he got out of the taxi, he knelt down and fell to the ground, his lips touched the soil as his nose blew up some dust and ashes on the ground. With the dust in his mouth, tears in his swollen eyes, he got up and walked through the house as if his family were still in there. In his imagination the house was still standing there, he could see Gillian's school bag hung on the wall with her bicycle right

next to it, the family photo at the entrance and their favourite sofa facing the television. The cabman didn't ask for his fare, he silently entered his car and drove off feeling sorry for the stranger he took from the hospital.

The neighbours gathered looking at Michael as the siren wailed in, some officers approached Michael and introduced themselves to him, the men told him they needed to talk to him down at the station, and Michael followed them without saying a word to neither the officers nor his neighbours.

On their arrival at the police station, one of the officers directed him to a room where they asked him questions but he remained silent.

'We want to help you, Mr Henning, we need your cooperation on this case,' said one of the officers who introduced himself as Detective Samuel, with his left hand in his left pocket, the detective threw some pictures on the table. He asked Michael to have a look, the pictures had the bodies of Jana and Gillian lying on the ground at the backyard of his house on the night of the attack. Michael's attention went to the pictures. He quickly went through them and realised that his wife and daughter didn't burn in the fire. 'Where are they?' He cried out. 'Where's my wife and daughter!' He

exclaimed standing up his seat, he pushed the detective to the wall yelling, 'Please, where's my family!' The men carefully subdued him then asked him to please be calm and follow them.

They took Michael to the very hospital he ran from and into the morgue, where the coroner opened the refrigerator, and there laid Jana, looking cold and without life. Michael was soaked in tears as he hugged her crying, calling her name. The men walked away quietly, leaving him alone with her corpse. Michael took the time that he needed with his wife and the officers could hear him sob heavily from where they stood. He knelt down, prayed, then pushed the fridge back in. Quite enervated, he went back to the room where the men were standing and asked about his daughter, they kept silent. Gillian's voice broke the silence. 'Daddy?' she said, standing by the door behind him accompanied by a female officer in police uniform, Michael turned and ran to her as she ran to him, the two cried so hard and no one could console them, he kissed her like he was seeing her for the first time and hugged her, she embraced him but the consciousness of Jana's absence broke them down both to their knees.

Minutes later, Michael learned that while he was unconscious that night, the perpetrators dragged him outside the house and set it ablaze, hoping the fire would kill his wife and daughter but Gillian hid in her room until she was sure they were out of the house, she then dragged her mother's body out from the bedroom through the kitchen and to the backyard but she was almost suffocated by the smoke. She passed out after she dragged her mother away from the voracious flames. Michael held his daughter firmly and he thanked her for being strong, brave, and courageous.

Back at the station, Michael began to open up and started to talk calmly but he could not give the policemen the evidence they sought, they asked if he had a grudge with anybody and he answered negatively, they also asked if he was aware of any enemies his wife might have had, and still his answers were negative. It was a cold case—no proof, no name, no evidence, no suspects, and so no lead. Could it be that Junior ordered the hit on him or that some random guy just picked out his family, Michael thought. The officer felt that it was a deliberate attempt to torture him by dragging him out of the house in order to survive and live without his wife and daughter as a form of punishment over a failed deal or

business that went wrong, and it was the only thing that made sense to Michael at that time but who could have done that? The authority could not dig any dirt on Michael as well and his records were squeaky clean because he never had any problem with the law.

Michael wanted to mention Junior's name, yet something held his tongue back from wagging Cannon Johnson Jr.'s name. While the men were chatting, another officer rushed in and told the men that two other banks have been hit and there were lots of casualties, few of the officers ran out of the room to respond to the incident, it occurred to Michael that the town he left before the weekend had entirely changed into something rather dark and evil, he realised that there were different problems erupting ever since they arrived back from their trip.

The detective gave Michael his complimentary card and said he would keep in touch regarding the case and they promised him a thorough investigation into the matter. So Michael and his daughter, Gillian, left the police station. The detective offered to give them a lift but Michael refused.

They took a cab to the church where they normally worshipped and on their arrival, the pastor's wife welcomed

them and paid the cabman his fare after Michael asked if she had some change. Michael and Gillian sat in the church as the pastor's wife called the preacher, they were sympathized and were given a room to stay but Michael begged the family to help look after his daughter for a while, that he needed to get to the office and get something. The preacher's wife offered some food to them and he was given some clothes to wear. Michael ate but Gillian only took water. Minutes later, he hugged Gillian and told her he would be back. As he walked out of the church the preacher followed him, asking if he needed some cash, Michael shook his head but the preacher insisted. Michael then turned, looked at the preacher and said, 'Pastor James! I've been paying my tithes in full, I sow seeds, I prayed every day for the world and my family, I gave to the needy and was concerned about others just like He said, just like He asked, Jana didn't deserve this. If there's anything you should do before I come back to get my daughter, ask . . . your God what I did to deserve this and if He got nothing to say, tell him . . .' He paused, sighed, and walked down the steps away from the preacher.

'The good Lord shall strengthen you my brother,' said the preacher as he watched Michael leave.

Michael walked into the office with the entire staff on their feet watching him. Some approached him and sympathized with him, others were busy packing their stuff from their desks and somehow panicked. He sighted Clara from afar, in tears, talking to another staff but she didn't notice him. He then went straight into his office and picked two of his ATM cards from his office drawer, got some documents, a spare cell phone, and some cash out of his office safe.

While he was at it, Cannon Johnson Sr. walked into the office looking pale and worried, the old man called out to Michael, he stood up and looked at Cannon Johnson Sr. 'I am so sorry for your loss, we looked all over for you when the news got to me about the house and . . . oh, Jana! By the time we got to the hospital this morning, we were told you've left and no one knew where you were headed. I am so sorry, oh my poor little angel, Gillian,' said the old man as he grabbed hold of a chair and sat down with his hands shaking. Michael could not say a word. 'Please let me know how I can help in any way, where is Gillian? Is she okay? Where is she, Michael?' the old man added.

‘She’s fine, she’s okay!’ said Michael, as he, too, sat down on his chair bending his head, resting his arms to the table, the two men were speechless.

‘The world has changed Michael, your world has changed, sorry to say but this generation is cursed. We stamp our thumbs for the wicked and yet point our fingers at them when things go wrong, truth is only darkness accommodates darkness. If we had the light in us, we would be able to sieve and read through the hearts of these men and know their aim . . . look at my grandson, William, he emptied the home safe in my bedroom and ran away. ..again! Hey, um, he just disappeared, young people!’ the old man said as he shrugged, ‘he is my next of kin, it’s his money. I wonder why he was such in a hurry and I thought he was like his late mother, Helen . . . she was just different, unlike Junior,’ added the old man as he paused, looked at his hands saying, ‘money? Men never satisfied with it, evil their hearts it turned. You know Rosy, my wife, before she passed away God bless her soul, she told me something I will never forget, Michael, she looked at me one day in the eyes and said “dear, you have accomplished and achieved a lot more than you hoped for as a man, I only pray that God uses you for the very purpose He

created you because I know even after getting married to me and having all these things you always dreamed of, I can tell you don't feel fulfilled" and she was right. Rosy was right, she spoke the truth that hid in my heart for long. I am old, people look at me as a very successful man but . . .there's a part of me that's unfed and I don't know what or where. I feel . . . empty. I feel like an empty shell. Forgive me, Michael, for bugging you with my nonsense, after Rosy's soul departed from this . . . dirt, you're the only one that listens, you're the only one who understands. God will expose your foes, son, they can't hide forever! Live for your daughter. Please, is there any lead on the case?'

Michael said, 'no!' With his head still bent.

'Take some time off, you will need it! Stay away as long as you want until things begin to settle, I know how heavy it is for you at these trying dark moments. It will be all right, it happened for a reason but I am glad I saw you today for your presence have made my heart light, your strength and hard work strengthens my weak heart, you've always been someone I wished I had as a son, not that . . . fool! You're different; brave, patient, unsullied, and strong willed. But the world can be cruel to good men, Michael, oh, poor Gillian.

This will wreck her, she will need you now more than ever. When you walked the earth to be my age, you'll find out that the creator is the only good that ever existed,' said the old man who stayed quiet for a while and then laughed uneasily, tapping his fingers on his knee saying, 'just imagine Junior left to run this company? I'd rather be the one to die than the company! A lot of good hard working men and women need these jobs and if Junior takes over, even the devil will be unemployed.' Michael smiled at the old man and the two men gave a short laugh.

'If I lost two of the greatest gifts God has ever given me and still survive the pain to this age, you'll get through it fine, just be strong son and follow your heart. May God forgive us all,' the old man said.

Michael had no grudge against Cannon Johnson Jr. even though everybody knew how much Michael was hated by him. Michael sat down like he always did to listen to the old man talk and after a long conversation, Michael felt the old man's concern for Gillian heightened and Michael was pleased within himself. The two men stayed silent for a while and stepped out of the office together. Michael left and promised to check on Cannon Johnson Sr. in days to come

without saying a word to anybody in the office. Cannon Johnson Sr. wiped the tears from his eyes and watched as Clara approached Michael in tears, she comforted him, he hugged her and walked away.

SHELTER

Michael got back to the church and picked his daughter, he thanked the preacher and his wife then left to stay at a hotel in town. There were lots of barricades and blockades around town with lots of police checkpoints increasing but there was no word or speech from the mayor nor the president of the country over the matters happening in the nation, the president had attended a World Leaders Security Summit abroad before the chaos started and was yet to come back. On the television was news and footage of the presence of the Red Cross, the United Nations, and speeches from the secretary general and other prominent people around the world concerning the events unfolding around the globe. However, the disturbing occurrences did not stop the people in the city from living their lives in the normal way they could. At the hotel where Michael and his daughter stayed, there were parties, and even weddings and wedding receptions taking place as well.

Many people were moving in and out of the hotel, Michael then spotted his long time high school friend, Paul. He and Paul once worked in the same company after their graduation from the university, the two grew up in the same

town and were roommates throughout their stay at the university and they lived like brothers. They embraced each other, it had been long since they last saw each other. Paul asked about Jana but got a cold response from Michael and Gillian. Minutes later, Michael narrated what happened to Paul as it shocked him for he could not believe his ears, he apologised for not keeping in touch and sympathized with his friend for he felt the heavy burden and bereavement upon Michael.

Paul introduced Michael to Samantha, his second wife, whom he met and married abroad. Paul was married to a different woman about the same time Michael and Jana got married but she left him for another man, he was a hardworking man and travelled a lot but his ex-wife had no room for his commitment to work amongst other reasons, so she left him. Paul didn't want to go into details about what happened and Michael understood.

Later that night, Michael and Paul went down the bar together, leaving Samantha with Gillian in the same room watching a soap opera on TV. After a few drinks, Michael learned that Samantha had been a kind and supportive friend to Paul after his wife left him, there was no official divorce

arrangement between Paul and his ex-wife and he waited for long and she never came back. So three years after his first wife left him, on hearing she had already given birth with another man, he decided to settle down with Samantha and they got married.

Paul and his first wife never had kids and he explained to Michael that he and Samantha came to town on an assignment Paul was on and were planning to leave the very day chaos hit the town and the couple decided to hang around till things settled down, hopefully.

After a long chat, Samantha and Gillian came down from the hotel room and joined the men. Samantha, sitting next to Paul, released an aura of happiness and respect between the couple, the love birds could not hide their affection for each other in the presence of Michael as the four of them chatted over, so Michael excused himself taking his daughter, they went up to their hotel room leaving the two to enjoy the evening.

Michael got a call from the detective that night to come to the station in the morning, as he hung up, he reached for the remote to change the channel and was shocked by the breaking news—there was an obituary picture of Cannon

Johnson Sr. On seeing it, Michael picked his phone quickly and dialled Clara, she was drowning in tears as she spoke to him, trying to put words together, she explained how some unknown gunmen attacked Cannon Johnson Sr. on his way back that evening. She explained that as the old man and his driver stopped at the red light, another car drove by them with two armed men halfway out of the car window and fired shots at Cannon Sr., driving off, leaving the scene in a pool of blood and bullet shells. They both were pronounced dead on arrival at a nearby hospital. Michael hung up the phone. Disconcerted, without saying a word, he turned and looked at his daughter who just stepped out of the bathroom to brush her teeth, and she came to him and held him looking up into his eyes, he smiled and she smiled back. Michael blocked her view from the television, he neither wanted her to see or talk about another death for his wish was not to sadden his daughter anymore. The old man was her godfather before he passed away, so Michael decided to ease it up on Gillian, the young woman had had enough to bear and needed peace.

Gillian invited her father to kneel along with her by the bed so they would pray, he did but reluctantly. Gillian prayed and after she said amen, she elbowed Michael lightly so he

would respond amen as well which he did and then tucked her to bed with a warm kiss on her forehead.

‘I love you, Daddy,’ she said.

‘I love you too, sweetie!’ Michael replied.

The next day Michael and Gillian went down to the station, detective Samuel with his left hand in his left pocket, explained to Michael at the station that there seemed to be a lead on the case, a surveillance camera across the streets captured the plate number of a car that was seen around the time of the murder with a blurry image of two men and the picture was undergoing enhancement at the lab, the detective also told Michael he heard about the death of Cannon Johnson Sr.

Michael tried to find out if there was any connection between the two incidences or resemblance of the vehicle used during the drive-by shooting and the photo from the surveillance camera obtained from his neighbourhood, the detective then handed over three more photos to Michael, the car used on the night of the incidence in his house was the same as the one used in killing the old man, this raised an eyebrow. ‘It’s an unregistered car, fake plate number . . . probably bought or brought in for these missions,’ said the

detective who pulled out his left hand from the left pocket and scratched his nose then put it back in the pocket again.

Detective Samuel paid keen attention to the expression on Michael's face while they were talking and asked, 'Michael are you sure there is nothing you wish to share with me?'

Michael didn't utter a word but with an odd expression on his face, he picked one photo each from the two different incidences, walked to the wall at the end of the room, leaned his back on the wall then gently slid himself down, sitting on the floor, shaking his head and talking to himself. 'No, it can't be, it can't be,' he whispered, with his right hand brushing through the hair follicles of his head and holding the pictures with the other 'but it's too obvious, you'd be caught and I know you are not that stupid, Cannon. He is . . . not that stupid!' he muttered.

The detective walked to him and squatted saying, 'we have already gotten an arrest warrant on Mr Cannon Johnson Jr. and if he is the man behind this, I assure you the law will crush him firmly with the gavel of justice! If you are holding anything back, it's time to open up buddy.' Detective Samuel expounded to Michael that so far it's just suspicion but they would bring Junior to the station for questioning and probably

detain him until he gets cleared and if they have nothing on him he would be released free or on bail.

Michael then spelled out to the detective what went down at the office on the last board meeting but said he was not sure Junior would do anything like that or have a hand in it. ‘Let the law decide my friend, let the law decide when we run our investigation,’ said the detective who asked Michael to write another statement that was documented and kept in the case file.

Gillian was at the reception with a policewoman waiting for her father and by the time Michael got there with the detective walking behind him, two policemen walked in escorting Cannon Johnson Jr. into the station, the two men stared at each other. Junior gave a cynical smile at Michael, stopped and dramatically sympathized with him, telling him that the two of them have lost people so dear to them. Michael did not say a word. ‘I think the authorities suspect that I did it, Michael, could you imagine that, kill my own father?’ said Junior as he giggled. ‘Spending eighteen years on the job doesn’t make one an expert! You’ve got this one wrong, brother!’ added Junior to the detective who smiled.

Detective Samuel turned to the two policemen and ordered them to guide Junior into the interrogation room.

‘Well, let us see what the law has got to say . . . brother!’ he said, as Junior walked away guided by the policemen.

Michael and his daughter stepped out of the station, the detective followed them and as soon as Michael and his daughter entered the cab, the detective approached the car window and told Michael not to worry, that he would keep him posted on any progress. Michael thanked him and asked the cabman to drive off, leaving the detective standing with his left hand in his left pocket.

As they pulled by the hotel, before Michael and his daughter made their way into the reception, a man called out his name and they stopped, the man approached them, he was dressed in a black suit with a black hat.

He removed his hat and bowed at Gillian as a courtesy, Gillian moved back standing behind her father. The man stretched his hand at Michael for a handshake. ‘Have we met before?’ asked Michael.

‘Oh, pardon my manners, I go by so many names but you can call me Hibnus!’ said the man, smiling.

‘What do you want?’ Michael asked again.

‘Well, it might interest you to know that I come from a world not far from this one and there is more to whom you always trust than meets the eye, Michael.’ The man replied, putting his hat back on his head as he added, ‘accept my deepest . . . of condolences for your great loss but you can regain all you’ve lost if only you’d look beyond this age my friend, you know what I mean?’

Gillian held her father firmly. ‘Look, Mister, I don’t know who you are or what you want but you’re scaring my little girl and I don’t think you’d like my reaction from here on out. So, if you may!’ Michael exclaimed as he led Gillian away from the man, she smiled and threw a tongue out at the stranger but Michael didn’t notice it. Michael and Gillian walked into the hotel leaving the man outside and the man smiled looking up at the hotel building.

‘Who was that man, Daddy?’ Gillian asked her father. ‘Nobody, darling! I’m here, sweetie, don’t be afraid!’ He replied to her as they entered the lift to their floor.

‘I saw him talk with mommy the other day at the mall . . .’ Gillian added.

‘What?’ Michael asked.

‘Yes, Daddy, that man . . . I saw him talking to mom the other day at the mall, about a week ago or so,’ said Gillian.

Michael was disturbed by what he heard but didn’t want to attack his daughter with questions. ‘Sweetie, what were mommy and the man talking about that day at the mall?’ He asked again.

‘I don’t know, all I heard was mom saying “you’ve failed already!” The man smiled and said “I may fail now but I don’t quit, woman!” to mommy . . . I think,’ replied Gillian.

Michael asked Gillian to go into the room and wait for him as he ran down the stairs. He got out looking for the man but could not find him, he ran down the streets both ways, back and forth but no sign of the stranger.

Michael went back into the hotel and knocked on Paul’s hotel room, Samantha opened the door and welcomed him in with a smile. Paul got out of the bedroom and the two sat down, Michael told him everything that happened and when he was trying to remember the name of the man with the hat, Samantha said ‘Hibnus?’ Michael turned and said, ‘yes, that was his name, do you know him?’

Samantha went and sat down next to Paul quietly and both were looking at Michael as Samantha stuttered trying to say

something. ‘Stay away from that man, Michael, he is evil!’ said Paul.

‘You’ve got to tell him the truth, honey,’ said Samantha with a straight-faced stare at Paul.

‘Tell me what?’ asked Michael.

Paul covered his face with his hand in dismay, sighed, then looked at Michael and said, ‘he was sent to get you, that man . . . they er . . . they are after you!’ Michael did not understand any of the things Samantha and Paul were talking about. ‘They . . . are after me?’ asked Michael. ‘Anyway, my daughter also said she saw him talk to my wife about a week ago at the mall,’ he added.

‘Poor Jana, she must have known . . . they must have come to her before approaching you . . . could it be?’ added Paul.

‘Could what be?’ interrupted Michael who got upset with the unclear and sketchy words coming from Paul.

‘They want you on their side, Michael . . .’ said Samantha. ‘Whom you met outside is one of the messengers and takes many forms,’ she added.

Michael got offended with what she said but controlled himself, staring at the couple he asked, ‘it takes many forms?’

Seriously?’ As he snickered because he felt stupid being addressed like a child so he stood up and walked out of their hotel room, Samantha wanted to follow him but Paul stopped her.

Michael went back to his hotel room, standing in front of the mirror in the bathroom, he touched the stitched wound at the back of his head, he stared into his eyes from the reflection in the mirror for a long time, bent down and washed his face in the wash hand basin then looked back at his reflection in the mirror again. Michael pulled out his wallet from his back pocket and pulled out a picture of him, Jana, and Gillian, he stared at it for a while, sighed and put it back into the wallet and kept the wallet on the basin. Too many thoughts crept through his mind and it was turning dark as he stared into the mirror again, he wiped the tears from his eyes and washed his face again.

Michael switched off the light in the bathroom, walked into the bedroom, and locked the door then lay on the bed where Gillian was, but she was half asleep. He smiled at her, she cuddled and curled herself into his arms. ‘I miss mommy,’ she said.

‘I missed her too, sweetie,’ he answered, staring at the ceiling still infuriated by the reaction from Paul and Samantha. His phone beeped, it was a text message from Paul. ‘There is more to what it seems, sorry about the way we approached you, will explain!’ Read the text.

Michael lay motionless till he was sure Gillian was asleep, he then moved his body away slowly from hers, stood up and gave a call to the detective. The men talked for a while and hung up, Michael then switched on the desktop situated close to the bookshelves in his hotel living room.

After it booted he went online searching through a website showcasing beautiful caskets and prices tagged on them, he scrolled through and clicked on the ‘contact us’ icon on the site’s page he was in. He made a call to Jana’s family, she, too, had lost her dad a long time ago but her mother and three siblings were still alive and Jana’s mother could not talk to him over the phone because she lost her voice and could not talk after hearing of her daughter’s demise days ago so he spoke with her sister.

THE HEADREST

The next day Michael made a call to the preacher after taking a trip to the hospital, he spoke to the him about the funeral service for Jana, he wanted her be put to rest the next day. Michael sent text messages to a few friends and also contacted Jana's family as well but they said they would not be able to make it because their city, where they lived was on a twenty-four-hour curfew, they permitted him to go ahead and lay her to rest if it would give him peace, though her older sister who was in another town agreed to come for the burial to represent the family.

Jana's family were very concerned about Gillian and Michael, he told them they were doing fine, they asked him to bring Gillian after the burial to come stay with her grandmother for a while when things calm down.

A funeral service was held for Jana the next day at the church which was not far from the heart of the city, her corpse was moved to the cemetery to be buried. The pastor and his wife, Sabrina, came as did Samantha and Paul who stood beside the bereaved father and daughter, all dressed in black.

Michael gave a short eulogy, everybody felt the distance his heart felt from God in his speech as tears rolled down his cheek, the preacher gave a rather long pro-God speech and in the end he added, ‘if the world has got no spot for Jana down here, God has got a beautiful position for her up above!’ Few friends, office colleagues, and neighbours attended the funeral and all condoled with Michael.

While the funeral service was taking place, Michael noticed someone standing from afar close to a tree within the cemetery. It looked like the man who introduced himself as Hibnus in front of the hotel the other day, so he turned and looked at Paul and as he looked back again no one was standing there, he felt as if his mind was playing tricks on him. Gillian’s aunt came over, she held Gillian’s hand and comforted her and the two were together all the while, allowing Michael to attend to the people who came to mourn with them. Michael turned and saw Sabrina talking to Gillian and her aunt, he saw how Sabrina was able to make Gillian smile even though she was soaked in tears, and Gillian appeared stronger than everyone expected.

As the sympathizers were leaving after the burial, detective Samuel approached Michael with the information

that Junior was released on bail, saying there was nothing solid to nail him with but the investigation would continue and he won't rest till the perpetrators are sentenced and caged. Few other policemen were also seen around as well at the cemetery, the detective gave an assurance to Michael. He promised to do everything in his power to fish out whoever was behind the murder. 'These are dark times, I want you to know that I will get to the bottom of this case,' said the detective, with his left hand in his left pocket.

As heavy as his heart was, Michael appreciated the detective's concern and effort. Detective Samuel handed over some photographs to Michael in an envelope, asking him if he knew these men and after a careful look at it, Michael said he didn't know them. It was a clear scanned image of the two men from the night of the attack in his house.

'That's Felix Martins and Joel Pattoski, we identified them. They came into town the night before the attack on your family and we don't know their whereabouts at the moment but I put up some men on the search. Now, we don't want to go all public on this course, we wouldn't want things blowing out of proportion. They may fly out of the city if we make a wrong move and, off-the-record, I strongly believe they have

a connection with Cannon Johnson Jr. but like I said, we've got nothing on him for now so we will take it slow and go by the book for now.' The Detective also added that Junior's phone was bugged.

Michael asked if he could keep the photos, the detective reluctantly agreed but asked that Michael return it soon.

The details on the men were scanty as the detective kept most of the info to himself and promised to let Michael in on any lead but also made it clear that the authorities would not make any move until there is solid evidence on Junior or anyone connected to it.

Michael knew the detective wasn't doing the right thing letting him in on some of the information about the crime but it felt good to have someone who was willing to help him nail the killers. So the two men parted ways and Michael went down to meet Paul, Samantha, and Gillian and on their way back to the hotel Michael asked Paul and Samantha to go ahead with Gillian, he then alighted at a junction and walked down into a nearby slum with his head bent.

On entry, he came across a tall fellow, an average street hustler doing his business as usual, another sunny day in the slums. A business that attract minds broken down by

depression, minds drowning in their own sorrows and by the state of the society, ‘the drug dealer’ with a big grin on his face on the sight of Michael, a potential law abiding citizen in need of his goods, how the mighty fall he whispered in his thoughts, as the dealer advertised his stash of illegal goods to Michael, holding out samples to him, Michael whispered, ‘I’m not here for drugs’.

Surprised as to Michael’s response he asked, ‘so, Mister, if you do not wish to purchase my vitamins, what can I do you for?’

Michael replied saying, ‘where can I get a gun?’

The conversation continued for a short while and after a careful analysis on Michael, the dealer told Michael that it will cost him a lot.

‘I will double whatever price you put up, I need it,’ said Michael.

The drug dealer smiled and asked Michael to wait for him.

He got back minutes later with a big brown envelope, he looked at Michael and asked if he knew how to use a gun. Michael nodded sadly, the drug dealer pulled out the gun from the envelope and decided to give Michael a little hint on how to use it.

Michael watched and listened like a little kid that was being instructed on how to use a toy gun, he just wanted to have the gun in his hand. The drug dealer told Michael the amount and Michael doubled the money as he promised and paid in cash, the drug dealer then gave Michael some extra bullets as reward for the purchase and the two men exchanged phone numbers. As Michael was about to leave, the drug dealer whistled and said, ‘yo dawg, you’re a nice guy! If you don’t wanna get dirty I can be of hire, it won’t cost much, Big Grandy is the name!’ Michael gave a two finger peace sign in appreciation from afar and walked away with the envelope in his pants without saying a word.

Michael stopped by a shop on his way to the hotel and bought a few things—an extra phone, a sim card, shaving powder, some clothes and a pair of shoes. He got some stuff for Gillian too then took a cab back to the hotel.

On reaching the hotel, Michael met the preacher and his wife, Sabrina. He thought they, too, had moved to the hotel to find refuge because there was a heavy security presence at the hotel provided by some private security company hired by the hotel recently but they explained to Michael that they actually came to see him and to talk to him about something important

concerning his life. Michael sat down at the waiting section of the reception, opposite the preacher and his wife, Sabrina, the preacher started by telling Michael that this may sound a bit odd, that when Michael asked him to pray to God about what he was passing through, he did pray for him and got an answer, he even told Michael he had a revelation about him months before he decided to call him around the time he took the two-day trip with his wife and daughter. He went on to tell Michael how God wanted to use him for a much bigger purpose, he told Michael to keep vengeance aside and wait for instructions from God about what He, God, wanted from Michael. Michael almost exploded upon hearing what the preacher had to say, he swallowed his saliva angrily and Sabrina could see how his Adam's apple moved up and down in rage but didn't say a word.

Michael sighed, observed, and could tell the preacher wasn't ready to take his words back. 'I know how much you care about my family, Pastor James, but this is rather trying times for me and my daughter and I would appreciate it if you stay away from me for now. I understand you are concerned and worried about us, but we will be fine, thank you for your support during the funeral and everything, now if you will

excuse me I've got better things to do,' said Michael, as he stood up to go.

Sabrina said, 'killing whom you suspect will not heal your wounds, Michael, but God can.'

Michael stopped and looked at the couple one by one.

'The Ambassador asked me to tell you that the gun you purchased cannot solve this nor would it take the burden your heart carries, it is way much bigger than you expect or thought of, Michael,' she added.

Michael sat down gently and said, 'how did you . . . I mean, how did he? Who did you say, said what?'

Sabrina gave a warm smile halfway in a concerned manner saying, 'because the Lord has shown us what is to come and what you must do in order to be healed, the good Lord has spoken, he felt your pain more than you do, Michael, and this battle, this war is bigger than what you think! Give the good Lord a chance to prove himself in your life and use you for the greater good, many would die to have what is bestowed upon you . . . because I have seen it, I was shown what you truly are.'

Michael asked the couple what war they were talking about, the preacher interrupted as his wife was about to talk,

he told Michael to meet them at the church for more explanation whenever he is ready to talk, that the hotel isn't conducive for the conversation.

Michael didn't utter a word but he made them understand that he will try and come see them, he even offered to get them a room at the hotel just in case the church isn't safe enough for them but the couple gave him a resounding positive, faithful, and sincerely reply saying, 'in times like these, the church is the safest thus far, Michael,' they said this in unison, like two people sharing one mind. Michael smiled and thanked them for coming, they, in return bid him farewell and left. He watched them leave the reception as they entered their car and from a distance he watched Sabrina turn and smile at him through the window, so did the preacher through the same window, they waved at him and drove off.

Maybe they were crazy he thought, maybe they were tense and scared about the current happenings in the country or around the world as depicted on the news or maybe he was crazy and everybody was trying to help him get back to his senses, he thought again. But he knew things were getting strange, and as strange as they seemed to be, his attention was on one thing—to get the killers and anybody connected to the

murder of his wife, he wanted to make them pay with their lives by any means he could.

Michael had never taken anyone's life before, not even a fight with the boys when he was young, he was a solid reserved individual and introverted, he didn't know how that would be done but all he knew was that it must be done and must come to pass! He went through Paul and Samantha's hotel room and got his daughter who slept off on the couch watching TV but did not tell them anything.

Two days later, while lying on the bed with his two hands behind his head, facing the ceiling, many thoughts came through his mind, many dark thoughts, because he wanted answers. Should he connect Junior with the murder of his wife and if yes, should he go after him and kill him? Who were the two men described and captured by the surveillance camera in the vehicle, why was Mr. Johnson Sr. assassinated and what's the connection between all these and the strange man he met at the entrance to the hotel the day he got back from the police station? And what were Paul, Samantha, the preacher and his wife talking about or hiding? He gazed longingly at the ceiling and then dozed off.

Gillian had a nightmare that night and appeared to be twisting on the bed calling her mother's name.

Michael woke up from his slumber and patted her before she calmed and then went back to sleep peacefully but then, he noticed that the glass door that linked the bedroom to the balcony was halfway opened and the cold night wind was blowing the white curtains, he stood up silently and reached for the pistol under his pillow and cocked it with ease as taught by his friend the drug dealer, then moved slowly toward the door.

There was no one there and it seemed he probably did not check the door before he slept off, he could not recall whether he locked it properly or not so he shut it, locked it, and as he turned he noticed a wet footprint from the door through the bedroom and into the living section of his hotel room so he followed it carefully with his gun pointed at the direction he was headed but there was no one there as well, he lowered his gun in a relaxed position, then something cold touched his neck and he could not move, he was frozen and could not flex a muscle but was able to move his eyes round, up and down, he tried to lift the gun up but his entire body was stiff.

A dark figure made its way from behind him and walked to his front staring straight into his eyes and then began to move back like a serpent, Michael watched as one of the chairs in the room moved on its own up in the air and landed in front of him and the dark figure sat on it, this figure had no face but Michael could see something that looked like eyes on the head just like a normal human being, it had the body shape of a woman but without clothes on it, and as the dark figure rested on the chair it called out Michael's name.

The only source of light was from outside coming in through the windows and the red standby light on his TV and green light from the decoder, Michael was frightened but there was nothing he could do because he was frozen stiff.

The moment it occurred to him that his daughter might not be safe back in the bedroom because he was trapped over here in the living room, he then began to struggle from within but it was tearing him and so he remained still.

'Don't fight it, Michael, it's no use. Don't worry, she is safe. However, if you want to see her again you know what to do. Fight along on our side and you shall have more than just a wife, a daughter, and wealth or freedom to be,' said the dark figure in a soft tender female's voice as she stood up and

moved toward him, this time her body transformed to a beautiful naked woman with her dark long hair touching the floor, one he had never seen before and as her shape became clear to him he noticed a short tail slowly wagging behind her and her eyes became clear and blue before him, her forked tongue made its way through her seductive wet lips like that of a serpent, she wrapped her arms around him and threw her mouth at his left ear and kissed it, then her tongue went round his ear from one end to the other, the slimy saliva was on his ears as she moved back looking straight into his eyes, smiling at him with such great admiration, she unbuttoned his pyjamas bending her head to his navel and kissed it, she then sniffed him up to his neck.

Michael was still, shocked and then began to sweat as she removed the gun from his hand, walked by passed him and headed to the bedroom. Tears started to roll down from his eyes and he was able to speak in his mind, ‘please, please, God, no! Not Gillian. She’s all I’ve got, save her . . .’ but still could not move ‘God help me . . . save me . . . Jesus!’ All of a sudden he was free and able to move, he fell to the floor heavily and quickly rose to his feet then ran into the bedroom but he only met his daughter sleeping peacefully. He looked

around but there was no sign of anyone, he then spotted the pistol close to his phone next to the bedside lamp on his side of the bed but the door was opened with the wind blowing the curtains again, he shut it close, picked the phone and the pistol then gently dragged a chair and sat opposite the bed where Gillian was sleeping.

He noticed his phone flashing, there was a text message in his inbox so he checked, it was a message from the detective and it read: Martins and Pattoski, Plot 649, Phoenix Crescent, Kuradora. It was an address sent by the detective, from where he sat, the alarm clock read 3:06 a.m. Michael knew the location of the address, he then sent an sms to Big Grandy to meet him at the very place they last met at around eight in the morning and got an ‘okay, boss!’ reply from Big Grandy as if he was expecting a message from Michael.

He also sent another sms to Paul asking him to come down in the morning and help look after Gillian because he intended to go to his office and see some people and explained he got a lot of other things to do that day, he then slept on the chair with the phone on one hand, and the pistol on the other.

The next morning Gillian woke him up, he saw her staring at his hand, he then realised he was still holding the gun so he stood up and hid it behind him.

‘Come on, I woke up like thirty minutes ago, Mr Stallone!’ she said, as she walked to answer a knock on the door.

‘Good morning,’ he said.

She answered but he quickly got to the door before she did, smiling as he tickled her, the two opened the door laughing and it was one of the hotel maids.

The hotel maid came to clean the room, behind her was Paul and Samantha. ‘Morning!’ the two said, smiling.

Michael and Gillian answered and welcomed them in, Michael then explained to the couple that he has got something to do in his office but would be back as soon as he was done and would like them to help look after Gillian while he’s gone, and they gladly agreed to assist. Michael then handed the new phone to Gillian with both numbers saved in both phones respectively, he hugged her and left. Gillian was comfortable with Paul and Samantha, they sat in the room with her watching TV after ordering breakfast.

Michael got a call from the preacher while on his way out of the hotel, the preacher asked him to please try and see him when he could, and Michael agreed but that he would do that later in the day when available.

ERRÒR IN TERRÒR

Michael got himself a hooded shirt and some fresh pair of jeans at a nearby boutique, he dropped the clothes he wore earlier in a refuse dump on his way down an alley, he took a cab to go meet his new acquaintance, Big Grandy, and at exactly eight in the morning, Big Grandy was at the spot. Michael whistled from across indicating a signal of invitation and Big Grandy walked towards him, the two men walked away from Big Grandy's domain and into a small restaurant nearby, they both ordered some light food and Michael explained to Big Grandy that he needed his help to settle some scores but that he only required a backup buddy, sort of a sidekick and offered an attractive amount Big Grandy could not refuse. The two men arranged to get a car from the ghetto and some tools to run their mission. Michael also promised more cash to Big Grandy if the mission went successful, Big Grandy was happy either way. 'My baby's momma gonna be happy with me man, this will cover my butt for eight months man. I am down for whatever, Mr M,' said Big Grandy, while counting the cash offered to him by Michael.

The two men left the restaurant after Michael paid the bill, Big Grandy ran back later into the restaurant and picked the full bottle of soft drink and a burger Michael left on the table and rushed out as he glared at the old couple on the other table.

Michael and Big Grandy got the right vehicle they needed for the job, and also some guns and enough bullets for a small assault enough to take an entire football team, but manoeuvring through the city with such heavy gear would put them in trouble with the law, especially with the current situation in the city and around the world and constant presence of law enforcement agents in and around the city. Big Grandy came up with an idea, he virtually knew all the officers in the city, thanks to his record-breaking jail time served. He had been in and out of prison and jail cell quite enough to have some inside men especially the patrol officers. The men decided to make their move after sun down, so they planned to meet at twelve midnight.

To cover up what they would carry, Big Grandy planned to hide the weapons in frozen food packages just in case anything happened, it was a good idea but Michael felt stuffing them inside a deflated spare tire in the trunk would be

best, they ended up using both methods. However, Big Grandy added some icing on the cake by inviting his cousin for the party, Michael wasn't comfortable having a third person but in the end, he agreed because Big Grandy's cousin looked tougher than the two of them combined and after a short chat, Michael left the two cousins and took a cab back to town. They agreed to pick him up at the rendezvous point at the appropriate time.

Michael arrived at the church on the hill side, paid the cab fare and entered the church, he sat down on the seat on the second row looking at the giant crucifix hanging up on the wall in the church. Michael didn't come to pray, he only wanted to get things clear with the preacher and his wife concerning what they told him the other day. After a while, Pastor James saw him and came to him, he directed Michael to the basement to show him something, and Michael went after the preacher down the basement through an entrance from the right side of the church altar.

There they met Sabrina serving food to a man, as Michael climbed down the stairs he noticed a man wearing a white seamless robe, the moment their eyes met, Michael stopped. Pastor James turned and smiled at Michael, inviting him to

come down. Michael did but his eyes were entirely focused on this man he was seeing for the first time. There were half burnt candles lit all around with one new candle on the old table at the centre of the room. Sabrina smiled at Michael like she always did and he sat down as directed, opposite the man.

Sabrina brought some food to him and there was a small basket of fruits on the table as well, but it was obvious Michael wouldn't eat. Sabrina and her husband, the preacher, excused the two men and went up, leaving Michael staring at the man opposite him at the other end of the table.

The man did not say a word to Michael, he laid his spoon back in the plate on the table and sipped the water from the glass cup served to him by Sabrina. 'Do you love sports?' asked the man, who was now looking at him, but Michael did not talk.

'Funny how a little accident that dislocated your big toe makes you despise sports, but you wouldn't have been a good player anyway, you were not moulded for such skills,' added the man.

'How did you know about that? I never . . . told anybody, not even my wife,' said Michael.

The man smiled and reached for an apple from the fruit basket and after taking a bite, Michael noticed that the fruit melted in the man's mouth like cotton candy as the man looked at the apple and said, 'I knew its name before it was brought forth and it was predestined to be served to me on this day at this hour, just like this, while you are seated on that very chair, Michael.' The man leaned his right elbow on the table and said, 'we cannot go talking about things I know that you do not know or the things you'd later find out which your spirit has found out but your flesh is yet to accept its reality, like you'd asked me how I knew that you have been moving around with a loaded semi-automatic pistol. Your friend Grand S. Simons aka Big Grandy did tell you how to use it safely, didn't he?' added the man. 'The gun would go off in the elevator when a lady who was out walking her two dogs in the hotel premises walks into the elevator, they would make the other woman in the elevator, who was cynophobic, jump out with fear and hold you accidentally triggering the pistol in your pants, and you and I both know that you strapped it in the wrong position, Michael,' said the man, who took a bite at the apple again.

Michael quietly pulled out the gun from his pants and realised it was loaded, he then disengaged the safety and kept the gun on the table without uttering a single word.

The man kept the half bitten apple on the table, he smiled at the apple and the apple went back to its natural order, back to its untouched form as if no one had ever eaten it, Michael was amazed. ‘I can make your life worth and fulfilled my child, blessed and crowned with such glory more beautiful and healed than this fruit be,’ said the man, as he stood up from his chair and moved to the chair next to Michael.

‘Everything that you see unfolding in your life and around the world is far beyond your understanding of things, this is the time that mankind hoped it would never come, the time both the heavens and the damned are all aware of its inevitability, the line has been drawn, Michael, and I do not expect you to fathom any word I shall utter to you for now but I guarantee you that if you will keep aside what your heart intended to do after sun down, then I shall guide thee and be with thee and use thee for a far more glorious, heroic journey. You are more than what this world intended to make out of you, you are more than an unforgiving cold-hearted killer triggered by the loss, and what this cruel world and its

wickedness schemed to implant in you. You were created a king to fight alongside a glorious army to usher in a glorious beginning that had for long passed in the realms of the Father, a heavenly army such that no man nor the damned have seen, so do not take that path for you won't like what your canal ears shall hear! It will destroy the man in you if I step aside and let this wicked world take thy heart hostage,' added the man, looking straight into Michael's wandering eyes. 'The entire plan of what came, what is, and that which is to come is all in the good book that you so trusted until the night Jana's spirit departed from this world.

I know your pain my child because I know thee before thou formeth in Esther's womb,' the man said, smiling at him. Michael was shocked because this man knew his mother's name. 'Yes, I do know Esther and the names of her forefathers and ones before them. The time of the reign of darkness has come to its edge, the time of light is here to stay that is why things are as they appear now, darkness is giving way to light and it does not like what was decreed by the Father and so shall not vanish without a fight. Here lay little or no time for the dark one to devour and take the ones who put their trust in him as fast as he can, but I ask that you lay

down the sword of this age that you carry and follow me, and I shall speak into thy hands a great and mightier sword. Take the vengeance off against men who wronged thy humble heart and do not let it be corrupt by what the dark one has put thee through, thou art a man of great integrity and countenance. Let not what is meant to pass away hold thee from passing through the golden gates, which is laid open for all they that received the free gift of the Father.’ These words came from the man.

Michael stood up quietly without saying a word to the man, he was about to leave and then remembered to pick his gun, and after picking it, he strapped it on the left side of his waist and as he was about to walk up the stairs, the man said, ‘woe unto man whose enemies trampleth upon his purpose and wagheth ceaseless war upon it before he knoweth why he walketh the earth! Do not let what is of this world deter thee from thy sole purpose bequeatheth by the Father unto thee, Michael.’ He stopped, sighed and then walked away without turning back neither saying a word to the man, all the while the man kept his eyes on Michael and kept smiling until he disappeared. ‘I shall be when thou seeketh and shall appeareth when thou needeth me whenever thou art ready my child.’

Those were the words that echoed like a whisper in Michael's heart as he walked up the stairs.

In the church were the preacher and Sabrina are on their knees praying, the sound of Michael's footsteps made them stop praying and they both turned. Michael was walking fast going out of the church building. Sabrina quickly stood on her feet and followed him calling but he didn't turn, he ran out of the church and far away into the bushes, Michael ran until he almost lost his breath, he stopped under a tree and lay on the ground looking up at the sky through the leaves. Michael was totally confused, he had no idea what just happened, he took a nap under the tree and by the time he was up, it was already sunset so he rushed to the hotel and on his way, he got a call from the detective that Junior was planning to meet the two men around midnight at the address he sent to him earlier. Michael thanked the detective and hung up and as soon as he ended the call he scrolled through his phone and dialed Clara's number, she told him that Junior said his father's body won't be put to rest till the killers are caught and put to justice. She sounded worried about Michael and he told her he was doing fine and thanked her for her concern, she wished him well and told him to take care of himself and his

daughter, telling him that she was planning to leave town the next day to a much safer place but would come back when things calm down or for the old man's burial when the date is set. She also explained to him that a circular was posted and the company was closed for a week or until things settle as the country itself is bracing for defence against threats by terrorists and other neighbouring nations, all government offices were shut down and all private companies were advised to go on a lockdown until the country is safe for business.

On reaching the hotel, Michael waved at the receptionist who smiled at him and made his way to the lift, there were two people inside—a man wearing a black shirt and a woman in a pink gown—and as the lift was about to close, a woman with two dogs pressed the button and entered with them, this made the other woman in pink ran behind Michael screaming and shaking. Michael quickly pressed the button and the lift opened again, Michael then asked the lady with the dogs to please kindly move out and take the stairs with her dogs that the other woman was afraid of dogs. The lady with the dogs was offended but she had to go out as the two men stared at

her, after she walked out, the woman in pink thanked Michael and he said no word but smiled at her as the lift closed.

Michael got back into the room and met his daughter with Paul and Samantha. Gillian jumped on him, smiling. He sat down, ate some food offered to him by Samantha, and thanked the two for looking after Gillian. He lied to them that he went to the office to have some issues cleared, he then asked Gillian to excuse the three of them so she went to the bedroom leaving them by the diner in the parlour. Michael was quiet at first and after a long silence he removed the pistol and kept it on the table, scaring Samantha. Michael also kept the pictures of the two men he got from the detective and explained to them how he got it and what he intend doing that night, they tried to talk him out of it but he refused to listen. He told them that he needed to do this for Jana.

‘What do you think Jana would really want, Michael? Take matters on your own and stain your hands with blood? What if the authority finds out? Think about Gillian!’ said Paul. The two tried to persuade Michael but he kept a deaf ear to their voices.

While they were talking, Gillian walked excitedly and asked Paul and Samantha to tell her father about the man that

came to see them. Michael hid the gun under the table cloth. ‘What man, sweetie? What man is she talking about . . . huh?’ asked Michael, who turned to the couple.

Paul and Samantha looked at each other and Paul said, ‘it’s the um . . . Ambassador, he was here.’

‘What Ambassador?’ he asked. His daughter, out of excitement, described the man and the description matched that of the man he encountered at the church basement. Gillian went ahead to say that the man was the same man she kept seeing in her dreams whenever she was attacked, but that in her dreams he was always shining brightly with such great light. ‘Remember that man I told you, Daddy, that saved me from the lions in my recurring dream the other day?’ said Gillian as she sat on his thigh, smiling.

Michael asked gently about the time the man came and when they told him, it was about the same time he was down at the basement in the church. What marvelled him was how the man was able to be in two places at the same time. Paul told Michael he had a confession to make, he explained to Michael that he and Samantha have been under attacks and many mysterious things have been happening to them, that was why they left their town and ran to the city after

Samantha had an encounter with the Ambassador and He told her in a dream that safety would come through this land and so they packed and moved here before the chaos hit the city, the idea of Paul coming for an assignment was a cover up not to make him think they were weird or crazy if they had opened up to him in the first place. They told Michael that Samantha has been having miscarriages whenever she took in since their marriage for four years, and it has not been easy for them since until they decided to sincerely pray over the matter, but the lord has blessed her womb and she was three months pregnant and that they believed this baby was here to stay, the two looked so happy talking about their unborn child.

Samantha explained how she saw herself carrying rocks in her stomach which were put inside of her by Hibnus who came in the form of a dark-figured woman in a dream, and the Ambassador appeared and Hibnus fled, so the Ambassador removed the rocks from her stomach and told her she shall be the joy of many as her womb shall bring forth what it was moulded to hold for nine months in the shortest time possible known to man, and that the Ambassador has been visiting her night after night and had appeared to Paul too several times. Since then, the two were instructed to come to the city

according to the instructions by the one they called the Ambassador. He told them that shelter shall be laid in the midst of darkness in this very city. Michael felt the couple were losing it, he began to think that everybody around him was either running mad or that they were playing pranks on him, he wanted to laugh and call them fools but his mind was on his mission.

The couple went ahead and told Michael that they had no idea what those words meant when the Ambassador spoke to them in a dream but they obeyed with faith and without question. Michael knew that Paul had no reason to lie to him but watching Paul being caught under such religious web stunned him, he felt that maybe he should ask the couple a few more questions. He told them that the person that approached him in front of the hotel called himself Hibnus and it was a man, not a woman.

Samantha excitingly told him that Hibnus can appear in many forms— at night is a woman and in the day a man. Michael then asked her how she knew all these. She then told him that once the Ambassador touched her hands, she knew all within a flash of a second. ‘An immeasurable load of

knowledge was passed to me in the form of light within a short period,' she added.

Michael then asked, 'so you're telling me that all these is real; the unborn child, Hibnus or whatever it's . . . his or her name is, the rocks, the shiny guy in white and . . .'

Samantha and Paul uttered 'yes, Michael!' at the same time.

'Yes, Daddy!' Gillian added too, smiling.

He giggled and asked them to give him some time alone to think, he then secretly took the gun on the table and walked out of the hotel room.

It was already 10 p.m., while sitting by the swimming pool staring into the water, Michael got a text message from Big Grandy about the operation, he wanted to know if the mission was still on as planned.

Michael replied with a positive response. There were too many things on Michael's mind, processing all these things he was bumping on was weighing his senses and judgment down, he did not ask any further questions because his attention was more on the clock than any other mystery he had seen or heard so far and he didn't know what to believe anymore. Killing the two men and finding out why they attacked his

family was the only thing that clouded his mind. He went back to his hotel room, Gillian had slept off, Paul and Samantha were sleeping on the couch in the parlour. Michael then shut the door quietly and took the stairs through the exit door on the other end via the public pool section to avoid being seen by the receptionist.

By 12 a.m. he was already at the rendezvous point and immediately after he got there, Big Grandy and his cousin picked him up. Big Grandy's cousin was very excited about the mission and just couldn't wait to get a piece of the action. On their way, Michael told the men that when they get there, they would wait for him outside until he gave them a signal and if he didn't show up within the specified time or signalled them they should come in thirty minutes. The two men were high on marijuana that they puffed earlier before they picked Michael and it was obvious that big Grandy's cousin was a trigger-happy young man. Michael asked Big Grandy's cousin what he did for a living and he said he was a rapper and wanted to be a rap star someday, he said why he volunteered for the job was because Big Grandy used some of the money from the deal to pay for his studio session that day, he even

wanted to play his demo CD for Michael but Big Grandy insisted he wait until this was over.

Michael then promised to support him on his album once it was over. Big Grandy's cousin, who was sitting on the passenger's side, was so excited that he mistakenly fired a shot in the air through the sunroof as the men passed over a small bridge that night. Big Grandy, who was driving, slapped his cousin and collected the gun, the men went down taking a shortcut through the bushes and arrived at their destination.

They parked not far from the estate fence and as planned, Michael took a pistol and a dagger while Big Grandy had a shotgun wrapped on his shoulder and a pistol in his hand but his cousin held up two semi-automatic, closed bolt and blowback-operated pistols variant generally known as the Uzi. Michael and Big Grandy didn't even know how he got the guns. 'If you had money to buy that, cousin, paying for a studio session shouldn't be a problem, man!' said Big Grandy as the two entered into an argument. Michael left laughing saying, 'thirty minutes, boys, thirty minutes!'

'Yes, boss, I got you! I got ya back!' answered Big Grandy, who turned and slapped his cousin on the head again.

Michael jumped off the fence and into the compound through the backyard, he saw a man making a phone call in the kitchen downstairs. The house was a semidetached duplex with a concrete fence separating them, dogs were barking from the other house so he quickly moved and lay on the ground, the man making the call looked around and saw no one then continued making his call.

A honk was heard from the frontage of the house so the man left the kitchen, as Michael was about to make a move toward the kitchen door, he heard a thud and another thud and on his amazement, Big Grandy and his cousin had already made their way through the fence too. He was mad but could not say a word so he gave them a hand gesture to calm down and not make any sound because Big Grandy was knocking his cousin's head when they landed. He asked them to come over, which they did, crawling like soldiers under barb in combat training. The moment they got to him he whispered to them to stay put and not move till thirty minutes have passed and they nodded in agreement at the same time like dogs.

Michael tried to open the kitchen door but it was locked, Big Grandy nodded and quickly tried it with some tools he had and it popped opened. 'Now, that's what's up!' whispered

his cousin, smiling with his two front broken teeth. Michael noticed the two missing teeth and was speechless so he made another gesture telling them to wait and they nodded again in agreement. Michael crawled in gently through the kitchen and overheard Junior's voice shouting and lamenting. He stopped and squeezed himself to a good hidden spot behind a refrigerator, and from what his ears could gather—a television in the house was switched on so Michael could not hear them clearly—Junior was telling the men that he didn't ask them to kill anyone, he said he made it clear that he only wanted to send a message to Michael but not by killing his wife. Michael was able to have a faint glimpse of the three men talking from where he was now standing, one of the men who was smoking got mad and pointed a gun at Junior, telling him to sit down, which Junior did without question.

‘Take that gun off me, Martin, or I won't pay you guys the other half . . .’ said Junior, ‘besides, why should I pay you guys, you didn't do as instructed,’ he added.

The men laughed, one of the men frisked Junior and pulled a gun from his holster and kept it on the table and told Junior they weren't working for him, he didn't understand

what they were saying until one of the men called out to William, Junior's nephew.

The weather forecast on the television was still loud and one of the men turned the volume down cursing at the lady in the television at the same time for no reason. William came down from the spiral stairs smoking and hysterically laughing at his uncle. Junior did not understand what was going on and so was Michael, from where he was standing. William was holding a glass cup half-filled with red wine and instead of drinking it he poured it on Junior's head. 'Are you out of your mind, William?' Junior exclaimed.

'Sorry, Uncle Cee . . .' answered William, laughing. 'What's the meaning of this?' Junior asked again.

William then sat on the glass centre table facing Junior, while laughing he kept the cigarette and grabbed hold of the pistol on the table, sighed heavily and said, 'the end, Uncle Cee, the end of you after . . . grandpa.'

Junior looked at him and William smirked, saying, 'oh, yeah! I knew about it before it happened, just as you're about to be done with, uncle Cee.' Junior got up angrily and pushed his nephew to the floor, breaking the table to pieces. Martins and Pattoski broke the fight between the two men, Martins hit

Junior on the back of the head with the edge of his pistol and he fell to the floor.

Junior and William were both bleeding from cuts they got from the broken glass table, William was annoyed. While on the floor, unknown to the three men, Michael could see William pressing some kind of device that started to beep so Michael stepped out from where he was hiding, pointing two pistols at the men, he ordered Martins to drop his gun on the floor, which he did without hesitation. Junior got up looking at the wounds on his body, saying ‘oh, Michael, thank God you are here, these fools were trying to . . .’ before he could say any more, Michael pointed a pistol at him, so Junior slowly moved back and joined the other men. ‘Oh! Okay, all right, but I didn’t do it, Mike, I told you even the cops suspected me but I have got nothing to do with Jana’s death or my father’s. It’s my freaking nephew, could you believe this?’ said Junior but Michael ignored him and asked them ‘why?’ The four men looked at each other and none said a word.

‘I will tell you why,’ said a voice behind Michael. The individual placed a gun nozzle between Michael’s shoulder blades. ‘Drop your gun gently on the floor before I make you!’ said the individual again.

Michael kindly dropped the pistols as ordered and slowly turned, no one other than detective Samuel pointing a gun at him with his left hand in his left pocket as usual. ‘How the hell did you get that blood on you, son?’ said detective Samuel to William.

‘Your freaking brother-in-law almost killed me, what took you so long, Dad?’ answered William who moved across to the detective’s side, the other two men crossed to the other side as well. William hurriedly picked two of the pistols from the floor pointing it at Michael and Junior.

‘So, this is what it’s all about, huh? Said Junior to detective Samuel.

‘Yeah, I told you I will get your family . . . for shattering my life and that of my son, Cannon!’ replied the detective.

‘It was an accident you fool, get it in your head and get over it! You were there for Christ sake, Sam. You were right there, and what, you brainwashed your son too? You’re a madman!’ said Junior.

‘Who was where, what’s going on here?’ Michael asked. ‘Now here’s the screamer, Junior sent these two to kill your wife, you found their hideout and shot them to dead with a pistol you bought from the ghetto and they shot you in the

process as well! Blah blah blah! End of story! Besides, why wouldn't you want Junior dead? Well, I will tell you why, Michael. He has been banging your wife whenever you were in the office and when you travelled abroad with his father trying to make the company big, my friend. Oh, don't you know?' said detective Samuel, laughing, pointing his gun at Martins and Pattoski directing them to move back and join Michael and Junior as well.

'Don't listen to this madman . . .' uttered Junior. 'Michael, oh he will, he has to . . . every fool gets to know what he is someday or what he's been taken for . . .' said Samuel and he added 'you know what, Mr Henning, you go run a DNA test on your daughter and tell me who you believe the real father is, but that won't happen anyway because you, my friend, and all these puppets will all be dead by tomorrow, all of you. But before that, brother, why don't you tell the good-hearted man here the truth about you and Jana, huh? Go ahead, man,' said Samuel, pointing the gun at Junior.

Junior kept quiet and moved back a bit away from Michael and said, 'you sick bastard!'

'Am I? Open up or I'll fill you up with lead!' Detective Samuel threatened Junior again.

Junior looked at Michael and said, ‘I’m sorry, man, I didn’t know what came over me, and it was a long . . .’

‘What the hell are you talking about, Cannon?’ said Michael.

‘Don’t listen to this lunatic, he is crazy. It was a mistake, okay!’ said Junior, looking remorseful.

‘A mistake, is that what you call it? Huh! I know everything, you fool. Helen told me everything. Banging the man’s wife way back, she helped secured your job with the company because daddy’s lil boy Junior here promised to use his father’s influence to hook you up only if she gave him a taste of the pink apple, and she did. But the banging stopped after you got the job and that’s after he impregnated her with the child you called your own,’ said Samuel.

‘Shut up, you fool!’ said Junior. ‘You are lying!’ screamed Michael. ‘Oh, am I?’ asked Samuel.

‘Samuel this is not necessary, you have brought enough pain on this man’s life, let it rest, you bastard!’ Junior exclaimed.

‘No! We . . . yeah, we, have brought these on him— you, the self-righteous old man, and myself, Junior. I just decided to take advantage of the little dilemma to seal my own plans,

that's all and God will understand, the old man thought that by making Mr Nice Guy here head of his company, that justifies everything! Now, tell him the truth or I will shoot you in your balls, you fat chunk of grass,' said Samuel.

Junior turned to Michael again and told him he was sorry that the story was true but it was a long time ago and that he actually forced her.

Michael refused to believe him, Michael learned that even the old man knew about it but warned Junior to stay away from Jana. Junior went ahead to explain that he actually forced Jana when she came to him to help secure a place for her husband in his father's company, Jana was the one who connected Michael with the old man when Michael was struggling to get a job after he left his former place of work but she was only able to gain access to the old man after going through Junior.

Michael didn't want to accept anything he was told but he understood that with the depth of the situation of things, Junior would have no reason to tell jokes or lie to him. 'So this is all a set-up? You set these things up all by yourself using your son, for what? What does my family got to do with this madness?' asked Michael.

‘Revenge, he wants revenge just like the fool that he is!’ said Junior.

‘Revenge against who? You handed over the photos of Martins and Pattoski to the authorities as well?’ Michael asked again.

‘Yeah, I did, they are expendable,’ answered Samuel.

Tension rose like hot steam in the room with Samuel and William holding the guns, they were the ones in charge and calling the shots. Pattoski’s attention was on the other pistol on the floor.

Samuel interrupted, saying, ‘in the next life don’t be foolish, Michael, run a DNA test on every child a woman would tell you you fathered, don’t forget to ask the doctor to check if you are potent as well. I know everything, Michael! Everything! No hurt feelings man, a detective’s got to do what a detective’s got to . . . just as your pretty wife did! You think not having more kids after your first child was a problem from her side? You are kidding me man, you are as stupid and foolish as you look with those glasses, the world is not meant for people like you. You are a loser, I can cut you a slack and let you put a bullet on this rascal’s head before I shoot you myself, Michael.’

Everybody was quiet and Michael was angry but he was more interested in the story he bumped about Jana and wanted to hear more and as Junior was about to talk, Big Grandy and his cousin came out from their hiding place behind the detective and his son, William, cocked their guns and ordered the two men to drop their guns. His cousin ranted about the guns he carried and so warned the men not to try anything stupid, the two men dropped their guns and then were asked to go down to their knees and they did. Junior, Martins, and Pattoski were ordered to join them and they did with their eyes still set on the pistols not far from their position.

Big Grandy told Michael to move so he would waste them but Michael was curious, said he wanted to know what was going on. Michael moved a step further and asked the detective to talk, he kept silent so Big Grandy hit the detective with his gun on the back of the head lightly and moved back, then the detective began to talk, telling Michael how he and Helen were in love back in the days and planned on getting married but her family disagreed after they got engaged, so the two decided to have a baby in order to force Helen's father to approve their marriage but the old man refused. So the day Samuel, Helen's father, and Junior were arguing and

quarrelling, when Helen was a few weeks away from delivery, Helen fell off the stairs and was hospitalised, she died but the baby was saved and since then Samuel swore to take vengeance on the family.

‘As foolish as you thought the old man was, he would never give the hand of his precious daughter in marriage to a deranged and possessed psychopath like you!’ said Junior.

‘First cast out the beam out of your own eye; and then shall you see clearly to cast out the speck out of your brother’s eye!’ answered detective Samuel.

‘Mathew 7:5,’ said Big Grandy, as he laughed and added ‘looks like y’all ready and prepared to go to purgatory, boys!’ ‘Oh hell, the president’s dead! Breaking news on TV!’ said Big Grandy’s cousin. All the men turned their attention to the television and it was true. ‘Yo, boss, turn the volume up, man!’ said big Grandy to Michael but Michael hesitated. On the television there was a footage of a burning plane with a text at the bottom of the screen saying ‘BREAKING NEWS: President’s jet shot down by terrorist minutes ago’. The news said no one has claimed responsibility for the attack yet.

‘This world is sick man, let’s get this thing over with and get the hell out of here, boss!’ said Big Grandy to Michael.

The five men on their knees were in the middle with Junior on one side and Michael standing. Big Grandy and his cousin were on the other side, Big Grandy asked the men to turn and face him, he then asked the detective to remove his left hand from his left pocket which he did, fast firing a shot at Big Grandy's forehead using a small pistol from his pocket and one shot on Big Grandy's cousin's chest missing his heart by an inch, in a spilt of a second Big Grandy's cousin screamed and opened fire at the men, both Michael and Junior jumped off to the left and right side respectively for their lives.

There were random shots fired from Martins and Pattoski as well who got hold of a pistol each on the floor but shots from Big Grandy's cousin put bullet holes in the detective's body, few shots hit Martins and Pattoski on the loins and throat but the two didn't miss the shots they fired at Big Grandy's cousin. Pattoski's pistol rolled close to Junior and Michael watched Junior struggling to pick it up in the midst of the chaos, bullets were flying all round the room through the walls scattering the television and other furniture in the house, William's chest was shattered with bullet holes too and some women from the next house were screaming.

The place was silent for a while, Michael could hear Pattoski groaning, coughing, and spitting blood through his mouth and nostrils. Blood stains all around the cushions and floor. Michael quietly stood up and almost got hit by the bullet Junior fired, Michael ducked behind a chair and then spotted a pistol from across on Big Grandy's hand lying on the floor so he ran for it and picked it, quickly turned and fired three shots at Junior's direction but missed because Junior was already headed toward the door and ran out.

Michael looked around and everybody was dead—Samuel, William, Big Grandy, his cousin, Martins, and Pattoski all laid dead and wasted and the women from the other house were still screaming, Some blood stains were on Michael's shirt, the dogs in the next house barked loudly as Michael searched Big Grandy's body and removed the cell phone from his pocket and made his way through the kitchen door and jumped off the fence injuring himself upon landing. He limped and got to the getaway vehicle parked behind the fence and zoomed off.

Michael stopped somewhere along the way in the bushes and got rid of the weapons in the car, he limped back in and hit the gas but was losing his grip on the pedal as pain from

his ankle weakened his push, he got to a bridge and he then looked around and then threw Big Grandy's cell phone down into the water.

By the time he got back on the expressway, sirens and red and blue lights from both police cars and the military vehicles were moving up and down the city, many dignitaries with their escorts were on high speed headed to different directions. He got through and arrived at the hotel safe, he didn't even park the vehicle appropriately and just pulled the hand break putting the car to a halt and made his way through the public pool side at the hotel as he limped, avoiding the reception which was filled with many people, Michael paved his way up painfully through the stairs and got to the room. Paul opened the room and called out to Samantha and the two held Michael and laid him on the sofa in the parlour in his hotel room.

The TV was on, set on the news channel carrying the breaking news flash still showing footages of the burnt presidential jet. Samantha quickly rushed to their hotel room for a first aid kit and as soon as she got back, Paul told her it was a minor pain on the big toe and a serious sprained ankle. Samantha then applied some ointments to it but with a careful

look, she discovered it was a broken ankle, she asked Michael what happened as Gillian ran out and held him with tears in her eyes, he held her firmly and lied to them that he went to get some of his stuff from the office and was attacked on his way back by some men asking him for money but Samantha and Paul sensed he was not telling the truth, however, they were happy he got back alive.

‘Did you see the number of people down at the reception and did you hear about the president’s assassination?’ asked Michael as he panted, sweating in the air conditioned room. Samantha and Paul told him they saw it on the news channel. ‘I don’t think this city is safe any longer, everybody seemed to be running and the city is filled with law enforcement agents. It’s a total chaos out there, we need to get out of here before it gets major!’ added Michael but Samantha and Paul disagreed with him, that the Ambassador told them the city was the safest place for now and they would not leave until he told them otherwise. Every time the two mentioned the name of the Ambassador, Michael got uncomfortable and edgy. While they were talking, Samantha brought the men’s attention to the TV and over the news channel the reporter broadcast that ‘all world leaders have ordered their troops on full combat

alert'. According to the news, war had already broken up in some countries around the world, the three of them looked at each other and as Samantha tried to find the chair next to her to sit down, the door on the terrace side broke open and the glass door shattered, pieces of glasses around pushed in by a strong violent wind with a loud bang. Samantha and Gillian screamed as the deadly wind threw Paul up against the wall. Samantha and Gillian held Michael strong and to their amazement, Hibnus appeared out of nowhere. Paul made an attempt to fight Hibnus but was smacked back to the wall again.

Hibnus pushed Samantha and Gillian to the floor and grabbed hold of Michael's ankle twisting it clockwise and anticlockwise as Michael let out a painful scream and tried to fight it. Hibnus now transformed into the dark-figured woman, with her hair spread like tentacles in the air and her short tail was visible. Hibnus smiled and grabbed Michael and threw him across the room. Michael hit the ceiling and right before he landed on the floor Gillian screamed 'Jesus! Save daddy!' Right then, time stopped but Hibnus could move. Michael, Samantha, Gillian, and Paul were still and frozen in time but conscious of what was going on, a shiny bright white

light sparked its way in the middle of the room and shined brightly blinding Hibnus who was about to make an attempt to disappear but was instantly vaporised. Michael was hanging in the air and so were the rest, then time continued and Michael landed on the floor, letting a painful moan out, the intensity of the bright white light subsided and transformed into a man, and Gillian rushed toward the man and buried her head in his arms as Paul and Samantha rushed and bowed at the man's feet. He asked that Michael be brought to the sofa, he was laid and the man ran his hand gently around Michael's ankle and it became healed, even his toe was made fine and the injury on the back of his head disappeared, leaving Michael feeling strong, energized, and fresh like a new born child.

‘Thy faith is great, my child,’ said the man, looking at Gillian. ‘I am here to take thee to safety, I am taking all the children with me to a safer place within the earth's pelt for now and when the gates come finally opened, they and all that fight along the good side shall inhabit the place I have prepared for those of the father!’

Yea and all the rest of Adam's seeds that I have visited must walketh to where these innocent ones shall be, for in

days to come the hour shall lose its weak hand. Time shall ceaseth but be not afraid, a great light shall guard and guide thee to where the young and innocents I saved for myself shall be, keep thy eyes opened and be yea vigilant,' the man said, and then turned to Samantha, 'thy womb shall bring forth its fruit when yea arrive at the camp I nested for my own before the gates come opened. There, yea shall be of joy and hope to many.'

Samantha smiled and so did Paul, their faces shined bright and glittered as they held hands, He then turned to Michael and said, 'yea must not knoweth all but I shall come to thee once thou have made up thy mind and calleth in earnest, but this yea must do before the ears of the father shuts itself against the voice of men. There is a much greater task for thee when thou art ready but first yea must cast off all yea know of this dying world and what the tongues of men have planted in thy heart through thy ears and forgive yea must in order to soar with thy wings, my child, for where I am taking thee, not even the angels have seen,' the man said, as he turned and looked straight into Michael's eyes. His face shone bright and glittered, Michael could tell it was the very man he met down the basement at the church, the one they call the Ambassador.

‘I shall gather mine and all they who believeth and accepteth the lamb in the hour left thereof and shall reacheth out to all men before the last wind of time is frozen and imprisoned!’ he added and again turned to Gillian who was dipped in his warm loving arms saying ‘soon my child, all this pain, cruelty, and decadence shall give way to unmatched and endless joy and peace.’

Tears ran down Michael’s eyes and Gillian looked at her father, Michael, holding strong at the Ambassador.

‘Can we go now?’ she said, smiling, resting her head on his bosom and it got obvious to Michael that all she wanted was to leave with the Ambassador. Michael could see it in her eyes. Michael smiled at Gillian, then a great white light made its way through and engulfed the Ambassador and Gillian and they both disappeared leaving Michael, Paul, and Samantha in the room.

Twin explosions hit the hotel sending the three to the floor, the floor cracked open but the three were able to escape and made their way down through the heavily-piled broken stairs. Dead bodies and blood were everywhere, women screaming and crying, calling out the names of their children. As Michael, Paul, and Samantha made their way out of the

degraded structure, a fog of dust was everywhere and people panicked on the streets running up and down, a state of pandemonium, and the earth shook as a short earthquake cracked some of the buildings standing.

While running on the streets, the three noticed how the entire city was in flames and yet there were some men breaking shops, looting, and some breaking into banks and moving out with bags of cash and only a handful of policemen bother to chase them firing shots at the criminals.

The three also noticed that there was no single child amongst all the number of people they saw, the entire crowd were running, houses were falling and the earth was shaking terribly. Street lights, cell phone masts, and electrical poles were falling, breaking, and smashing everything in their way.

There was total and complete chaos, nuclear alarm sirens could be heard from afar as debris and objects with smoke tails were falling from the skies on buildings and people, and from afar planes were sighted making a forced descent and one sighted in flames with numerous sounds of explosions heard across the city. Not a single child's voice was heard and all the women that were pregnant appeared without womb and

confused, the sun rose in the morning while the people were still busy trying to locate loved ones.

Above in the sky, the sun's colour began to change to a duller tone because the clouds were turning thick and dark with smoke rising from the city, a horrible evil and loud sound was heard in the skies sending cold chills down the people's spines as they looked up in search of what it might be but the sound stopped and nothing was seen. The earth stopped shaking, and debris stopped falling, as the entire city calmed leaving only smoke everywhere and people covered with dust.

Coughing their way through were Michael, Paul, and Samantha. Paul held Samantha's hand tightly, the three helped those they could and people began to help the ones that were trapped beneath fallen buildings. Young men, women, and old came to the realization that they were all that was left and there seemed to be no single child in the city anymore, only the adults were left. The news of the missing children in every home was heard, some families talked about hearing their children talked with a stranger and seen lights in the children's bedrooms before the earth started to shake, some men and women were on their knees praying in the dust and didn't care, some were crying and many were trapped and

dead in the buildings. Michael advised the two to go down to the church so they moved carefully between fallen structures and burnt cars through the city trekking to the church, they saw many horrible sights on their way and many deaths and still in their entire long trip to the church, there wasn't a single child in sight.

They got to the church building at about nine in the morning and only half of it was standing, they saw pastor James rearranging the church seats and dusting them off, the pastor's house was totally brought down and in pieces. The preacher saw them and ran to welcome them, Michael asked of Sabrina and the preacher told them she went to get some water so they could clean up the church seats. The four of them sat down on the dusty seats talking about what happened, minutes later Sabrina arrived with some men and women she met whom she invited to come and rest with them, she was happy seeing Michael and she didn't bother to ask of Gillian as if she knew what happened, Michael smiled and sighed but could not explain nor say a word. 'There is a message for you!' Sabrina said to Michael, smiling.

After a long day's work putting up the place, they were offered food and water, many other people came to the church

and joined them while others kept their ears to the few radio stations that were available on air, listening to news and alerts on what was happening and were trying to understand why it happened. Both man-made and natural disaster struck the nation and many other countries around the world at the same time.

The wounded were attended to and were provided a clean tent to stay in and were catered for, smoke was everywhere from near and far, and after sunset, they lay on the benches in the torn church building. Paul arranged a good spot for Samantha to rest, and they slept in each other's arms.

THE GUARDIAN

The next morning people kept coming to the church site from all around the city and other places, they were welcomed by Pastor James and his wife, Sabrina. Friends, families, and individuals from around the city walked up the hilly side where the church was situated. Pastor James, with the help of Michael, Paul, and other few men, opened a bunker where the pastor and his wife have stockpiled food and water. It was a big underground root cellar on the north side of the hill with screened vent pipes distributed above it. The preacher directed the men as they brought out food from the storage site, varieties of food were brought up and taken toward the location of the church.

Michael was surprised with what he saw. ‘The food must be rationed in order to reach many because I think we will all be here for a long time,’ said Paul.

‘No one is staying here that long, we will all leave when the time comes which is soon,’ said Sabrina, who was standing behind the men.

‘The good Lord has left a guardian amongst us, to lead us,’ she added confidently, smiling at the men but none

uttered a word, they moved the food they could and with the help of the women, they made fire, prepared the meal, and shared it to all the people.

Most of the women who were pregnant before the Ambassador took the entire children both born and unborn from harm's way, discussed the incident amongst themselves and to nearby witnesses that night, saying their wombs went back in and disappeared, leaving their stomach like that of a virgin, as most were saddened as they could not explain why or how, neither could they describe the experience they felt during the quick transformation.

Michael went down into the hole where the food was stored, he made his way down holding a flashlight and discovered that the underground hole was big and had giant pillars holding the soil above it like a bunker, it had lots of bags of food, water, and tents kept and stored among other things. From where he stood, he could see that the space was big enough to contain half of the congregation the church building was built to take and it had heavy concrete work, there were electrical wires running down from above through ground holes but there was no light even though there were signs of bulbs on the walls of the basement. It had passages

but only one entrance which also served as an exit. ‘I built it six years ago, took us months to finish it,’ said a voice behind him, it was Pastor James climbing down into the hole holding a search light. ‘She’s big, she got a big belly and we stockpiled what we could according to the instructions I received in a dream the night before the eve of the election seven years ago.’

I was going to tell my family members and my wife but I wasn’t ready to be called a madman by people I called family, let alone the world so Sabrina and I . . . did what we had to do after I broke the news to her,’ he added.

‘This looks more of a bunker and a bomb shelter than a food storage cache, you knew this whole thing was coming before you built this place?’ asked Michael.

‘Well, yes! But its sole purpose was for food storage!

As big as she appeared, what is stored in her won’t last us a week,’ said the preacher.

‘Are you kidding me? This can last for a month or two from where I am standing,’ said Michael.

The preacher looked at him, giggled, saying, ‘judging from what the Lord showed me and the total number of

people that will come here before we set off for the camp, this entire stockpile you see can only last days, Michael.’

Michael nodded even though he didn’t understand what he meant.

The men had a long conversation, the preacher expressed his fear to Michael concerning what happened when he saw a vision of the things to come years ago but ignored it until he had a personal encounter with God. He told Michael that because of how scared he got after he had been shown the revelation of things to come, he had to go warn the president of the country, who was also his opposition during the presidential campaign years back. He also explained how he approached his wife and how she smiled telling him she knew and it was revealed to her what he was going to do and what she must do beside him before she even married him.

‘I actually didn’t know how I was going to approach Sabrina with such news but I was amazed how prepared she was before I even had my encounter,’ said the preacher, who sat on a dusty bag of rice. Michael listened to the preacher as he praised his wife, Sabrina, and how strong she stood by his side when he took everything he had and did as instructed. The preacher said, ‘I was so afraid that after giving Him all

my money he would one day say “offer your wife as a sacrifice to me” but . . .’ The two men laughed and later went silent and the preacher broke the silence saying, ‘I wish and hope that I have been the man she had always and ever wanted and if not I hope she finds a place in her beautiful heart to forgive me. People laughed at me, they laughed at us . . . it never bothered her, and her faith strengthens mine!’ Michael later learned that the preacher and his wife, Sabrina, never had a child in the entire eighteen years of their marriage, the preacher told Michael that he was sent by God on three different occasions to warn the President not to attend the summit abroad, but the President refused to listen to him. ‘I went to God in prayers, crying for a child and he said “I’ve got something greater and better for you! You shall not feed a child, I shall use you to feed a nation” so he asked me to abandon the world before I shall be instructed on what to do next, it wasn’t easy. A man my age who was looked up to by many!’ said the preacher. Michael sat down next to him, the two men stayed silent until Samantha called out and they climbed up.

As they got to the top, Michael was overwhelmed by the crowd he saw who made their way to the hill looking for food

and shelter within a short time, he also noticed the sight gave joy to the preacher. The number of people who made their way into the church area was enormous and growing larger minute after minute, in the next few hours. It became clear that the food they stored would not last a week. Michael spoke to Paul that the three of them needed to move away from the city and find a safer and less crowded place, he lamented that with the current condition of things, rebels or guerrillas might attack the area or the people might lose control and no one knew what could happen because he was sure the food wouldn't last them long enough. Paul and Samantha told him again that they can't leave the city, not until they got confirmation from the Ambassador to move out of the city. So they continued to welcome people coming in and offering food to those that were hungry, some of the people offered money to be fed or served but the preacher told them that the food was free for all and not for sale.

While they were sharing food and tents, a young man paved his way through the crowd and met the preacher. 'I admire your courage, sir, I wish I had a heart like yours!' said the young man. The preacher turned but could not recall ever knowing him, the young man introduced himself and told the

preacher that he was a host of the people's favourite talk show on the radio but the preacher told him he had never seen nor heard of him.

The men sat down and ate together and the young man told the preacher that he knew about him for a very long time, that he used to make fun of him and other people over the radio, he told the preacher that for the past three years he had been having dreams of demons chasing him and in his dream he always saw a lighthouse over the hills and had no idea what it meant until he saw himself here. The young man and the preacher had a long conversation, the preacher listened to the young man's story, the young man later cried and ask the preacher to forgive him for the things he had said concerning him, and the preacher told him he can't forgive a man who had never done him wrong, the preacher told the young man that he could not hold grudge against him even if he had listened to the talk show so he asked the young man to go and forgive himself that he had forgiven him from the bottom of his heart and the young man left happily.

Michael stood watching, looking at the city. It was covered with smoke rising in almost all directions as fire could be seen from afar, burning in most of the buildings. The

rest of the people in the church prepared their tents all around the hill provided by the preacher and his wife, many stood watching the city too and could not believe their eyes.

‘So, it is true and it happened in our time . . . unfolding right before our very eyes,’ Michael said to himself, wondering and hoping it was all a dream.

Sabrina walked by and smiled at him, she brought some food to him ‘someone forgot to eat’, she said. ‘This is the last meal, scraped off from nothing,’ she added, laughing. He laughed, too, thanked her and collected the food. While he was eating, she sighed and said ‘what if I told you that tomorrow by this time, hundreds of thousands more would come here from the city?’

Michael stopped chewing the food in his mouth and paused, looked at her and turned, then took a sip of the water offered to him as she added, ‘and what if I told you that you are the one chosen to lead them, to lead us all to the camp?’

Michael turned to her again and kept the cup on the ground, his stomach made funny noises. ‘That’s your message from the Lord, Michael,’ she said to him as she stood. ‘Don’t worry, you will receive your instructions from Him, He said you are the only one He entrusted his own from this beacon to

lead us to the camp, there are about seven beacons of hope in every city and town around the world, this is the seventh . . . oh, how I so envy you! When I was shown what became of you when the glory of God came down upon you for the first time, I wished I was born a man, Michael,' she said as she walked away from him and headed to her husband. Michael turned and saw the preacher and his wife talking, smiling, and looking at him.

He didn't know what she meant or why she said so, but he didn't take her seriously even though he had no choice but to believe almost anything ever since his last encounter with the one they called the Ambassador.

That night, Michael could tell that the electrical power grid in the city was down, little fire on buildings and lights from bunch of cars stuck from a distance could be seen, the city looked dead from where he was sitting. His mind was distorted by the events unfolding but more disturbed about what he heard concerning Jana, his wife, from the mouths of detective Samuel and Junior. Michael pulled out a picture from his wallet, he was in the middle of Jana and Gillian, they looked happy together and in the picture Jana was kissing his cheek happily. He smiled looking at Gillian's eyes but wore a

straight face staring deep at Jana's smile from the photo looking at the ring on his finger at the same time. Many disturbing thoughts hovered around his mind, and it troubled his heart. Michael didn't know what to believe any longer, and under the tension of how things were the night Big Grandy and the rest were killed, and from the look of things, Samuel and Junior had no reason to deceive him with lies.

He was glad that Junior was still alive, and he needed to track him down. First, to extract the truth about Jana's affair with Junior, if it was true and then kill him either way the next chance they meet.

He could not take the thoughts out of his mind, he hated himself the more as the number of people that fluxed the church grew more than twice as many that night. Michael slotted the picture back into his wallet and put the wallet into his pocket, he then got up and went to assist some of the people in setting their tents.

With many tents set around the entire place and around the hill, the people in their great number were organised and were always talking about the dreaded experience that occurred and many were speechless. Some held onto their bibles and even non-Christians who said they have been

visited by the Ambassador found their way up the field and into the midst of the people in the church and were given food and tents to set up. It was as though the preacher and his wife knew the number of people coming and trooping to the church area, the entire field was with people in tents and some outside, many passers-by were also invited and asked to stay while the preacher and his wife kept moving around attending to the people as they preached to them at the same time.

Each tent was lit with candle or flashlight, both new and old couples, singles, and even the physically challenged were there. Michael later sat down under a small tree alone, his mind went back to his wife, Jana, again. Samantha saw him seated alone so she got some food and water, as she was about going to meet him, Sabrina stopped her and told her he had already eaten, so Samantha offered the food to another person and didn't go to meet or talk to Michael.

Hey, Michael,' said Sabrina, who came and sat next to him. Michael told her she worked hard and should go get a good sleep but she said 'no, when something is in your mind for almost twenty years and it comes, the next thing you want is for it to be over'. Michael smiled as if he understood what she meant. 'You, every man will envy you sooner or later. Try

and let it go, Michael, I know how much worried you are about Jana and what you are passing through. You are a king, and a king who would ride and rise from the shadows of dark clouds to meet the sun. Don't let the past hold you back, to err is human. Did you know, first six months of my marriage I caught James with his secretary but he felt bad and promised to change and change he did. The trust and love I have for him changed him and made him a better person, I don't even want to talk about it, but all I am trying to say is that true joy comes when you let go and forgive those who have wronged you, both known and unknown. If you can forgive the devil, do it if it will give you peace. Course it will!'

Michael nodded and said, 'I do not know if I can do this, Sabrina.'

'Yes, you can,' she said, smiling.

'No, I don't mean Jana. I don't have what it takes to guide these . . . people. I don't even understand what you're talking about,' he said.

'He chooses his own and he has chosen you! It is a great privilege and you better brace up and get prepared, for tonight you will have a visitor,' she said. She stayed with him for a

while and then bid him goodnight and walked away singing a song.

Michael removed his shoes, cleared the ground behind him, and laid his head on his shoes looking up at the sky. There were no stars and the moon was hidden behind the thick dark clouds that night.

‘Michael!’ A voice called in the dark. He stood up, turned but could not see anyone so he lied down again, but the voice called out again and he stood up wondering who it was. ‘Michael’ The voice spoke again and Michael followed it, and away from the people and far he kept walking, he came to a place where many fireflies rose from a nearby dry tree without a single leaf, the fireflies formed a pathway leading him into the bushes. Michael walked in between the two long lines of fireflies set for him to follow, he arrived at a certain place and stopped where the fireflies ended.

The fireflies flew up, some back into the dry surrounding trees and some disappeared. The place was quiet and then a tiny bright light appeared in front of him, glowing and increasing in size until it became so bright, obstructing his vision, all he could see was white, he looked around and all there was from far and near into the distance was plain white

and a much brighter and shiny figure of a man appeared to him smiling, calling his name and Michael answered.

‘Fear not, for I am with thee! Fear not, for the lamb that is lamp to thy feet is here with thee! Fear not, for thou art before the root of thy wholeness!’ said the voice of the bright shiny man.

Michael looked but could not see his own hands, legs, or body but he could feel them. ‘What do you want from me?’ Michael asked.

‘To lead my own through the darkness, the dark hour is cometh,’ said the man.

‘But I have got nothing, I am not strong, I have no knowledge or qualities of a leader, I am bereaved and I am weak! My heart is dark and filled with the venom of vengeance, I am not whom you seek . . . I am not worthy, I am a sinner!’ added Michael, whose heart spoke truth of its nature, he could not lie before the man that stood before him. A thunderous storm stirred in the surroundings with beautiful lightning that did not harm Michael, in the presence of the light Michael could not hide what was in his heart, he poured out his fears and doubts, pain and anger. ‘Yes! Weak yea appeareth, but I mouldeth thee and breatheth in thee

something greater, something only useful in these times and the times are nigh my child. So fear not, I shall utter my words unto thee and into thee and command my words unto thy hands and from this beacon yea shall lead my own. The words that I speak shall cometh down from the heavens and landeth upon the dying world, a sword in thy hands it shall be in the eyes of men but a light in the dark it is to thee. My words bring ruin to darkness and its seeds. Fear not, for I am with thee, when my words are spoken, yea and thy sword shall become one! Yea and thy sword shall be guided by the same thought which is mine words, I shall renew thy heart and giveth thee a fearless heart, and strengtheneth thee such that no warrior amongst men have ever seen, heard, or hath. A heart with such great beat like that of a thousand lions, even the beast of the earth shall flee at thy sight. This words spoken shall never fail thee for they have already come to pass in spirit, keep thy heart and eyes opened for when the time cometh which is already at hand, sons of men shall run to thee and darkness shall want to take thy life but fear not, for it is in that hour that my glory shall be brought forth upon thee and thy crown restored fully when the journey endeth. Bring they that calleth mine name and survived through the trials set

against and before them by the world to the camp, a temporary place I laid for my own before the gates are opened!’

Michael fell to his knees and said, ‘Lord, if my foes shall be brought to justice, my life is laid for the purpose you created it.’

‘Vengeance is of the Father, do not take into thy hands that which is of the Father, when the words cometh in form of a sword, yea shall be pure in thoughts and shall follow it, and be one with it. Protect my own, Michael,’ said the man who disappeared, leaving Michael alone.

The surroundings gradually gave way to the night, Michael regained his vision and noticed that all the dry trees around him were alive and green with thick leaves, flowers, ones he had never seen had grown and blossomed around him, and greener grasses under his feet, he ran back to the people and his eyes were shining and his shoulders have broadened.

On sighting him, Sabrina shouted, ‘the good Lord be praised!’

All the people came out of their tents and saw Michael and how he had changed and were astounded. No one asked him anything, the preacher and his wife were very happy, the

two then announced to the people that soon, God will lead them to safety using this man, Michael, and because of the current event that was unfolding, all the people looked happy and joyful, they felt as though the end of what they experienced had come and many went to their knees and asked the preacher to pray for them, the preacher went on his knees along with Sabrina and Michael, and prayed.

THE DIMMING EYE OF SUNSET

The next morning, the people woke up and ate their morning rations. Everyone was fed and satisfied, the men and women worked as one in keeping the place clean and healthy, while others were cooking food, the preacher and his wife continued sharing the good news to the people and at the same time sharing food. Michael at the time was on his knees praying when a great dark storm arose from the east, west, north, and south blocking the sun as fear gripped the hearts of the people. They all ran to one place and gathered, holding each other as the voices of women were heard screaming in fear.

A great and dark whirlwind made its way from up and down in front of them, sending the tents into the air and out of the dark wind came hundreds of demons. The people were frozen with terror, and their hearts got heavier as fear took their minds hostage. They have never seen such demons before and were all filled with great fear and disbelief. A great and wicked looking demon with four torn and burnt wings and a burnt eye stepped forward and growled at them, its voice shook the grounds and it spoke in a harsh tongue saying,

‘many of thy leaders and icons, to the dark lord they pledged their allegiance, they bowed to the great power of darkness and all shall have their place when the heavens are turned to ashes, now whence thy help come from?’

Most of the people were confused and did not even understand what the demon said as the sound of its voice made their hair stand at end. ‘Cans’t yea hear me or to the deaf I spoke?’ the demon added, and all the people were stricken with fear and many called unto God and heard no answer nor a sign. Sabrina shouted with courage as she moved forward and said, ‘Jesus! The lamb!’

The demon took a step back, waited a while, looked up the sky and waited as though afraid something might happen, then laughed and growled again saying, ‘a woman, to lead you? Oh, weak sons of Adam!’

‘Yes, and lay a finger on her and you would lose it!’ said Samantha, standing in between Sabrina and the demon. Michael ran and stood in front of the two women but the size of the demon made him to rethink his action, he tried to stand tall in the presence of such terror. The demon moved a step forward, looked down at Michael and then smelled his essence by inhaling the air around him and said, ‘Hmm!’

Michael, I smell fear in thee! I can smell thy heart of hearts, a man who cannot protect his own . . . protect this many?’

Michael was touched by what he heard and got angry. Sabrina held him tight.

‘Such disgusting smell of weakness! Death be upon thee! All you who chose to camp with the one you called the lamb,’ said the demon with a green saliva splashing through the torn flesh on one side of its cheek.

‘Devoureth death, terror, and greater horror never seen or heard awaiteth thee little Adam. This be the best chance for change, who do you serve?’ the demon added with such great pride, staring down at Michael.

Paul tried to drag the two women away but Sabrina refused, she stood behind Michael with great courage looking up at the threatening size of this demon as the remaining demons begun to move forward and closer to the people. ‘Jehovah is whom I serve, and I believe in his son, Jesus Christ, the lamb, the only way to the Father, the truth and the light, He walked the earth in flesh born of a virgin, suffered and died for the sake of our sins, his life was taken as a sacrifice so we’ll regain ours, and on the third day he rose and seated on the right hand of the Father! He is whom we serve

and on His side I stand . . . on His side . . . we all stand!’ said Michael in a loud voice.

‘In our grand number without a match against the flesh, death and torture awaiteth thy souls, little Adam!’ the demon added, staring angrily at the people.

‘You are speaking to sons and daughters of God, you filthy damned and wicked . . .’ Sabrina added but before she finished speaking, the demon growled and flung one of its huge wings, hitting both Michael and Sabrina, sending them flying into the air and they fell on the ground not far from where they stood. ‘God! God? Where is he? Show me he and telleth us whence yea hear he last . . . or the little . . . lamb?’ said the demon, who cried out loud, and it opened its mouth and cursed the name of God, then the wind got violent. A darker storm rose and many more demons began to surface from it, and beneath the earth and from the clouds.

A great number, dark and grey they appeared screaming, growling, and screeching their way through the skies, from afar they appeared like swarms of bees in such immeasurable number, many had four wings others had six and many had no wings but could soar. They emerged from everywhere visible and invisible to the human eye, while their dark presence

obstruct the sun's ray above, the earth begun to turn dark as though the sun was setting, the people watched in horror as different types and kinds of demons manifested in their wicked and threatening forms. Some had two heads, some with many heads and a majority had tails swinging up, down, and dragging on the floor with fire blazing, like the tongue of a furious dragon. The entire birds and animals that were alive began to fall and die, the demons were hungry and angry, they flew higher and below as if they just got freed from a dungeon.

The people were bewildered and raised their voice and anger toward Michael and some even attempted to fight him, but Paul stood by his side pleading with the people. They asked the preacher to call his God, the one he said would come and save them, others stayed as though they have given up and accepted their fate. Then a great and mighty thunderous sound was heard in the heavens, a great white light pieced through accompanied by a great lightning such never seen before from the heavens breaking the skies, piercing the clouds and striking every flying demon on its path, the light struck the earth and the earth shook, its impact created a large crater on the ground not far from where the

church stood. A shockwave with a sound so sharp sent both men and women and even the demons to their knees.

Michael was the only one that was able to stand, he looked at his hand and it was becoming brighter as it glittered like the light that fell, he felt his heart became lighter than a feather, his eyes shone forth and he ran toward the place the light struck the earth, and as he ran, some of the demons made their way through to attack him but on reaching the crater, he jumped and landed and at that very moment the light gave way, leaving a shiny bright sword dipped into the soil. The moment his right hand touched the handle of the sword, both Michael and the sword disappeared.

The surrounding became calm and all the people rose to their feet wondering where he went, both the demons and the people were mystified. ‘He left us, he has abandoned us!’ shouted a woman amongst the people.

‘He has been raptured and we are doomed!’ said another woman from the crowd.

Sabrina, the preacher, and all the people were silent and lost in their thoughts, they didn’t expect Michael to leave them, they expected he would stand and fight for them and protect them as the Ambassador promised them. The preacher

and his wife felt that something was wrong, they were all shocked as to why Michael disappeared on touching the sword. The entire demons turned their attention to the people and rushed at them like predators upon weak preys to devour them, and the people began to scream and shout calling God's name, and then another second thunderous sound was heard and lightning struck down with an eminent spark and a much greater storm, paving and clearing the demons both on the land and in the skies and to their amazement, Michael landed on one of his knees wearing a full shiny golden armour—a golden metal jacket with tiny tubes of liquid gold moving around the jacket, a thick golden tunic, a decorated belt round his waist, and a golden helmet which had two-inch protrusion above the rim protecting his forehead, holding a shiny sword on his right hand, his feet had golden sandals with golden straps that went round his legs and on his left arm a shield as shiny as the sword he carried. Light emitted from both the shield and the sword and so did the crest upon his helmet which glowed brightly blinding the demons and dimmed as it reflected on the gold that made up his dress, the shield begun to spin and so did the sword. The people and all the demons around watched as Michael jumped into the skies splitting

into a fearsome lightning moving at the speed of light through these demons both on the land and in the skies destroying them, only sparks of lightning was seen cutting through ruining all on its path, the spark of light penetrated through every dark clouds and the demons begun to run into the earth but his movement was too majestic and faster than their speed and the demons were in utter dread.

He rotated clockwise and counter-clockwise violently at the same time creating a dome of shiny light over the people, caging the people in and then turned to the demons. The demons were faced with such greater force that fear was seen in them. Michael swirled and packed the entire demons caging them in a circling tempest and sucking them out of the earth in extreme speed clearing the way for the sun to shine again, making a thunderous sound across the skies, the entire people shouted in wonder with their mouths wide opened as six other large thunderous sounds were heard all over the city subsequently.

Michael landed again on his knees and the people watched as the shield he carried transformed into a sword, now he held two swords. He stood up to his feet and walked toward the people who were in the dome that had walls made from a

thick golden transparent light and as he approached, the people moved back in reverence. Samantha, Sabrina, Paul, and the preacher rushed to meet him. His face was glowing and in a short period of time his face started to show and as they tried to embrace him, his body was hot, the heat could be felt four feet away so they stood aside smiling joyfully at him but he didn't speak and touched no one.

Michael walked through the crowd, the people observed in admiration as Michael walked between them and went up the hill top, he lifted his right sword into the sky and the people watched as two angels with mighty wings came down and met him. No one knew what they were discussing for it appeared as though they were talking and Michael listened, none of the people could go up because everyone was afraid to go outside the dome of golden light that shielded them, the people noticed some poisonous gas emanating from the ground outside the dome and all grasses, shrubs, trees, and plants withered, dried, and died. Then Michael and the two angels came down from the top of the hill and went into the dome that shielded the people and as they entered, the people were more afraid of the size of the angels' wings but the angels looked peaceful yet their presence evoked awe and

respect. The people noticed that each angel had more than two wings on their back and they were bright just like the colours of lightning but less shiny, their faces carried not a smile nor frown, everywhere Michael went, the two angels went along with him. Michael could not speak, he stood in the middle of the people and all men and women envied the glory shown upon him and were glad he fought for them.

The angels whose feet were above the ground called out to Sabrina and pastor James, and the couple came out. One of the angels soared and spoke to the couple but no one heard what the angel was saying to them, they only saw his lips moving and all the people could hear was a beautiful song their ears have never heard and both Sabrina and her husband, James, were seen talking but none could hear their voice as well. The only thing the people understood was that tears rolled down Sabrina's face and she was comforted by her husband, James, who was smiling happily. After a while, the two angels went back behind Michael and stood motionless.

The preacher and his wife gathered the people and told them that everyone should leave the things they won't need and should carry only food and water enough for the long trip they were all about to embark by sunrise the next day, they

would all follow Michael and the angels to the camp where the ambassador awaited them. Samantha and Paul went to meet the preacher and his wife, while all the people were busy piling what they would need for the journey, Paul and Samantha noticed how tears were still on Sabrina's eyes, they felt she was hiding something. They asked if everything was okay and she said everything was fine. The preacher told them not to worry. 'She wanted a piece of the action that shall unfold at the camp that's all,' he said, laughing. Samantha and Paul still did not understand what he meant but the preacher managed to make Sabrina smile minutes later. Paul and Samantha noticed that pastor James and his wife, Sabrina, were more intimate and didn't leave each other's side throughout the rest of the remaining day.

Michael could not say a word to anyone, not even Paul nor Samantha but Sabrina was constantly talking to the angels from time to time. She later met Paul and Samantha that day and asked them if her hair was okay. Samantha told her it was fine but she insisted Samantha helped braid it for her. After that, Sabrina wore a beautiful gown, she took her time observing the rest of the women close to her at the field, she called out to Samantha and then handed a beautiful bracelet to

her as a gift, and Samantha liked it and wore it happily. The preacher brought out some classic musical instruments and those who could play these instruments played it and the entire congregation danced that night, they sang through the night and in preparation for the morning journey, the people slept off but few stayed awake, wondering if that was the end of the world.

The skies were silent and the stars and the moon appeared dimmer and distorted. Michael and the two angels stood guard and watched over the people.

Samantha slept in Paul's arms and the preacher and his wife found a place and slept and so did all the people leaving only Michael and the angels standing guard.

THE JOURNEY OF JOURNEYS

At the break of dawn, Samantha and Paul called out to Sabrina but there was no answer. Paul looked for them in and around the tents and church area but they were nowhere to be found, no one had seen them. They checked the underground food cellar and other places they suspected the couple would go or be but could not find them. The people became worried that morning, a young man came running saying he saw them, the people went along with Paul and Samantha, and they met the preacher and his wife lying next to each other holding each other's hands yet they did not respond to call nor touch, the couple were found dead. Sabrina had the most beautiful smile on her face even as she lay lifeless next to her man. Paul took Samantha away from the scene, the people mourned and their bodies were buried where the altar of the church once stood.

One of the angels approached Paul and Samantha and told them they were assigned to take responsibility of the late couple from there, so Paul and Samantha now could hear when the angels speak. They received instructions from the angels and uttered it to the people and the people were once

again reminded not to carry anything apart from food and water for their journey. Samantha later made an attempt to talk to Michael but he did not answer her back.

The angels instructed Samantha and Paul to tell the people that they would walk for days before reaching the camp, that they would reach when the food and water had finished, and that would be after the people had walked for three days and three nights without food or water. The angels told Samantha and Paul to let the people be aware of all these and be prepared that when the food and water finished, darkness shall fall upon the earth for three days, greater than it did and many shall be tempted to turn back or compromise, they were encouraged to be prayerful along the way and those who could fast and pray should do so.

The angels blew their horns at the same time making a loud noise that went across the lands, and six other sounds were heard from afar as they echoed through the burning city. Shielded by the golden translucent dome, the entire population walked. Michael was in front and the two angels soared behind the people, they moved away from the hill and walked into the bushes passing many that died on their way.

The shield in Michael's left hand revolved with great speed, it spun so fast as if on its axis and sparked lightning, the shield expanded to a radius of a meter, exited from Michael's hand and remained suspended in the air, the shield swung in front of him. The sword in his right hand glowed from time to time as he walked majestically behind the shiny shield which led the way.

Michael and the angels were the only ones that could walk out of the dome and back, once faced with a greater threat, Michael and the two angels would move out and destroy whatever stood in their way. Some of the people who took large sums of money along with them began to throw it away, some even had diamonds, silver, and gold in the bags they carried but they all got rid of it one by one along the way.

The experience thrilled the people and was fun to most of the young men and that continued until they began to give in to exhaustion but neither Michael nor the two angels stopped nor talked to anyone and the dome moved parented by Michael. The two angels soared above and behind the people, flying, switching and interchanging their positions. A number of demons started to come out and followed the people but could not enter into the dome, the angels would blow their

horns at the same time after every three hours and six other sounds were heard, and as they walked, Michael left a golden footprint wherever he stepped on.

The people did not rest, and all the food and water they carried were starting to finish along the way. With time, the number of demons that crept behind them increased and their food had finished and none was left and along the way in their journey no life was seen, not a living animal nor birds in the sky was seen, no tree nor a single blade of grass. All the streams, ponds, and rivers were either empty or poisoned with thick venomous substance running on top of it with signs of blood flowing on it. They grew weak and the old were carried by the young and strong. The clouds were dark red and lightning and thunder stroke every now and then.

The day their food and water finished, a great storm arose and like a dust, demons came forth and surrounded the people as they move.

Michael and the two angels did not attack the demons but they stood guard all the way and only attack those who stood on their path, but the destructive power the shield and sword carried by Michael and the power the two angels displayed scared most of the demons and they stayed away from the

path of the dome and only walked beside it or behind it. None of the demons could go into the dome and the men and women were told to stay within the reach of the dome light that shielded them, from afar the dome could be sighted by anyone and it attracted many demons and many fetish people who could not get into the dome.

Their eyes saw many things and many new demons, more terrifying and deadly than anything they have ever imagined. There were flying demons more evil looking than the ones that first appeared. The demons moved around the dome wherever the people went, both night and day, on the ground and up in the skies. When hunger struck the people in the dome, these demons began to entice the men and women with mirages of streams and water fountains, beautiful fountains of wine falling from rocks, exotic foods and fruits of all sorts so enticing that it made the men drool, the wise ones kept their saliva in the mouth and fed on its juice. Those that were thirsty who could not hold on strong were fooled by the illusions and moved out of the dome and into what they thought were forests and orchards.

Many cried when their friends or family members who were warned against moving outside the dome opposed to the

advice and attempted to make their way out, these demons kept flashing false images of bliss, food, and shelter, giving them false hope and all who moved out were devoured without mercy, their souls were ripped and robbed from their flesh both men and women. Some who walked out of the protection of the dome were also struck with such fearful diseases as their bodies instantly decayed and turned green and the life in them is soaked out, it continued for three days and three nights, and many grew weary and too weak to move.

From afar the people sighted another dome just like theirs and were marvelled, with a different man in front and two other angels behind the dome. Neither Michael nor the two angels with them turned to look at the other dome. However, knowing what happened to those that walked away from the golden shield provided in the dome, the people remained within its cover and frowned at the mirages that were shown to them by the demons that hovered over the golden dome and many more who walked by the side of the shield. Samantha's growing baby bump became visible to all to see, she was the only woman among the women under the dome that carried life inside of her and the bump grew, it didn't make her weak

nor did it draw her back. She told Paul that it was as light as a feather and she could feel the baby kicking. Paul was going to be a father and was very happy and pleased with the miracle in their lives, most of the women in the dome envied Samantha and many were happy for her, they kept coming one after the other to see her and talk to her.

The golden footprint of Michael left a trail as they walked by and it remained permanent on the ground and every land he walked on, even on the waters and in the rivers and over anything he stepped on.

Most of the young men in the dome admired the grandeur Michael carried himself with and walked behind him talking about what they saw in him but Michael never said a word to anyone and never turned to look at no one. With the shiny revolving shield leading the way and a shiny sword in his right hand, he walked tall and fearless with great pride like that of a man who conquered the nations of the earth. Every step he took thudded with great pride yet humbled, his arms were strong and flexible, his chest stood out like a warrior that slew all the kings of the earth. The side of his arm that carried the sword was brighter than the other, the entire people understood that Michael could not talk to any of them, the

only ones that could talk were the two angels and only Paul and Samantha could hear them and relate it to the people. The people knew there was a great supernatural authority working inside and beside him and their hearts were glad that they were part of the people under its umbrella, whenever the angels opened their mouths to talk, only a beautiful song was heard by the people and the people yearned for more of it.

They came across many groups of people along the way, but these groups had no golden dome covering them and the people, fetish in nature, were seen living alongside other demons, and for every group they passed by, the people outside the dome would stand up infuriated and throw rocks and many other things at them, others threw and cast spells, like the sorcerers, at them but the shield kept it off. No harm came to those under the dome nor any weapon made its way into the dome that was man-made nor evil-made.

It looked as though these people they came across lived as allies with the demons, in their huge number, many of them walked naked and in their nudes. There were women of great beauty among them and men of impressive figure and vigour all sexually enticing and alluring. At first these people from outside the dome would appear hospitable, the mob would

follow them and try to lure them out and when welcomed with rejection, the people outside the dome would become hostile and would mock, curse, and throw weapons at the dome. The dome repelled anything that touched its surface and nothing came through it. Most of the people outside the dome wore precious stones around the neck, some gold, and many dressed in such sexual manner and ornamented themselves and their faces like gods of ancient days, many preachers, teachers, leaders, and men of high and low ranks were seen among them sharing a common interest.

If viewed from the sky, the dome moved like a dry leaf paving its way amidst a large army of black ants. The number of these people was enormous and they didn't seem happy watching those walking under the protection of the angels in the dome and every group they passed had a number hundred times larger than those under the protection of the dome, some of the people in the dome recognised a few outside and many outside were able to identify some of the people under the protection of the golden dome as well. Some even saw their relatives and loved ones on the other side, both sides could hear each other and their voices were filtered through. Many more with such unmentioned diseases were seen walking

outside, they, too, poured their anger and throw rocks at the people in the dome.

Some people outside the dome had visible demons hanging from their bodies the same way a dog hangs its head out through the window of a car, their bodies were like a room housing such demons they carried and somehow attached. The people came across another set of fetish and seductive people, most of them dressed in black, the people followed the dome until they got tired and stayed back leaving only the demons that moved like escorts around the dome still trying to entice the people inside the dome. Those who moved out of the dome were killed but the people could not understand why the other people outside the dome were able to live side by side with these wicked demons. After every three hours, the crest on Michael's helmet would flash incalculably within seconds and one of the angels would fly above Michael and the two angels would blow a wind instrument making a loud hornlike low tune at the same time, the angel would then fly back to its position, this continued from time to time and the sound was accompanied by six other sounds heard from a distance. Demons would gather along the path and cling themselves to the golden footprints left by Michael, some of these demons

even fought for a space over the footprints as though feeding on it.

No one said a word as they crossed and passed these groups of people. The people in the dome came across a big river and walked on its poisonous waters, they passed and their feet floated like boats on the surface of the waters and did not sink, the experience was so great, many jumped in a joyful mood hugging each other. Most of the miracles they came across on their journey even made some forget they were hungry and needed food to eat, that experience was one of the greatest of miracles many of them had ever felt or seen, most bridges they came across were broken and shattered but they took a straight path through the valleys and across the fields but didn't stop and nothing stood in their way.

They made it across many lands and met many different kinds of demons and even seen different kinds of people and other species that looked human but were wicked and they cursed the people and cursed God's name and threw wicked weapons at the dome but none came close to the dome, neither Michael nor the angels bothered to fight anybody outside the dome because none could get close to or into the dome from the outside.

The journey continued and the entire people were exhausted and almost gave up, and after they murmured and lamented, in the evening of the third day they walked without food or water, the people walked up a steep-slope terrain as though climbing a huge mountain and approached a giant wall made by visible giant angels standing thirteen foot tall each forming a circle that stretched far and wide round into a far distance that stood like a great city wall. The wings of all these giant angels were spread wide touching each other, there was no gate and from a distance, the people observed two other domes making their way in through the angels that stood like walls.

Michael stopped, and so did the angels, the people stopped too as the dome itself stopped moving the very moment Michael stopped walking. Michael then lifted his sword into the heavens and cried out, the golden dome imploded into the crest upon his helmet and the people were afraid. The angels then spoke to Samantha and Paul to tell the people to go ahead, so the people walked through quickly in between these standing giant angels and as the congregation walked in, Samantha and Paul were instructed to walk behind Michael into the wall, and they did as instructed by the angels.

On reaching the wall, Michael fell helplessly to the ground, Paul and Samantha rushed and held him, they helped him and watched as his armour began to fall off one by one. The shiny sword and shiny shield transformed into light and flew into the walls and the angels stood and didn't lend a hand. Paul wrapped his arm around Michael's waist, placing Michael's hand around his neck, they walked with him into the wall and Michael was only clothed by the tunic he wore which turned into a fine long cotton dress. Paul turned and saw how the two angels transformed into lights and flew into the wall as well and behind them, Paul saw a great number of people alongside the demons in mass making their way through the thick forest but they all stood from a distance, growling and yelling.

THE CAMP

As they appeared inside the walls, they were all startled by the sight that was before them—an evergreen landscape with fresh beautiful fruit-bearing trees, all the people that made it to the camp were running, picking up fruits from the ground and others plucked from the trees, fruits they have never seen nor tasted before. All the physically challenged were healed as they stepped into the camp, the blind could see and the deaf could hear, exotic succulent fruits were scattered all around the camp and many children were seen playing and some of the parents saw their children and were filled with joy, all sorts of animals were also seen, even animals known to be ferocious and extinct were seen playing with the children on the camp, most of the children did not even bother about the people who were making their ways into the camp for they all seemed happy and filled with bliss.

From a distance came the Ambassador who walked down toward Paul, Samantha, and Michael welcoming and embracing those that made it to the camp.

Some men came with oil and water along with him. Michael was then anointed with the oil and was given a drop

of water to take. He became fine and strong again and was able to walk and smile. Michael asked where he was and Paul, the men, the Ambassador, and Michael himself laughed together.

Gillian ran toward Michael and hugged him joyfully. Michael gave her a warm kiss and embraced her and both didn't want to let go. Michael noticed that all the women who made it to the camp had smoother and longer hair running down and beyond their waist and so did all the children. Everyone was looking like a new born, and a great scent filled the air, beautiful birds and breeds never seen were flying in the camp and on the trees singing beautiful songs.

There was clean water from many wonderfully flowing streams and the children who drank from it said it tasted like milk and honey combined, and the adults who thirstily drank from it could not compare it with any liquid they had ever tasted. The water flowing from rocks in the camp made the old men strong and the young men wise and quenched the thirst their flesh carried, many beautiful fountains were scattered around the camp, and all the children of all colours played together as one race not a single difference was seen or sensed amidst them. The people spread around in the beautiful

land and marvelled at its wonder, the atmosphere and temperature in the camp was very conducive and favourable throughout the entire land that they needed no tent to rest or sleep in, there were many people in the camp but all organised and in order, and many kept coming through the walls in groups and all felt the presence of peace within them.

The sun stood in one spot inside the camp, it shined beautifully as many were grasped by this marvel, looked at it as though they had never seen it before. Angels of many wings and many shapes, beauty, and sizes were seen in the camp and each stood guard of every human in the camp and walked wherever they went.

The Ambassador made his way to Michael and as He stared at him in the face, He asked Michael to discharge the last drop that tainted his heart but Michael did not understand what the Ambassador meant, so the Ambassador touched Michael on the shoulder and said, ‘yea shall be able to soar higher if yea grasp not to what thy heart gives refuge.’ The Ambassador smiled and walked away while Michael still couldn’t comprehend why he was told so.

A sweet horn echoed through the camp. The men, women, children, land animals and birds both on land and in the air,

ran in their multitudes to the direction the sound came from and gathered around all looking beautiful in their numerous radiant colourful dresses. The people were allured by the place and the men and women standing by their side and joy filled the place like the day the creator introduced Eve to Adam, their senses were heightened and all were filled with great knowledge and love.

The Ambassador stood and many of them sat down on the beautiful sweet-scented grass. ‘After a while, a short while . . . the final hour is come, and the walls shall rise to the heavens after the son of man fought and conquereth darkness, the glory of the Father shall be seen in the son of man and through men, when the war cometh, which hath already been won before time was first recorded.

Darkness and its entire army and its warlords and the tongue that birtheth lies shall lift their swords against the sons of men but then, the glory of the Father shall cometh through man and be made manifest and the beast shall loseth its power. The place were sons of Adam were created to sit shall be restoreth upon the realms that be to them both on the new earth and the new heavens. A place where no eyes have ever seen and no ears have heard shall be inhabited by them who

put their trust in the Father above who is seated upon his throne radiating the love that is in Him that is He to all that came to be from the beginning to the end. Be ye not fooled, for it is not about the place but with whom thy spirit shall be with up above in the place call peace, for it is a place where love and truth is seateth upon the glorious throne! Fear has no place in this gathering, evil has no root in this gathering for this is the hour of the son of man, the hour that the glory of the Father shall come forth through men. There is a body thy spirit shall inhabit that had no tear gland in a place where only love reigneth. A place I built for my own that I kept for the Father and all who loveth peace, and what is mine is of the Father, for what is of the Father is therefore of the son, and the son called thee his friends . . . thou art family of the son, the Father, and the spirit! My sheep heard my voice and endureth the journey of life set to test their love for peace, tranquillity, and love for the reign of the Father, who is love. After the battle of the last hour, which hath already cometh, I shall take thee all and these beautiful young ones whom I sent as peace ambassadors to the place reserved for my own, and there, only love ruleth, no pain, no agony, and no place for

evil, no death . . . for the end of evil has cometh! The truth through love reigneth from this hour not long,'

These words were spoken by the Ambassador who stood addressing the crowd that gathered around him and even those who were far and were not seen heard his great voice. His voice filtered through their hearts like a sweet perfume and it made their hearts light and warm.

‘Tomorrow, when the sun endeth its blessed age, it shall cut through the blessed horizon in every part of the world which is made to be as one in the glory of the Father, after the last seed of Adam walketh into the safety of my arms on the grounds of this camp and ones I set for all that are mine around the beds of the worlds. Seven times the battle is won when the final hour cometh and seven times the key is snatched from the father of lies and seven times victory remaineth victorious, and yea, my friends, are more than conquerors! My word shall be lifted as sword in the hands of man, and glory of the Father shall be made manifest upon the earth for the last time before the earth and all of its age sinketh into the abyss. The hearts of my people shall be renewed, they shall walk in glory forever and ever glorifying the name of the Father who shall be their only source of light

to and upon man from the beginning of the end, to the infinite new beginning! When these all come to pass, which hath already been recorded in the book of books man shall give everlasting praise and worship to the Father and be one with the Father through me, the way the truth and the light! For I cometh not to take thee to heaven, but to make yea one with the Father, who is love and light and truth! In the eyes of every man, there is what he thinketh and believeth is heaven, the son is the only bridge that stretcheth forth from the dying worlds to the living world of truth and light where the Father, who is love, reigneth forever.

Neither the Father nor the son above shall rejoiceth on the victory over they that hath faileth or the fallen or they who have chosen the ways of the fallen, the sons of men who chose darkness over light and they whose hearts yieldeth not to the truth cannot inhabit the place built for the lovers of peace. Once the trumpets soundeth on the last hour, those who refuseth to eat from the bread of life and those who walketh not in the path of truth shall be one with the damned. Know yea not that the words of the Father cannot returneth empty,' added the Ambassador.

The ambassador spoke with his eyes like a thousand diamonds hanging like two stars from the heavens at night, the people watched as his body gradually transformed into a beautiful shining light, every word that came out of his mouth was full of life and as bright as he stood in his majesty and splendour, all the people could see him and were not blinded by his brightness. There was peace, there was love, and there was total tranquillity in the camp, after his speech, his light departed and walked away from their presence and into his tent at the centre of the camp and all the people went back talking to one another as one family. There was no guard, not a single angel around the tent, all the angels were scattered around the camp talking with the people and others playing with the children.

Michael, Paul, and some other men were helping people who newly walked into the camp, welcoming them. He then saw someone who appeared to be Cannon Johnson Jr., with some group of men and women making their way into the camp, he walked down slowly hoping his eyes lied but as he approached closer, his vision got clearer and there came Junior.

Michael let out a painful cry and rushed toward him with such anger to attack him but was held by some of the men. His voice carried along with it a sorrowful and a vengeful aura. Junior stood motionless out of fear as Michael stretched his hand in tears but the rest of the men grabbed Michael and lay him down, no one could stop him from crying and the light in him dimmed.

Paul and Samantha walked up to him and tried to console him, but Michael walked away and into the Ambassador's tent wiping his tears, he fell to his knees speechless as his body rested on the ground shaking.

The Ambassador sat down on the ground next to where Michael knelt and said to him, 'to ride on your glorious wings my child, forgive you must! Thy heart harbours the past.'

Michael cried heavily, saying, 'you tricked me, why did you trick me?'

As the Ambassador lifted his hand to touch Michael, Michael moved back. The Ambassador smiled and said,

'lies cometh not from this tongue, and vengeance shall ye have, to stand for and fight alongside the broken hearted, to fight for the weak, to fight the good fight against the cause of man's agony, not against those used as devices to deliver it,

though the sword of truth shall pierce through the hearts of they who turned not from their evil ways, there is more joy and glory fighting the cause than the tool, my son!’

Michael was weak and overwhelmed, it was obvious he could not lay his hands on Junior but the Ambassador was not happy seeing the way the light was not well lit in

Michael’s heart. ‘I want vengeance, I need to satisfy that part in me,’ he added, and the light in Michael dimmed the more, his eyes begun to change and his heart became heavy.

‘Forgiveness is the key to thy freedom my child, harbour not revenge, it is of the Father! This war shall be carried in both thy presence and absence, but only one way yea can be free to soar high to thy place of purpose. Do what thou must, for even thy thought I planted in thee because I knew them before yea thinketh of them, as I have known thee before thou was conceived,’ this he said, looking straight into Michael’s eyes. ‘The children of the light are not fighting to win or lose! The battle hath already been won and yea have come this far and have seen the glory of the Father and beyond are greater things to come here and above promised by the Father,’ the Ambassador added, but Michael stood up and walked out of the tent and as he made his way out of the camp, some of the

people watched him go, Gillian called him and ran to him and he spoke a few words to her, kissed her and walked away, she did not cry as she watched him go. She smiled as she and the others watched him until he disappeared beyond the walls. Michael's absence did not affect Gillian in any way, she was seen smiling and looked happier than ever before, never worried, no one knew what her father said to her and she did not tell anyone.

The Ambassador stepped out and welcomed the men who got into the camp. As he approached them, they took to their knees in praise and the Ambassador fully embraced them all, the looks from the rest of the men made Junior feel unwelcomed, though he appeared humble than never seen before and he found peace. 'Embrace them, for they were lost and now found, they are your brothers now,' said the Ambassador. The Ambassador comforted Gillian and held her hand as they walked into his tent accompanied by many other children.

Paul excused himself into the Ambassador's tent, he was worried about Michael. Paul asked for permission to go after Michael to bring him back but the Ambassador refused to let him, telling him that Michael was far stronger out there alone

than dozens of the men in the camp combined and Paul stood still and said nothing.

‘Do yea fear thy friend shall change grounds? I am concerned about he than thou art, for one lost sheep I value as much as the ninety nine in mine hands, for where I cometh from, a hundred is but one as a thousand, and ninety nine is lost as one that was not seen. However, I expect understandings from yea not . . . for now!’ said the Ambassador. Paul interrupted the Ambassador, saying, ‘but, Lord, he is all alone out there, at least command one of your angels to go after him and guard him, there are many of them out there or he can’t survive one second outside the walls in the dark.’

The Ambassador smiled and added, ‘whom yea think isn’t there arriveth before thou thought of.’ Looking straight into Paul’s eyes, ‘I’m with my lost sheeps as I’m with the ones under my wings. Do not give up on one another! Pray for whom you cared for. Now, your brothers need your service.’

Immediately, someone called out to Paul outside the tent, Paul sighed, bowed, then walked out of the tent to attend to the one who called his name, but his mind was on Michael.

Samantha was in labour and many women have gathered around her to see, beautiful birds flew and created a beautiful temporary house covering her and some of the women. Paul rushed in smiling and within minutes she delivered and the infant's voice was heard all over the camp and all the women in the camp were delighted.

Paul was very happy and all the people in the tent were stunned by what they saw, the little infant had something that looked like a tattoo of a tiny golden wings on its back, some of the women ran out of the tent and told the people around and the news spread into the camp like a flood and many more came to see if it was true. Many women envied Samantha but they rejoiced joyfully with her as if the child was their own, the little baby kept a smiling face and rested in its mother's warm arms as it sucked from her blessed breasts with its tiny beautiful golden wings clung to its soft body, the child had the most beautiful feet all the women had ever seen and all the children went to see the new born, and all the birds in the camp sang a beautiful song.

The men's attention on the camp was shifting to the issue between Michael and Junior, although none harboured hatred for Junior but it got clear that many felt for Michael and

sympathized with him. Paul knew how bad Michael wanted to crush Junior, to avenge his wife but with the realisation that Junior has changed for good and was remorseful of his wrongs, it was no time to hold grudge. Even Michael knew that well enough to cry out seeing Junior in the same camp and so did all the men.

On the camp all shared a common enemy which made them all one, every man learnt to lay down his difference, grudge, and pride. Victims of rape were made to forgive and embrace those who hurt them and have genuinely changed from their old ways.

Women who were abandoned by their husbands, children forsaken by their earthly fathers forgave, embraced, and accepted each other. It seemed easier for bad men to turn from their old ways, than it was for the victims to forgive those who did them wrong but as hard as it appeared, all who made it to the camp forgave and embraced each other, with the exception of Michael who has fled the camp and far away from it.

The hearts of many that were broken were all healed, all those who walked into the camp, forgiveness freed them from such hateful burden they carried and everybody understood

why Michael reacted the way he did, but would he ever come back or would he join the other camp? For he must belong to one as every man must, as had all chosen sides. A great number, two-third of the entire human race sided with the dark ones and this was known to all on both sides. Knowing the great number that stood on the other side, none of the men felt outnumbered within the camp because of the great power they have seen and felt.

THE DAY OF DAYS

The night passed in the earth outside the camp, and in the earliest hours of the morning, the entire men and women in the camp gathered in a great formation around the tent of the Ambassador. A great horn resounded through the camp and the Ambassador made his way out of his tent and the tent became one with the earth. He lifted his hands into the heavens, the men and women were transformed and endowed, they all wore armour far more beautiful and greater than the one Michael wore for the journey from the city, they were all marvelled and filled with joy, their strength increased from within. Men and women all strong as one and in the nature God shaped them from the beginning of time, such glory never seen rested upon them, and the sun was yet to peep on the outside world. Like the way Adam was formed, the men were, and like Eve, the women were. They all stood as one in strength, in spirit, and power clothed in such great glory and beauty.

Their armour glowed and the reflection of every man's face was cast upon the armour of the man that was before them, shiny swords greater in power appeared in their hands

and every woman carried a light shiny shield each and all the men and women wore glorious helmets greater than the one Michael wore and were all filled with such unmatched power and stood as one great force.

‘The dark one waged war upon thee because the Father, the greatest of all in His love chose thee as His own, bestoweth thee with favour, and placeth thee above all. This day, yea shall prove to the minds that are soaketh in the inextinguishable fire of doubts that thy substance is of the Father, above the angels and far above everything thereof because yea were created and ranked in the image of the Father through the son, in the son, for the son and by the son . . . This day, yea shall fight as one and the angels set to guard thee shall stand alongside thee, they shall guide thy sword and direct thy sword at the heart of darkness, for thou art honourest by the blood of the lamb, more willed, stronger, and higher than thy foes from the beginning of time. This day, the glory of the Father shall be made manifest through the weakness of men through the son, for in the weakness of the sons of men, the Father’s strength cometh and is greatly shown! Ones who saw you to be weak, shall be made to seek mercy from thee. Arise, oh dear friends, sons and daughters of

the most high, for the days of the saints and sons of the most high cometh forth to be! Lift thy sword of truth which is mine words against the enemy of man,' said the Ambassador.

This speech brought a giant roar never heard of before across the camp, it shook the valleys, trees, and sent great ripples of wave through the polluted waters of the earth, piercing through the lands around the camp and the hearts of all men, women, and demons that surrounded the camp.

The Ambassador smiled at the crowd as his eyes shone like a million drops of water falling at night from a beautiful rock in a land filled with glowing mountains, hills, and valleys of diamond and silver and added, 'to the Father yea are sons, to me yea are more than friends and what the Father and the son loveth and valueth, the spirit accepteth.

Be yea not afraid, for this is thy epoch, the era of the reign of good and in a short while, I shall goeth and openeth the gates to thy new home, and shall cometh down in the splendour of the Father who sent me and taketh with me all my friends to where I have prepareth for them where their mansions lied next to that of the Father and of the son. Fear not, for in my absence, in faith yea accomplisheth greater

things, fight and remember that my spirit is beside thee, brethren.’

A voice amongst the men said, ‘Lord, what about our brother, Michael, if you leave us, would he fight along our side? Will he fight with us or against us, oh dear saviour?’

After a faint silence the Ambassador said in a soft voice, ‘some hearts heal quick, others take time but every good heart with walls made from the finest of gems shall stand in the midst of all challenges, he and all alike as him shall fight along the side that owned their hearts. I may appear absent in thy eyes in flesh, I am always with thee in spirit, which is truth.’

Some of the men looked at each other. ‘Know yea this, whom yea shall call thy brethren is one that fought alongside thee when these all endeth,’ the Ambassador added.

Junior, who was standing in line right in front of Paul, turned and gazed up at Paul who was standing tall behind him.

The Ambassador looked upon the great number of army of strong willed men and women standing in front of him and above them angels soared as guards and for the first time, eased his smile and continued saying, ‘this, too, shall pass like any other day to give way to the reign of the Father, the reign

of truth, love, and light. This day carries with it a mark, an end to manipulation and lies, an end to violence, bloodshed, and injustice and most important of all, an end to lies fed to the hearts of men. This day shall never be remembered after it has passed neither they that brought evil to the worlds, for days that shall come after this are days of joy, and days of peace. From the day that waited in the future not far from now to the very new beginning that shall remain forever, everyday shall be called Peace! For love, in its magnificent and wonder, love in its truest form and being, is what is seated upon the throne in the kingdom where we shall find ourselves after this day! So take and lift yea the word I speaketh and placeth in thy strong hands, lift thy sword and strike the heart of darkness, brace thy armour and strike the power that looked down on thee, for when the sun kisseth the mountains in the east, thy weakness shall be made a wonder in the eyes of the enemy! The word shall be fulfilled, for only in the eyes of men it is yet to be fulfilled but the time has cometh, equality has cometh, strength has cometh, and love . . . is here to stay.'

The men cheered as the women hit their shields with such great roar. 'Now go yea forth and thank the Father for this day, for this battle that has been won even before the sword of

truth pierceth the roaring winds of darkness! Pray yea, as never prayed before.’ As the Ambassador spoke, the men all knelt and prayed in their hearts, the women bent their heads in their glory and uttered prayers which rose as beautiful scents to the heavens.

The angels who stood tall as walls surrounding the camp turned and faced the people within the walls and began to sing gloriously as the Ambassador soared up into the skies along with all the children, amongst the children was the new born. Samantha’s child flew with its tiny golden wings, she watched him soar high with the rest of the children, laughing and smiling happily, holding their hands together ascending toward where the Ambassador went and they all disappeared as lights into the heavens, and Samantha, too, was endowed with her armour and received great strength, she walked and stood tall next to Paul, smiling. The angels who stood guarding the camp also soared and halt seventy feet above the earth in a perfect circle as they were on the land guarding the camp turned again facing the dark ones who were scattered like sand around the camp, laying a thick siege. The angels stood like great light shining upon the people in the camp when everywhere was dark.

The men and women in their glory turned, facing the valleys looking at the great number of demons, the fetish and wicked men and women that surrounded the camp, they were many and yelled like a great army, scattered like ants the earth puked from its belly, and they outnumbered the men and women in the camp a thousand and eight to one, the number of the dark ones spread across the land, the angels above blew each a trumpet and all the men and women stood still and so did the dark ones. There was a great silence for a moment that lasted not, a great wind arose from the east and the west, the north and the south, the winds clashed and the earth shook greatly, piercing the grounds.

The face of the men and women in the camp glowed, their armour was very light but strong, all ready to fight forth the greatest of all battles and end the war between good and evil and place evil where it belongs. The dark ones carried with them such hefty tools and weapons never before seen and diabolical tools of war both man-made and spirited, the dark ones in their mass had archers of superb strength and giants of all sorts on their side, demons with many heads and wicked limbs, they growled, they roared and some flew into the air.

In the camp, all the men and women were in their great formation, ranks, and positions stood guard fearlessly with a heightened bright spirit connecting each and every soldier to the ones standing around them, looking below at what was before them and were not shaken! As the sun cracked open the first stroke in the horizons on the east, the colours of their armour, swords, and helmets which was finer and outstanding than refined gold, reflected and shone upon the valleys and the demons. The eyes of all the men and women in the camp were like diamonds, their hearts beat as one, all shoulders upright and heads held high. In their midst, fear had no place.

The sun cracked open the second stroke and half way through the horizon with its ray breaking the mountains and hills that hid it, the glory of man shone intensely upon the valleys around the camp and the mountains blinding the dark ones and those flying approaching from above in the skies. Not a sound was heard, not a leaf fell, and not a wind blew from the east, west, north, or south. Only the sound of their hearts as one, beating down like drums from the mountain shaking up the valleys and lands beneath, the dark ones stepped back, confused in such great chaos but at that moment, no white flag was honoured, for the war had begun

in the hearts of men and this has been one thing they all looked forward to.

A brilliant smile found its way and tore itself through the face of a young woman standing in front that radiated across the entire faces of the men and women that stood against the dark army, she lifted her sword and hit her shield making a sharp sound with immense spark and shouted in a sharp voice saying, ‘for the future, for tomorrow . . . for good!’ As she charged ahead leading the entire people, all with their swords raised, all synchronized as one voice spreading and running down like a great thick avalanche of shiny gold dust down the lands and into the valleys where the dark ones gathered. The dark ones also hailed, screamed, and growled from down the valley up against the men like ants in their great number then a shadow is seen cast upon them of a huge winged man above them up in the skies. With a little gaze, it appeared vivid in their hearts that Michael was back, riding upon his wings and fully dressed in his armour! He swapped further ahead and with such great and mighty force, his wings cut through the dark ones down the valley with edges of his wings like a sharp blade, leaving a black smoke of dry bones in a straight line as

big as his wings cut through, slaying all who stood before it, his wings had such great span and strength.

This made all the men advance and jump into the air with such great leap in their mightiest glory as two wings miraculously appeared on the back of each man, the women and men evoked with great speed of flight, sight, and strength. Within a short time, half of the dark army was turned to dust. Every man and woman had two angels beside them directing the shiny swords they carried at the heart of darkness.

As the war continued, the earth shook and broke open and the dark lord emerged as a giant angry dragon from the earth with a great roar flew up into the clouds with smoke and fire from its tail roaring. The dark lord sparked and evoked a storm which was subsided and calmed by a command from one of the young women in her glorious golden armour. It provoked the dark lord and from where he hovered, the dark lord watched in awe and shock as half of his army was destroyed. ‘Kill them, destroy them! Devour them and rip their souls!’ shouted the dark lord who looked from where he hovered, he watched as his entire army has been defeated.

No harm was brought to a single soul as the war waged on, not even a scratch on the skins of men, they fought in an

organized manner, all as one and each eye guiding and guarding the back of the other. There was no fear in their eyes, no, not one, their race became one, their ethnicity became one and all their differences set aside, for the first time they fought side by side as brethren. The strength of every female on the battle ground as strong as the male therein, trails of smoke and black thunderous clouds cover the field but with their new vision and sight, the darkness was as clear as the day, the brightness of their glory blinded the dark ones even those that could fly and from the little that the dark ones could see, the sharp edge of the golden shiny swords and wings was the first and last thing they saw that cut them in half. The men swept all that was before them, annihilating all those who lifted swords against the golden army.

Men and women who chose to fight alongside the dark ones started to flee but there was no place to hide, for the glory of man had surrounded them putting them in the centre, reducing their number to nothing. The lives of the men who fought for the dark one and the demons rested at the mercy of the sword of the golden army. The faith of every man and woman determined their swiftness and skills in the battleground. Some wings were bigger and wider than others,

however big or small, all the men carried marvelous wings on their back, and the entire earth was at war.

The dark lord spoke and from the earth a great number of men erupted in the form of hot lava from the earth, arose but were destroyed by the men. The men and women in their golden armour enjoyed the battle galore as they flew up and above striking through the dark ones fiercely without mercy with their sharp-edged wings and strong shiny swords at the same time and Michael and Cannon fought side by side happily.

After a long while, the Ambassador's voice was heard, he gave a command with a great, beautiful, and glorious voice summoning both the gates of the heavens and gates of hell be made opened, and the entire angels blew a trumpet each shaking the earth beneath the feet of men then all of a sudden a portal opened from above in the heavens in between the giant angels that hovered above the camp and in the middle of it a great white light descended down to earth, shining brightly upon the earth and all the men, women, on both sides and the demons went to their knees praising and worshipping what descended from the portal and so did the angels. He that descended commanded a great force which struck the dragon

down from the skies and it fell like thunder, carving a huge crater upon the surface of the earth. It changed its form into that of a beautiful wounded man and back into a dragon and the dragon too bowed, praised, and worshipped He that descended from the skies. All these they did with such great joy and peace, and even the dark ones enjoyed peace and were soaked in its awesomeness, the entire world and all those who were present felt the calmness as the light embraced them all and were all happy.

Through the great light, their hearts sighted the Ambassador in his full crown and glory, his feet did not touch the ground. He gave a command and the men in the golden armour begun to fly one by one gloriously into the portal and through the gates of heaven and those that flew once their body touched the lips of the opened portal, their spirit ascended and their body fell down the earth and is swallowed by the earth. All the people and the demons watched, and all who remained where on their knees offered praise and worship to the Ambassador in his glory. The Ambassador again commanded the earth to be opened and the earth again vomited all that was in it, and brought forth many from within its belly, all burning like fire who also went to their knees in

praise glorifying the name of the Father and even the earth, the stars, and the moons were heard praising His name and that of the Father, and so did the mountains, every rock and all that was in the earth and the universe.

There was a moment of peace over the earth, the dark ones were glad and joyfully praised and worshipped singing ‘Hossana in the highest! Oh good Lord take us with thee, take us so we would worship at thy feet and glorify thy name and that of the Father our creator forever and ever!’ They were all filled with a great knowledge of the truth through the light and were filled with peace and love and their eyes were opened and the dark ones began to moan and gnash their teeth but the Ambassador broke each of their wings and the earth swallowed it all and they cursed his name and lamented in tears, all those who chose to fight along the side of the dark ones were engulfed and devoured by the earth as they begged for mercy, the earth opened beneath with great unsatisfying hunger, swallowing all on its path both the dead and the living on the dark side, the damned, men and women, witches, wizards, and sorcerers who refused to turn away from their dark ways and all the alluring tempters, liars, and seductive

people whose hearts were soaked in evil, and all their weapons both carnal and spirited.

Worlds crushed worlds and stars fell and died out. Some of the dark ones ran toward the edge, the gap between the earth and the gates of the heavens in commotion screaming ‘let us in, he lied to us all as he did yea please forgive us oh lamb of God. Our eyes are opened, take us to thy kingdom of peace and love, let us worship at thy feet and feed on thy everlasting and unmatched love.’ But they could not dare touch the gates as their voices were lost and not heard, for to them it was but hot and hotter than gates of hell itself, no one could save them, no one could hear their cry and their spirits and souls and their hearts were lit with great flame, for all who walked through the gates found their way in through grace.

Every man in his glory that flew in through the gates of the new heaven, their spirit departed from their body, their spirits were crowned and their bodies fell to the earth and into it and was swallowed. Their crowned spirits ascended up into the heavens and into the great light as their lifeless body fell down the earth, as all made their way into the gates of heaven, Michael and a few of the soldiers continued to fly gloriously.

The Ambassador walked upon the gates of hell and across toward the dark lord, and the dark lord was in the form the creator created him, trembling on his knees begging for mercy. The Ambassador lifted his hands then there came heavy hot-spirited chains from under the earth that had narrow sharp points and the chains had life and was alive, the hot chains sprang up like living cords and fastened and handcuffed the dark lord, binding and dragging him and making his body one with the earth. Strangled by chains, the dark one struggled to get free. The chain and the dark lord spoke to each other and fought but the chain overpowered him and held him tied to the earth and he was without strength.

Michael and the rest watched as the Ambassador lifted his right foot and placed it upon the dark lord's head, the dark lord transformed from the beautiful form the creator created him into a big red hideous dragon, with huge black horns, revealing its true beast form with its sharp serpentine tongue hanging out between its wicked sharp teeth. With its head beneath the foot of the Ambassador, it shrieked in agony and its wings broke and burnt, it swung its tail up and down and cried from the burnt pain which was caused by its contact

with the foot of the Ambassador. The heat from the light emitted from the garment of the Ambassador melted its horns.

It struggled to free itself from the intense pain because its wings were burnt and broken, the red dragon howled in pain, haled, and spoke saying, ‘oh great one, what is it about them that made thee love them this much, they don’t deserve the crowns thou has kept for them and neither do they deserve a place next to the Father! You have shown mercy to the filth you call man and none to me.’

The Ambassador lifted his foot off the face of the beast and the beast took a breath of relief, the Ambassador then bent down, looked at it with keen attention, gave a short smile and touched its face. The beast gave a piercing cry and part of its shell on its face burst into flame, it broke and begun to disintegrate.

‘I have shown mercy and sympathy to thee first even before thy fall, more than I have ever shown to all; these lies have cometh to its end! These are the words of the Father and must come to pass and that, thou knoweth as much as I. It is time for those you hold bondage to experience the peace and love of the Father!’ said the Ambassador to the beast, the chains squeezed and tightened the beast harder, calling its

name and dragged the dragon down to the earth and it whined and said, 'but they are not worthy of His love, if had I more time, even the ones you called your chosen would have sided with me, man will defile the holy grounds where the Father liveth . . . man is not worthy of the Father's blessings, man does not deserve your love and mercy nor the Father's, man is weak and foolish, who is man and why are you so mindful of him, that yea made him a dweller of light, truth, and love . . . one with the Father?' The dragon growled and cried with anger.

'Who art thou to say "what the Father should do with what He owns?" Yea knoweth that when thy rebel against the Father, thou loseth his love inside of you and so choesth to go down with many. Thou have been given time and chance to prove if thy reign is as peaceful as thou claimeth, thou have faileth from onset. The reign of the kingdom of the Father has cometh, and thou and those whom put their trust in thee are not beneficiaries,' said the Ambassador.

And the beast was given the right to speak the name of the Ambassador and it said, 'oh, Jesus, son of the most high . . . the Father knoweth this end even from the beginnings . . . why waiteth through the eons, through the ages to end it! Showeth

me mercy and keep me within Adam's former realm and lift up the condemnation cast upon me by Jehovah, the Father! Oh, dear good Lord, king of kings let me dwell the old worlds, close the gates of the new against me! Mercy is thy name, you reigneth oh truth, great is thy name and great is thy love, raineth it upon me and I shall praise thy name and worship the Father who is true, love, and light.'

'Oh how great thou were, created in unmatched wonder, I formed thee from the finest of refined stones but now, the total absence of the Father's love awaiteth thee at thy resting place, in the abyss,' said the Ambassador who whispered the true name of the dark lord and the dragon was humbled and was filled with fear, as it trembled.

Michael watched as the Ambassador commanded the left hand of the dragon to open, and it did, something from the dark palm of its hand flew up and unto the Ambassador's hand and was destroyed, life went out of the dragon and it squeaked and shivered. The Ambassador turned and walked away, making his way into the heavens and Michael noticed the sign of a tear drop upon His magnificent face like liquid sparkling stars, he smiled again as the line of tears disappeared saying, 'it is sealed with my name, it is done, Father!'

Michael and the rest bowed before him and followed him then their spirit separated from their body and was crowned the moment their body touched the gates of heavens, their body fell into the earth and was swallowed just like the rest! Then a great separation opened between the heavens and the earth. The earth ate all into its belly and all that was fed to it and gulped and closed its mouth as it turned into a molten fire with tears, then came forth another formidable mouth with tongues made of fire, fire never seen nor heard of. Fire stronger and great with such destructive spirit which opened wide bigger than all that was ever created and its fiery tongues lashed all before it and swallowed the worlds, the heavens, and all that was created into itself,

it was deep and long and without end. The earth and all the universe were heard worshipping the name of the Lord and they moaned and were pulverised and swallowed, the spirit of the earth and all that were, it swallowed and the earth cried and so did the moon, the sun, and the stars and the entire people who chose evil over good and war over love.

From above, the crowned spirit of Michael could be seen embraced by the crowned spirit of Gillian, then came another crowned spirit of a woman, whose crown was bigger than

Michael's. The three hugged each other happily and were embraced by the great white light as the gates of the new heavens were commanded shut by a soft sweet tender voice and the abyss that swallowed all into its belly was heard praising the name of the Lord with a beautiful voice, and Jehovah is His name!

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APPRECIATION:

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Thanks!

Richard Shekari.

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Other books by the author:

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