

# Junta



*The Real . . . Cosmic Conflict*

CARL HILTZ

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Carl Hiltz

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# Chapter 1

## *Lurking in the Darkness*

Quickly Allen pedaled his bike down the tree lined lane and into the safety of his garage.

Before Allen was born, his family had moved into this spacious acreage on the outskirts of Silver Bay Minnesota, a small city on the shores of the Lake Superior.

He usually enjoyed the ten-minute bike ride from his high school, but today he was late because of wrestling practice. He's trying out for the regional championship, its tough and time consuming but it's his ticket to college; the winner gets that scholar ship. But now this unusual storm is brewing and he had to make it home before it hit.

Made it!

*"Whew! What a bummer of a day!"* he mumbled under his breath. He shut the garage door, opened the one leading into the hallway and did his daily sprint to the kitchen. On his way he tossed his jacket into the hall closet, pitched his knapsack onto a shelf and gave himself a thumb up for making it before this annoyance hits.

He peered out the window above the kitchen sink and eyed the murky clouds rolling in from the lake. Often his family had watched numerous storms propelled inland from this giant lake. Frequently they were fascinated by how the wind drove the waves and watched in awe as they crashed into the huge boulders along the shore line then exploded into a drenching spray. Every so often a storm would be so intense that just for fun the whole family would put on their rain gear or bathing suits [depending on the time of year] and challenge each other to see who could stand the most drenching from the 'soakers'; it was great fun but something was different about this storm. The clouds were blacker than he had ever seen, the waves were higher, the crashing more explosive, the wind really intense, causing the clouds to spin and swirl in patterns he had never experienced before.

Hoping this would pass over quickly, he watched with great interest, then he spotted one clouds churning and forming into what remind him of a huge black lurking creature. *Get your act together, it's your wild imagination*; he thought, *hey, I sound like my dad*.

He always accused Allen of a vivid imagination.

Then quickly it vanished and more threatening clouds swirled into place.

Then another typical teen comment surfaced that would challenge any storm, I'm *hungry*!

Years of habit kicked in and he turned to the refrigerator, poured a glass of milk then reached inside the cookie jar on the kitchen counter for his favorite treat. For as long as he could remember, his mother always made sure she left a special after-school snack for Allen and Susan his younger sister. For a split second a weird outside thought placed itself on his minds screen, he wondered if he would miss them when he went off to college.

*One-two- three- four, that should do for now.*

*Crack!* A deafening crash of thunder cut short his reflection. As the wind screamed louder and louder, he realized this unusual storm was getting too extreme for comfort. A brilliant blinding white light lit up the whole house, followed by another ear-splitting detonation of thunder, causing the whole building to tremble and the lights to flicker.

Then, blackness!

Allen again became aware of his throbbing heart begin beating wildly within his chest. Even though it was only mid-afternoon, the place was black as midnight, even blacker! Allen couldn't see anything, not even his hand in front of his face. He inched his way across the room, feeling the wall for guidance. Not a glimmer of light penetrated the darkness, not even the neighbors' lights or the beacon across the bay; he couldn't even see the tall television tower with its blinking lights that always invaded the night sky. Staring into this sea of



obscurity he heard himself mummer; *what's going on?* No answer, just blackness.

Allen wished his parents were home, they had both taken the day off work to visit his aunt, who was hospitalized in a nearby city. Then a new sense of anxiety surfaced,

*Susan, where the heck are you?* His younger sisters' bus should have been here long ago. *Man, he thought this is wild.*

No lights, how does he find his way around?

*Hey, he just remembered, I've got that cool flashlight up in my bedroom; the one Aunt Cheryl gave me for Christmas last year.* It was plugged into the wall socket when he wasn't using it. When he removed from the socket, the battery inside would take over, give a great light until the charge ran out. Plugging it back in produced a recharge. It was his constant companion whenever he wandered around the grounds at night that he loved to do. *I've got to get it!*

As Allen turned in what he thought was the direction of the stairs, he was startled by a dim glow at the top; he knew the power was out. All kinds of thought flashed through his mind from some alien creature from outer space to a possible visitor from the spirit world. As the wind continued to howl and the house creaked, ebony shadows seemed to dance in the darkness with menacing gestures.

*I've got to get up those stairs.*

He mustered up enough courage to begin the climb. From years of experience, he knew there were exactly thirteen steps. Lightning flashes, gave him brief glimmers of illumination. Allen counted each step aloud, "One- two- three- four- five –six- seven." He froze.

*Crack! Boom! Jarring* thunderclaps repeatedly shook the house. The thought lodged in his brain; *I hope it's still standing when my folks get here.*

A new sound! Rushing water filled the air. As another lightning bolt lit up the yard, Allen spotted the largest breaker he had ever seen silhouetted in the flash; it was leaping up and over the shoreline, about to crash into the house! *Oh, God, please help me!*

Allen had heard people pray before. He even heard some people say how God had answered their prayers. Some other folks said they didn't believe in God at all. Allen had his doubts about God too. He had listened to people talk about God's love and all that religious stuff but even at his age when he looked at the world it made him wonder how that worked. He felt it raised more questions than answers for him. His life was pretty busy right now and he figured he had plenty of time to sort things out when he got older, so God wasn't high on his priority list at this time in his life. However, right now that suddenly changed and that short prayer appeared not only important, but the only thing to do.

Allen raced up the rest of the stairs, knowing he needed to get to higher ground before that colossal wave battered the house.

At the top of the stairs, he noticed that frightening illumination was coming from his room! He took a deep breath, summoned up all the courage he could, and peered in--- his flashlight! *Duh of course.*

He quickly grabbed it and with no time to do anything else he crouch in a corner, and waited to hear that huge gush slam into his house.

An eerie silence filled the room. He sat very still, afraid to move. The silence continued. All he could hear were the sounds of his own breathing and thumping of his heart that was threatening to burst open his chest.

His mind raced with questions. *Is the storm over? Is this a pause just before the final crushing explosion of the wave? Where is that wave? Am I dead? Should I try moving?*

He wiggled his fingers and toes. He didn't feel any pain, no broken bones. Then his mood seemed to change. The fear and anxiety was suddenly gone. He was filled with a peace. 'Strange' but that's a good word to describe this reversal in his thoughts.

Cautiously, but deliberately, Allen crept out of his room and headed down the stairs. At this point the silence was actually peaceful but also scary at the same time. This was a first time experience for

sure. He slowly beamed his light all around the living room. Everything seemed all right. Following his beam he proceeded down the hall toward the kitchen; everything seemed fine there too. He inched over to the dining room window and stopped, turning out his flashlight. As the darkness enveloped him, a new panic thought gripped him. *Whoa! I sure hope this flashlight doesn't run out of juice, or I'm in big trouble.*

Allen had never experienced this type of blackness before. He could feel and even taste the darkness, but was this possible, could anyone ever taste darkness, that was a new question for him?

# Chapter 2

## *A Shocking Surprise*

Allen headed toward the family room. Being on the lower floor he thought for *sure it would be flooded*. He rotated his flashlight beam to the stairway and tiptoed down the steps. Scanning the room he was shocked by what he saw; the computer monitor was glowing! *He gasped and wondered how could that be when there's no electricity?*

To check it out he turned off his flashlight and flipped on the light switch, hoping the lights would come back on, but nothing happened. His imagination kicked into high gear again---aliens! He inched his way toward the screen. The startling glow cast a dim covering of light on the keyboard and chair---he crept closer.

Startled, an image suddenly appeared on the screen!

"Oh!" Allen blurted out. He couldn't breathe and fright paralyzed him. He stood there, his feet frozen to the floor.

A calm and gentle voice came from the screen. "Hello, Allen."

He couldn't speak, then another "Hello Allen." Finally he let out a weak, "Who . . . who are you?" A lump had formed in his throat. He stuttered and stammered, shooting out one question right after the

other, "How . . . how come you're on my computer screen? How did you get there? Where are you from?"

"Whoa, slow down, Allen." The voice continued, "Why don't you just sit down in the chair and I'll answer your questions?"

A blast from the past streaked through Allen's mind. He'd always been inquisitive and often his questions would come in succession just like now. Sometimes his father would be amazed at the barrage of questions shooting out. "Dad, where did I come from? Why am I here on earth? Why is the sky blue? What happens when people die?" As he got older, the questions were harder and always led to deeper ones like "Is there a God? Why is evil in the world? How did the world begin?"

Allen had some good questions and they deserved answers, but often he wouldn't hush up and sit still long enough for his dad to engage him and it would often turn into a laughing fest as his father would double up with laughter and never get a chance to reply to 'the machine gun kid' as he often described Allen.

The science club at school helped him explore the answers to some of his regular questions but he was experiencing some real issues in his social life affecting him and his friends and now more than ever some heavy duty questions in that area needed answers.

"Sit down Allen." The voice interrupted Allen's thoughts and shocked him back to the present.

Reluctantly, Allen settled down into the padded desk chair and stared at the screen. He couldn't believe what he saw—a face with a slight grin and friendly eyes. His golden glowing hair was a jolt to Allen's senses, he pointed at the screen and blurted out, "Did you know your hair glows, and how does it do that? Old 'machine gun' started again.

The beings head bobbed. "That's why your computer screen lights up."

Allen jaw dropped in surprise. The questions stopped.

"If you're wondering who I am and where I come from, I'll tell you." With arched eyebrows, the golden haired one continued, "My name is Mike."

"Are you for real?" Allen leaned closer to the computer screen.

"I 'm real, more real than you'll ever imagine. I've been sent here on a mission by my sovereign Ruler, His name is Theos." Mike's voice was very soft but commanding attention in its tone. "He's supreme in the Kingdom I come from."

Allen scratched his head in disbelief. *I must be dreaming. This is stupid and corny.*

Mike squinted and his eye brows became wrinkled. "You may be thinking this is corny or stupid, but I assure you it's not."

"Hey, how do you know what I'm thinking?" Allen shot back.

"Oh, you'll discover there are many things about me you don't and won't understand."

Allen was impressed by the mystery associated with Mike's words and even more fascinated by this being talking to him on the computer screen. He sat up a little taller and with his strongest voice said, "What do you want with me?"

"You have been chosen!"

Images of aliens danced through Allen's head again. Was this some creature from outer space that planned on kidnapping him and whisking him away in a spaceship? He'd seen startling programs about UFOs and studied about them in science class. "You aren't going to take me to your leader, are you?" Man he thought that's a different question from what an alien would ask, all the movies had them saying 'take me to your leader'.

"Well, maybe . . ." Mike pursed his lips and added "You've been chosen to discover and expose the realm of Vulpine."

Allen couldn't understand what he was hearing. "Who", he asked?

"Vulpine."

"Who's that?"

"You'll see." Mike blinked and nodded his head; "I want you to do something for me."



As usual Allen's mind began to race and he could feel the pulse in his neck begin to throb. *He's trying to trick me into doing something that will turn me into a mummy or a zombie or some other kind of monstrosity.*

Mike smirked. "Relax, I'm not going to do anything to hurt or change you."

In a tone of exposure Allen mockingly said "Oh! I forgot you can read my mind, right?" He wanted to show off his smarts; no one was going to fool him. But Mike just carried on with a smile and then asked Allen to "Place your hand on my face displayed on the monitor."

Allen hesitated. *Whoa! Now wait a minute!*

"Come on, Allen. Get with the program. Allen smiled to himself, this guy's kinda cool he thought but he still hesitated. "Go ahead place your hand on my face." Mike's voice was tender but pressing.

Allen wasn't in a big hurry to be killed or turned into the next Frankenstein. *I bet if I touch the screen, a giant surge of electricity will shoot through my body and I'll become paralyzed, unable to move for the trip I'm about to take in that spaceship that's hovering above my house right now.*

"Allen, I'm waiting."

Allen raised his hand slowly toward the screen. He knew he had the power to stop at any time, but he was fascinated with this new

experience. As his hand inched nearer and nearer, he squeezed his eyes tightly shut, contact was made, a tingling sensation shot through the tips of his fingers and his hand. Surprised, Allen opened his eyes. His hand and arm were moving into the screen he felt a draw like a giant vacuum cleaner tugging on his arm. His whole body was slowly moving toward the monitor. As his arm and shoulder entered the screen, he could see his head would soon bump into the glass too. He was speechless and felt helpless to stop what was happening, and then that strange peace swept over him.

*Swoosh!* In seconds his whole body slipped through the monitor and he found himself in a new and astonishing surrounding. “Ye Gads!” spilled from his lips.

Allen was atop a high knoll surrounded by a spectacular view.

Rolling hills, flora in brilliant shades of blues, yellows, reds, oranges, whites, and some colors he had never seen before, it stretched as far as his eye could see. He took a deep breath looked up and stared at some soaring trees so high he couldn't see their pinnacles all displaying perfect leaves, brilliant in their intensity and perfectly contrasting with other vivid evergreen giants. In the distance he could see a waterfall and hear it's rumbling as it seemed to flow right out of heaven, cascading downward with a huge rainbow painted across its crest.

He reached out and stroked the petals of what looked like a beautiful rose growing wild beside the path he was standing on, it was so soft—he could hardly feel it. Then he realized all his five senses were acute beyond anything he had ever experienced. The aroma was fresh and clean, his sight was keen and he could see for an incredible distance, his touch, yes that rose, he was able to feel the delicately of its petals and finally his hearing; he seemed to be able to pick out every birds song and many other sound individually as he viewed them. Astonishing, amazing, unbelievable, words of description flooded his mind. He just stood there.

"Welcome to the Realm Beyond Time, Allen." Mike's booming voice matched his huge stature and enormous eyes. For the first time Allen gazed at a full view of Mike. He stood at least nine or ten feet tall and wore a flowing emerald-colored robe, trimmed with gold around the collar and the bottom hem. A gold sash dangled from his waist, matching the golden sandals on his feet.

"Your hair still glows." Allen smiled and pointed to Mike's head. "Is that a halo? Are you an angel?"

Mike chuckled. His warm laugh made Allen feel safe and secure. "You'll have plenty of time to find evidence to make up your own mind about a lot of questions you're going to ask."

"It's a good thing there's plenty of time because I have tons of them." Allen stood there shaking his head in disbelief.

Mike tilted his head in Allen's direction. "Let me take you for a walk and try to explain where you are and why you are here."

"Sounds like a plan to me." As Allen continued his gaze of the landscape, his bewilderment never wavered.

Mike reached out and clutched Allen's hand.

"Your hands remind me of King Kong's!"

"Who," Mike wrinkled his nose.

Allen's voice dropped to a whisper. "Oh, never mind."

*I'm not much for holding hands but I'm not going to argue with this guy.*

Mike motioned to Allen with a nod of his head and directed, "let's go over here." The duo headed off down a roadway stretching toward a valley directly in front of them.

Allen felt incredibly small next to this giant. As he looked down at his feet, he couldn't help but notice how smooth and shiny the road was. "This is the softest road I've ever walked on. It feels as if your feet don't touch the ground."

"That's because they don't," Mike chuckled.

Allen squinted as he looked a little closer. *Wow! I'm floating, Cool!*

Mike studied Allen's face. "You're suspended above the road."

"Right, my thoughts again right?" Allen heaved an exaggerated sigh.

Mike giggled again at Allen's reaction. Allen couldn't help but join in when he heard the giant giggle. *Mom and Dad are never going to believe this!*

# Chapter 3

## *The Meeting*

Mike stared at Allen then raised his eyebrows and asked, "Remember how I told you that you were chosen?"

Allen nodded a Yes.

"Well, here's why." Mike paused. "Do you remember when you came home from school today and made a remark about it being a bad day, I believe you called it a 'bummer.'?"

A frown creased Allen's face. "Yep, I sure do."

"Do you remember what happened that caused you to make that remark?"

Allen cleared his throat before he answered Mike's question. "It's kind of involved. Are you sure you want to hear this?"

Mike's eyes widened. "Please do."

Allen scanned every crease in Mike's face. *He seems really interested in what I have to say. I may as well blurt it out, even though I know if I told it to other people, most would laugh at me.*

"Well, a bunch of my friends and I hang out together. It's really cool because we're all different and yet get along well. We have great fun

going places and doing things—like movies, school events, gabbing about guy stuff or whatever else comes up. Some of us belong to the same clubs or play on the same sports' teams. My favorite sport is wrestling. The guys usually stick together and the gals often have slumber parties and stay up all night talking about us guys." When Allen heard Mike giggling, he sensed he was on a roll and continued, "There are some things that go on, and if parents knew about them, it would mean trouble for some in the gang."

"And . . ." A concerned frown crossed Mike's face. Allen wondered if he should say any more. "Go ahead. Tell me more" encouraged Mike.

*He probably knows what I'm thinking anyway* thought Allen, Mike smiled.

"A while back a new girl named Stacy started attending our school. She was in one of my classes, very friendly, and seemed to get along well with everyone. Soon things began to happen that have ruined many of the friendships."

Mike shook his head. "Go on."

"Stacy invited some girls over to her house. She introduced them to weird stuff like witchcraft, witches, and wizards. She even showed them how to cast spells on people. The girls were fascinated by it all and decided they wanted us guys to be included. So it was arranged

and one night we all gathered at her house. At first no one believed in all the hocus pocus, but as time went on we all thought there might be something to it." Allen paused and shifted nervously back and forth. "Are you sure you want to hear this?" Allen wondered why he was doing this, what would Mike care about it?

Mike gave a curt nod, "absolutely. Please continue."

"That night about a half-dozen of us went over to Stacy's house. We told our parents we were going to do homework assignments over there.

When we arrived, Stacy's took us downstairs to a special room in their basement, it was quite dark. It's only light came from candles. An overpowering odor of strong incense burned my nostrils and I found it hard to breathe. Huge posters with strange symbols were displayed on the walls, also very large and spectacular pictures of outer space. Looking at them actually gave you the feeling you were traveling in space. It was eerie; the pictures danced on the walls as the candles flickered, giving a kind of hypnotic experience. Stacy motioned for us to sit down.

In the middle of the room was a low round table. Each of us was given a pillow and directed to sit down around the table; the gang became very quiet. Stacy told us how great it was that we could all get together and assured us 'we're going to have a great time'. Everyone



kinda chuckled a little bit, but down deep inside we were all wondering what's going to happen next?

Mike exhaled a huge sigh. "HmMMMM, I see."

Allen blinked twice. His lip twitched and he carried on. "Stacy asked if we believed in a spirit world. Most of us said we believed there was a something out there, maybe a heaven or some other realm inhabited by beings, maybe even a hell for those bad dudes; that got a chuckle, except for Bill Morgan. He called us all superstitious and insisted once you die—that's it. There's no afterlife, no other dimension, that's all bunk. This discussion went on forever with Bill becoming quite emphatic about his beliefs."

Mike's mouth turned down at one corner. "I can't say I'm surprised by all the different opinions. What did Stacy believe?"

"Stacy finally interrupted and said she didn't know about heaven and hell and all the stuff we learned in Sunday school and church, but she believed in a spirit world. She actually had some contact with it. At that statement we all sat in an awkward silence for a few seconds until Mary Patterson questioned Stacy and accused her of making this stuff up."

"I bet Stacy didn't like that" injected Mike.

"Stacy didn't budge. She sat up real straight and said in a forceful voice, "Yes and my folks believe in it too." Then she went into this long

spiel about how they believed there are spirits and gods of earth and nature, beings that protect and guard our environment; spirits that ride the wind and take up residence in animals. It sounded like something out of a Hollywood horror movie.”

Mike rubbed his chin. “Were you nervous?”

“Kind of but we wouldn’t show it, we were curious too, especially when she told us how she spends a lot of time learning more about a world she called the occult. It seems all these areas of the spirit world are tied together.”

“Did anyone else challenge her opinion?”

“Yes, Conny did. She had been very quiet during the whole discussion, but she came right out and confronted Stacy, telling her she had heard it was risky maybe even dangerous to be drawn into that occult stuff.” Allen raked his fingers through his hair. “Stacy didn’t appreciate Conny’s view at all. She continued ranting, lecturing us about how religious people just want to keep people from understanding the spirit world and won’t approve of any contact or communication with the spirits of another world.”

Mike whistled low. “Wow! Do you think any of your friends talked to their families about these meeting?”

Allen’s eyebrows shot up, “No way. Stacy told us it probably wasn’t a good idea to discuss it at home because they might not understand

and stop us from getting together for some fun. She was so convincing that everyone agreed.

“But what happened next really bent my mind.

Stacy said, “Just for the heck of it, let’s see if we can contact what we call The Other Side. Okay?”

“When discussing this later some said they had a ‘hold it’ go off inside their head but peer pressure won out and we decided to go ahead and see if there was anything to it.” She had never gone this far with the girls before.

All during this conversation with Mike, Allen continually wondered whether he should share all the details with Mike.

*What am I doing? Why am I telling him all this? How would he know anything about this.....there goes ‘machine gun again.*

He stopped and yes there was that look from Mike again; the one where he smiles, nods his head that signals that ‘I know pose’ when he appears to be reading minds.

# Chapter 4

## *Trouble from Beyond*

“Go on.” Allen relaxed as Mike calmed his fears and encouraged him to tell what else took place.

“Stacy lit a couple more candles. They made a cloudy mist that filled the room. Then she asked us to close our eyes and quietly chant the word ‘Come’ and we weren’t supposed to stop until she told us to. She started and everyone joined in.

I was curious and peeked to see what she was doing. She placed a gold chain with a huge red gem attached high over her head and held it there. The flames of the candles danced with a strange glow off her face and the brilliant jewel. While we chanted, Stacy spoke quietly. I couldn’t understand what she was saying, but it sounded real strange to me.” Allen nervously tapped his foot on the ground.

“Did Stacy see you open your eyes?” Mike paused and looked at Allen.

“I don’t know for sure, but she did speak out, ‘keep your eyes shut’! I was spooked! I shut my eyes tighter and joined in the chant. As I was fascinated after a time I couldn’t help but peek again. She

continued to chant, and the volume grew louder and louder. At the same time she was swaying back and forth with her hands still held up over her head. This went on for forever. I was getting a little tired of the whole thing and wanted to slip out, but I forced myself to carry on.

Then the weirdest thing happened; I felt a slight breeze hit my legs under the table, but I didn't feel it on my face. I thought someone must have walked into the room. I covered my eyes with my hands so not to be seen looking but nobody was there. The breeze kept rippling over my lower body. Then it stopped. There was a dead silence for quite a while, quietly Stacy whispered, "Everyone, open your eyes, but remain silent!" We all sat there half fatigued and half-curious. Stacy asked us if anyone sensed anything. I didn't say a word. I wanted to see if anyone else felt what I did. Everyone looked at each other waiting for someone to reply."

Mike's expression never wavered. "Did anyone say anything?"

"Bill shook his head no and everyone else agreed with him. Stacy looked at me, waiting for my reaction: I took deep breath and blurted out what happened. Bill immediately accused me of making it all up."

"What did Stacy do?" Mike inquired.

"She told us that sometimes only one person senses anything."

Allen pressed his lips together. "I asked her if it was some kind of spirit

being or live presence? Before she could answer, Bill scoffed at me again and mocked “it’s all in your imagination, get real man.”

“I didn’t know what to do so I split.

Two hours had passed and most of us needed to head for home, we had school the next day. My folks gave me a hard time when I came home late, but for some of the kids they said it didn’t matter, I know my Mom and Dad care about me, even though I rant and rave sometimes about their controlling my life. We’ve been known to get into wicked arguments and won’t speak to each other, sometimes for days. Sooner or later things cools down, we talk about it. My dad always refers to it as a ‘sulking season’ and we often get a laugh out of it. When I look back it’s mostly my fault. I’ve different ideas than they do. When I smarten up, I know they’re just trying to do what’s best for me, still I can’t wait for the day when I can make my own decisions. But for now, I just have to hang in there as college is soon coming.

Mike patted Allen’s arm and prodded. “Do you think Stacy encourages showing respect to parents?”

Allen folded his arms across his chest and let out a long whistle, “no way. Try this one on. I overheard a conversation between Stacy and another girl who said she was having big time trouble with her father. Stacy asked her if she had ever considered casting a spell on her father.”

“Really,” Mike eyes grew big.

“I knew right then and there something wasn’t right—just seemed this magic spell stuff might go way too far.” Mike stepped closer to Allen, placing his huge arm around his shoulder. “I prize your honest sharing Allen; it will really help for our talk later. Anything more that might shed light on this incident.”

“When I told some of my friends at school what happened to me at Stacy's house, most of them thought I was losing my marbles.”

“Losing your what,” inquired Mike, “you know my mind.” “Oh sorry Allen, that didn’t register with me. Hey man, sorry for the jargon, I’ll try to use angel talk. Mike thought that was really funny, gave a hearty laugh and gave that usual gentle pat on the back which brought the conversation back to the subject at hand.

“Yah, some of them thought I was just trying to make out. One of my buddies said it right out; your trying to get on the cool side of Stacy. I decided right quick to let the whole thing die”

*“Make out with Stacy, let the whole thing die; I think I understand.”* Mike eyes twinkled as he gave a slight sigh, *all these new terms he mumbled under his breath.*

“Here's the climax, Mike. A mess of things happened that bugged me, but one especially grabbed my brain.” Allen motioned his hands up in the air. “A guy named Jason was having trouble with one of his

teachers. He wasn't part of our gang, but somehow he found out about these 'spooks'; that's what we called the parties at Stacy's house: Jason had convinced Stacy that he really wanted to learn more about the 'spirit world.' Now Jason hated his teacher—Mr. Gibson. Jason was fuming because he'd flunked him in a couple of subjects, and that could lead to some big time consequences later that year. He was determined to persuade Stacy to teach him how to cast a spell on the 'teach', as he called him."

Mike lifted his chin a little higher and asked, "So did she?"

Allen's chest quivered as he thought back to what happened next. He shared how he had felt a connection with Stacy since the night he felt the breeze blowing over him at her house, and as often as he could, he attended the spooks but never told his parents.

Allen continued. "Man this spook was different from any other night and really got me trying to sort things out. We chanted as Stacy did her usual hocus pocus, but on this night a new thing was added—something I had never seen before. Stacey's mom was there because Stacey wasn't exactly sure how to cast a spell like Jason wanted. They mixed some liquids together and made a potion. It was real creepy."

Mike's face tightened. "A potion, that was different."



“Yeah, I felt super uneasy when I overheard Jason say to them, ‘Can you mess him up real good?’ A chill gripped my back. I couldn't believe it! How could anyone hate someone else that much?”

“Did Stacy’s mother agree to that?” Mike’s eyes widened in astonishment.

“Well, she told Jason she didn’t think she could do that, but they could place a hex on his teacher and let the forces deal in their own way. She said something about not wanting to have the full extent inflicted. I didn't know what she meant by that.”

Mike contemplated Allen’s words for a moment then motioned to continue the story.

“Stacy’s mom asked Jason if just getting even was OK and Jason nodded his head. Then, Stacy’s mother put on special clothes and cast what she called an ‘avenge spell’ on the teacher. I can’t remember all the antics she went through but some chants, the handling of some objects, mixing of liquids plus some hand motions, it took quite a while. I watched with all kinds of questions but when the spell bit was over, I wanted to split because of the time but it was hard I just couldn't pull myself away from what was happening. It was so far out and seemed so cool.

On my way home I kept wondering, is this stuff for real?" Allen frowned and stroked he sleeve in a manner that indicated he wished to brush away the memory.

"And what did you decide? Do you think casting spells is for real?"

Allen fidgeted. "Well, here's the mysterious and really scary part. Two days later Mr. Gibson was in a terrible car accident and was almost killed. In fact, he's still in a coma and the accident was three weeks ago. Is that a coincidence or what?"

Allen didn't give Mike time to respond. His thoughts were on a roll.

For me this whole thing seems to have gone too far. More and more kids at our school are getting involved with Stacey's spooks. Some are even starting some on their own. They cast spells, communicate with the dead, and talk with demons, evil spirits, imps, and all kinds of dark beings; at least they say they do,"

Mike's shook his head; you could see his feelings were heavy.

"That's not all; some of the kids are searching the Internet for websites about how to get even more specific results. One guy is so caught up in it that he calls himself 'The spirit Stocker'. He spends hours experimenting and learning.

One of Allen's eyebrows slid up. "Some kids are getting in arguments with their parents for dabbling in it, other are saying the

whole thing is just harmless and that kids should be allowed to have a fun time. They think it helps keeps the kids off the streets.”

There was a pause and Mike wanted to say something but he wanted to make sure Allen had everything off his chest. He looked deep into Allen eyes and said, “anything you want to add, this is heavy my friend.

“Like I said this is a bummer. Many parents seem to be as confused about it as their kids.” Allen’s eyebrows shot up again. “All I know is these spooks and what goes on at them has completely messed up our gang. When some of us do get together now, all we talk about is this hocus-pocus stuff.”

Mike’s eyes widened with alarm. “You sure have a lot to think about.”

Allen leaned in close to Mike. "Do you know anything about this stuff?"

Mike rubbed his chin. "Well, I have had some experience with it."

“Well, it’s your turn to talk.” Allen’s voice was firm. “I’m all ears.”

# Chapter 5

## *Startling Introduction*

Allen glanced up and saw something moving toward them. His hands tingled and his breath became short. The word “Look!” automatically formed and leaped from his mouth. Huge creatures similar to Mike, dressed in shining armor resembling Roman gladiators with gold shields and weapons strapped to their sides, marched toward them. Allen motioned to Mike with a jerk of his head and whistled. “Mike, they look like they’ve all just stepped out of the cover of the *World Body Building Magazine* or are members of a World Wrestling Federation!”

Light filtered through the trees and splashed on the streets, giving a golden reflection.

Mike stood at attention and saluted, "Greetings!"

"Greetings in the name of Theos!" replied the leader. Then that magnificent creature suddenly relaxed and warmly greeted Mike with a handshake and then a full embrace with pats on the back that sounded like the beating of a bass drum. It was obvious they had a deep friendship that had developed over time.

Allen eyed a sparkling earring with a brilliant stone glistening in one ear of the leader. He scanned the other creatures and saw they each had an earring.

Mike focused his attention on the main leader and asked, "Where are you headed?"

"There's a small uprising near the Dark Region, and we've been dispatched to check it out. That Vulpine never gives up."

Allen whispered to Mike, "What's the Dark Region?"

"I'll explain about it later," Mike whispered back.

The leader fixed his gaze on Allen. "Who's that?"

"This is the earthling Theos sent me to bring—another chosen one." Mike replied.

*There's that term again. Why am I a chosen one?* The palms of Allen's hands began to sweat.

"You've done well. Theos will be pleased." The leader turned to the other 'mighty wonders' waiting at attention, "we must be on our way." The whole regiment turned and glided down the road out of sight.

Allen turned to Mike and inquired who that was? "Let's just say he's a good friend." Mike's reply didn't answer the question but later Allen would realize the relationship. As they continued down the road Allen's focus returned to the surroundings.

He noticed the nearby hills were covered with a vast variety of those vibrantly colored flowers. A new experience captured his attention. They swayed in a motion resembling the waves rolling in on the seashore, but Allen realized there wasn't any wind. *How could the flowers be moving?* Soothing music echoed down the celestial corridors. *Could the flowers be making these glorious sounds?* For the moment Allen just seemed like a sponge soaking in this flowing vista.

Mike tapped Allen's arm. "Are you hungry?"

*It's been a long time since I ate those cookies.* Allen's head bobbed. "I sure am."

"Come this way." Mike waved toward a new trail. As they proceeded Allen realized he was walking on the ground again, not gliding like he did when he was on the road with the golden shadows.

Up ahead he recognized something familiar; an apple tree! There's a whole orchard of them! Allen stared at the biggest red and glistening apples he had ever seen. "They are apples, right?" Being unsure of all that was going on around him, he questioned Mike for an answer.

"Pick one and see," was the reply.

Allen reached up and plucked a luscious fruit off the branch and bit into it. *Delicious!* As quickly as Allen picked off the apple, another one grew in its place. "Hey, what's going on?" Allen felt really strange.

*Where am I? What am I here for? What does it mean to be a chosen one?* The questioner was at work again.

"Eat up." once more his thoughts were interrupted by Mike.

Succulent juicy flavors exploded on his taste buds and tingled all the way down into his stomach as a crisp fresh aroma wafted through the air. *The supermarkets back home don't have any fruit that compare with this.*

"So you like my fruit?" Allen was startled by a strange voice behind him. He turned and saw another being, appearing somewhat human with dazzling white hair cascading over his shoulders. Allen had never seen anything more brilliantly white. The closest thing he could think of was freshly fallen snow. At first Allen thought the creature was old, but despite the white hair, His face and skin had no wrinkles, his eyes were deep blue and twinkled brightly with a friendly glow. He wore a robe that came just below his knees. His clothing was something like Mike's but not as royal looking, and it changed colors when he moved. The shimmering colors reminded Allen of those strange squares he sometimes saw on credit cards. When you turn them, they change to different shades; holograms, they're called. He had learned about them in science. This being wasn't as large as Mike and he didn't have a weapon, but he was wearing super cool boots.

*Boy, I wish I had a pair like them.* Allen was into boots. In fact, wearing cool boots was the latest fad at his school. There were cowboy boots, army boots, hiker boots, rubber boots, leather, suede, canvas, high boots, and low boots. You name it! Boots were in style in Allen's world.

*He's wearing an earring too.* The stone glistened just like the others. Allen wondered what significance the shiny jewelry's had.

*It has to mean something. Everything means something in this place!*

Allen thought he'd better answer the creature's question. "Ahhhh ..... Yeah, it tastes great. How come they're so big?"

"Look around."

Allen scanned the vast orchard. All the trees had beautiful bright ripe fruit on them. There were also countless vineyards and gardens with every kind of giant fruit imaginable.

"Do you take care of these all by yourself?" Allen couldn't stop the wide grin that was forming on his face.

The old, but not so old, man laughed, "oh, no, I have lots of help. We tend the gardens for the inhabitants of the kingdom."

"I haven't seen others. Are there many who live here?"

"Oh, yes. I don't know how many, but more than I can count."

Allen looked over his shoulder, wondering if he would spot anyone.



"I see you're from the other world."

Allen was shocked by the old, but not so old, man's statement. For the first time he realized he was away from home in a strange land. He had no idea why he was here and didn't know how or if he would ever be able to return to his own home. Allen's head dropped and tears filled his eyes, color rose in his cheeks He tried to push aside his emotions. *Man I'm undone. I sure hope I find out soon what this is all about. Mike could see his fear and drew close, put his huge arms around him and in a comforting tone said, "You will, you will,"*

# Chapter 6

## *The Duns*

A loud shout thundered off in the distance! Looking down in a valley, Allen was startled as he saw some creatures shifting here and there among the giant fruit trees.

"It's the Duns! They're raiding our orchards again!" The old, but not so old man silently counted the heads of the scoundrels, "there's more than last time; their relentless in their constant attacks. The fruit and other foods we grow here are free for the taking to all the dwellers of our land. Even the Duns can have all the food they want, and they know that, but they don't just come and eat the fruit, they purposely destroy the trees, gardens, and anything they can get their paws on and they do it with a vengeance. Of course, we know why they do it. And I suppose it will never stop until the final result is carried out."

Allen contemplated these words but didn't understand. "What does he mean, Mike?"

"I'll explain later, but first we have a present task." Mike set off toward the valley with the old not so old, man right behind him.

“Hey! Don’t leave without me! I don’t know my way around this place yet.” Allen scurried after them.

As they neared the area where the shouting was coming from, Allen could see a group of figures destroying the surrounding grasses, vegetables, shrubs, and trees. They pulled everything out by the roots and flung them to the ground.

*Man, these are some bizarre looking creatures!* Allen studied them from a safe distance. They were wearing black robes with hoods that hid their faces, black shoes, and even what could be seen of their faces was black, a blurry black. Their eyes were red and glared at the approaching group. They growled and grunted as they swiftly and ruthlessly destroyed everything they could get their long curved claws on. Though not very tall, they seemed incredibly powerful.

As Mike got closer, they all stopped and turned their sinister eyes toward their intruders.....us. One looked straight at Allen and without warning bolted toward him. Allen froze in terror! The creature lunged toward him and then grunted a command to all the other Duns, “attack!” Allen immediately concluded, *I’m a goner for sure. They destroyed the trees and other vegetation with a few swats of their claws; they’ll tear me apart next.* He tried to cry out for help, but fear had seized him to the point, he couldn’t yell. He squeezed his eyes tightly shut and choked a feeble “Help!”

Mike's familiar voice blared with authority. "Stop in the name of Theos!"

Allen opened his eyes: there was Mike's massive frame with his broad shoulders squared back and his feet set wide apart. He had drawn his weapon, aimed it at the Duns and they came to an abrupt halt, appearing paralyzed. Mike centered his weapon on the Dun ready to pounce on Allen. *Crack!* A charge of energy pulsed from the end of it and hit the Dun. He vanished into thin air. Mike aimed at another Dun. *Zap!* Another flash of energy and another Dun disappeared.

Allen threw his hands in the air and let out a whoop! "Wow!" In just a brief moment, all the Duns had been snuffed out.

Mike held his somber gaze, his tone so low that Allen could barely hear him. "I'm sorry they frightened you."

Allen was delighted he was safe, but he couldn't stop shaking from fear. He realized if Mike hadn't been there, he would have been destroyed.

"Thank you, Mike!"

He felt that big muscular arm again as it drew him in close. "It's all right, Allen. I won't let anything harm you."

Allen's heart raced. "Did you kill all of them?"

Mike shook his head. "No, I didn't kill any of them. There is no killing as you know it, in this kingdom."

"What? No death? Then what do you call what just happened? I saw it with my own eyes." More and more puzzling questions loomed in Allen's head. "Who are those strange creatures," he inquired?

"Those creatures are from the Dark Region." Mike's eyebrows rose as he turned toward Allen. "Do you understand?" "Not really," was the reply.

Mike didn't answer but motioned with his arm toward a road ahead. "Come on. Let's go." Allen followed, quietly pondering all that was happening.

He said goodbye to the old, not so old, man and others that had come out of hiding. They all looked different and yet they all looked the same, crazy!

Allen hurried to catch up with Mike and when their feet made contact with this road, off they glided.

"Well, it's time for me to answer some of those probing questions you have rolling around in your head." Mike's eyes rested on Allen.

*Finally, I'm going to get some answers.*

# Chapter 7

## *Some Answers*

A mix of relief and curiosity flooded Allen's mind.

Mike coasted along beside Allen on the road. "The main reason you're here is connected with the story you told me about what's happening among your friends back home."

"Really", a knot of urgency squeezed Allen's chest.

"Very few people on earth know they're constantly being observed from this 'Realm', and also that their lives are affected in many ways from here." Mike took a couple of deep breaths. "We're always trying to help humans live without fighting and violence in their lives."

"I didn't know we're being watched, but I do know about fighting," admitted Allen.

"That's good" acknowledged Mike. "There are many forces behind this. But before I carry on, here is something I want you to see." Mike rubbed his temples and continued, "Very few have ever seen what you are about to experience. We hope after you see it you'll better understand what's happening here and will return to earth a different person, ready to help us in the fight against darkness."

Allen's heart thudded in the pit of his stomach. "I thought I must be here for a purpose."

"Yes, you are. We're restricted in your world but we are hopeful to recruit and train a team of, well", Mike searched for the right words: "secret agents who will enlighten people about how to become sensitive to our warnings and then experience a new way to live and avoid those things that are presently messing up and controlling lives."

"You want me to do that?" Allen shook his head. "Forget it. I'm too young, how could I make a difference?"

Mike wrapped one muscular arm around Allen. "We're putting a lot of effort into youth. Let's hold your thoughts until after you witness a breathtaking event."

They glided along the road and as their speed increased, they began to fly! Allen found himself floating higher and higher with no effort. Mike was soaring beside him and even though they were traveling at a great speed, Mike's robe hung straight down, his hair and halo—or whatever it was—stayed perfectly in place: Allen couldn't believe what was happening was real. *This wouldn't be this way on earth. There'd be a great wind rushing past them and everything would be trailing out behind. But there were no blasts of wind here. Everything was still and quiet; the questions kept piling up.*

The sky was bright but no sun and in the distance Allen noticed they were approaching a vast valley surrounded by striking mountains with snow peaks, giant cliffs, lush green forests and numerous waterfalls. A river that was crystal clear meandered on the outer edge of the valley; sometimes it appeared a dark emerald colour other times sparkling blue. What was strange, even from a distance he could see the valley itself was barren with no trees or vegetation. Another part of this breathtaking event as Mike called it---appeared. There were clearings where Allen caught glimpses of beings living in charming little settlements and villages. “Look, Mike, is that someone waving at us?” Mike nodded an agreement. As they passed over this serene vista below, way off to his right he became aware of another unusual setting, a second mountain range, this one was different. An aura of blackness resembling a dense cloud shrouded the whole range. “I haven’t seen a cloud or the sun since I arrived here, what makes that darkness,” he inquired.

Mike replied in a concerned voice, "That's the Dark Region—the Dominion of Vulpine.”

Allen responded in surprise, “The black creatures from the orchard?”

“Yes, that’s their home.”



Allen's stomach lurched as he associated that answer with his 'welcoming event' with the Duns. At that moment, he realized he would probably find out more about the Dark Region, and he hoped he was ready for what he was about to discover.

"Let's head down."

Allen mentally shook himself and tried to keep his voice steady as he sensed Mike's intensity; "has the time come", *what am I saying*, Allen tried to silence his thoughts.

Mike echoed "Yes, the time has come." and he began the descent.

# Chapter 8

## *A Great Spectacle*

Down, down, down they glided, then they hovered a little distance above the surface and remained suspended!" Allen grinned and exclaimed his usual explanation of what was happening; "Wow!"

"Now listen carefully." Mike gave Allen an odd look, one that he was getting quite familiar to.

"Do you know what instant replay is, Allen?"

"Yes, it's used in television to replay events that happened, over again, mostly in sports."

"Well, you're going to see one of the greatest events that ever happened in the universe take place again right before your eyes." Mike pointed, and continued, "And any question you have, asked Gabe."

"Who", Allen wrinkled his nose, hushed, turned around and standing there was another giant creature.

"Hello and welcome to our realm. I'll be your guide."

Allen's knees wobbled at the sound of Gabe's voice. What a shock! He appeared half-human and half-birdlike with wings that moved more

like humming bird wings, but as large as an eagle's, perhaps even bigger. His other features were quite similar to a human, but like most creatures in this land, he was large, almost as big as Mike. He looked eternal and young at the same time. Allen stumbled over his words, hoping to find a way to describe clearly what he was seeing. All he could think to say was "Look at that robe! It's amazing!"

Gabe's regal tunic was bright shimmering green one second and blazing blue the next. A weapon of some kind, in a sheath, was fastened to his robe with a golden sash. Allen blinked from the sparkling beams that glistened from the stone in Gabe's earring. When Allen saw Gabe's hair, he spoke louder and didn't care who heard him. "His hair changes color just like his robe. Doesn't it, Mike?"

Mike didn't answer so Allen turned back to find him—but he was nowhere in sight. A sense of panic grabbed him. He looked at Gabe and with a tone of hopefulness asked; "Will Mike be back?"

Gabe nodded. "He's not far away. Remember how he told you he wouldn't let anything harm you?"

Captivated by the sparkling gem in Gabe's ear and marveling at its beauty, Allen replied "Yes, I remember."

"Well, you can rely on him to keep his word." Gabe's eyes wandered back toward the spacious land. "What do you think of our kingdom?"

"I don't know what to think. Things keep happening that are impossible for me to understand."

"Yes, this certainly is different from your world, but as a chosen one, we think your time spent here will be very useful in bringing much needed help to earth. One day soon things will change and the inhabitants need to know how to prepare for that."

Allen nodded as though he understood. "You mean I'm going to know how to help people prepare for the end?"

"It's not only to prepare for an end, it's to learn how to live now until that happens—to live without hate, violence, and all those behaviors that are destroying people, especially countless children in your world." As Gabe was watching Allen, he saw contemplation begin to flow into his face, he continued, "they need to know the things most people are striving for will not bring the help they need."

"Whoa . . ." Allen's eyes dampened. "This all sounds pretty heavy for me."

"We don't think so, Allen." Gabe's tone was encouraging.

A great eruption interrupted their conversation! Clouds of dust billowed skyward and the whole floor of the valley shifted and began to change shape. Allen gasped in amazement as he saw countless buildings being fashioned right out of the floor of the valley. They rose

up completely built. Great mansions lined streets reflecting a golden hue, then, boulevards and sidewalks secured their place.

It's magnificent!" Everything was happening in slow motion; trees and flowers grew without a person in sight to plant or water them.

"How can this be happening without any person or creature involved in the whole process?"

Gabe motioned for Allen to keep looking.

Yah, it looked like some pictures he'd seen in history books. This ancient city stood in the middle of this great valley, and everything appeared brand new. *Man my mind is bent way out of shape; ancient city but looks new, come on mind.*

Looking off in the distance, near the base of a gigantic snow-capped mountain, Allen could see a great palace surrounded by manicured grounds. It has that same appearance. He voiced it out loud this time; "how can it appear old and yet new at the same time?"

Allen drew in a sharp breath. As usual he found it almost absurd to believe what he was seeing, but there it was, right before his very eyes.

Now inhabitants began to fill the city everywhere, they were engaged in joyful activities. Allen didn't realize it, but as he studied this stunning kingdom and became engrossed in the events, he was being

escorted closer and closer by Gabe. He couldn't hold back any longer..... "Where are we? What is this place?"

A twinkle flickered in Gabe's eyes. "This friend is the City of Light, Theos, the ruler of the city and this whole kingdom reigns here. He's the King of all kings throughout all time and eternity, past and future. Countless great titles are given to Him, Wonderful One, Councilor, Prince of Peace the Everlasting One, Alpha and Omega, First and Last, just to name a few. He governs with all power and wisdom and above all love."

"Wow!" exclaimed Allen as he tried to digest all those great acclaims."

Gabe declared that for him the city has always existed.

"But I just saw it created with my own eyes," Allen tone reflected a question.

"No, remember the instant playback? I am just replaying it to show you a little of the power and authority of Theos; as the Creator one of His delights is using that power and authority to bringing to about His dream."

"And what's that?"

You'll learn more about it as this story unfolds."

Allen's eyes widened and his heart anticipated. "I can't wait!"

# Chapter 9

## *The Celestial City*

“The palace is way up there.” Gabe shifted his gaze off in the distance. “We’ll travel there very soon.”

Fear and anticipation emerged from that statement.

Back to the moment Allen neither blinked nor flinched; he just stood there motionless viewing beings roaming everywhere. They resemble humans but different.

Gabe cast an affirming glance at Allen. “Your observations are very true.”

*Mind reading again no games here, Allen warned himself.*

The one thing he noticed that they all have in common is they’re all quite large. He was fascinated by that discovery not to mention another one---wings! Looking more closely he said “Gabe, why do some have wings and some don’t?”

“Everyone has a pair of wings, but some choose not to wear them,” Gabe replied “areas of the kingdom, including most of the roadways, allow flight without wearing wings, but there are others where wings

are necessary.” Man, Allen thought to himself, if I add up all the questions crowding my mind it would boggle Einstein.

Then a simple thought for a change; the city is so clean, bright and enjoyable it makes me feel peaceful.

Allen wasn't the only one in a good mood. Everyone seemed festive. A great assembly of musicians and singers were leading a celebration. Other small clusters of these beings sat with smiles plastered on their faces as they swayed with the music. Allen cupped his ear with his hand trying to distinguish the words. It worked, “they're singing about the goodness of Theos, right?”

Gabe crossed his arms and nodded. “Yes, everyday you'll find some singing and dancing here.”

“It seems kind of crowded to me.” Allen's eyes grew larger as he watched them celebrate. “Is this a special occasion?”

“Very special” Gabe said, nodding with enthusiasm; “it's the much anticipated and unique gathering to bring thanksgiving and pay honor to Theos. He's utterly appreciated by His subjects so they gather voluntarily to honor and thank Him for His goodness; they're here from all over the kingdom. Each one can hardly wait for the gathering and great feast; it's a time when united celebration will take place.”

“Will that happen tonight?” Allen asked.

“Oh, no, there's no night here.”



"What!" Allen folded his arms over his chest, tilted his head, and then shook it as he often did. "No night?"

"That's right, no night, no rain, no time, no seasons, no sickness, and no death. If you look closely, you'll notice there are no children as you know children. All present inhabitants of this kingdom were created by Theos but have undergone change.

As usual, Allen was speechless as Gabe continued, "This is a land of eternal peace and joy for all who discover the source of that vacuum within them that says there's more.

You might wonder what the inhabitants do if there's no need to work, no rearing of children, and no business world. No one grows old here and there are no family units like the ones on earth but what's here is matchless and joyfully embraced by all. I could go on and on, but I think you get the idea that things are different here". "You got that right" Allen chipped in.

Knowing the things I just told you would cause some to think how boring it would be to live like this, but remember, our beloved King has all wisdom and power and wisely exercises it to share his life and to create meaning and purpose that most on earth haven't even thought about." Here's an example. Theos has just communicated to everyone in the city that He is going to create another universe and has invited

any who would like to be a part of that to let Him know so it can be arranged.

“I see.” Actually that comment was spoken but not convincing. Allen’s mind was buzzing with so much mind boggling information.

“There’s no end to exploring His vast creations.” Gabe grinned and then in a soft and encouraging voice restated, “I don’t expect you to understand it all now. You’ll need wisdom far beyond what you have, to even begin to realize what it’s like to live in a land like this, but for now let’s just show you around; we’ll have lots of opportunity to yak.” That caused Allen to relax a bit.

Gabe led the way down the street. Allen looked down at his feet, *yikes*, he couldn’t get over it; again, he was suspended inches off the surface, just gliding along. His head was spinning. *Nobody back home will ever believe such a place exists.*

Gabe tugged on Allen’s arm and gently guided him off the street into a large beautiful park like area. He saw countless fountains spraying exquisite designs of water; at least it looked like water. Some liquids changed colors and sparkled as they cascaded in limitless forms and shapes. Each fountain was unique, everything from a gentle spray or mist to an explosion of magnificent heights and designs.

“Gad’s look at that.” Over across the lawn was a group of citizen’s right in the middle of a basin being soaked by a fountain spraying huge

jets of liquid. They weren't kids but they sure were acting like it, roaring with laughter as they splashed and pushed each other into the spray. His eyes were popping out of his head trying to take in all the activity and movement of this celebration. He found the whole area breathtakingly peaceful and tranquil, yet full of anticipation and adventure.

"Let's go over there." Gabe took the lead.

When they stopped, a crowd began to gather. Everyone was staring and pointing at them. Allen had a light bulb moment. "Gabe, I really look weird to them and my clothes looks like rags compared to what's worn here."

For sure nothing about Allen looked similar to the celestial beings. He appeared peculiar to say the least, but they recognized Gabe. As they acknowledged him, he motioned for them to come closer. Allen was amazed at the number assembling. When Gabe raised his hand, a holy hush swept over the crowd. Extending his arms high over his head and with a loud voice exclaimed, "All hail to King Theos."

They shouted back, "All hail, King Theos!" A loud cheer went up from the throng and continued in joyous waves.

*They really love their King!* Allen was deeply moved by their chorus of acknowledgement in His honor.

When they eventually quieted down, Gabe spoke again. "The one you see beside me is a chosen one."

Allen's knees trembled. He almost fainted when another great cheer went up from the crowd. *Chosen one? There's that term again.*

When Gabe announced, "We're on our way to meet Theos!" another cheer went up.

*This is incredible!* Allen was shocked and a little embarrassed. *I've done nothing to deserve this response.*

He was right. He didn't realize at that moment the reason the crowd was cheering, they all knew what it meant to be a "chosen one."

Finally the cheering and supportive activity ended and Gabe gave a farewell wave to the crowd and revealed, "We're on our way to the palace."

The multitude shouted with well wishes and waved back. The sound of their merriment faded as they glided out of sight. As they passed by other parks and street gatherings similar responses were experienced. Allen realized for this to be happening the word about a chosen one being there must have spread throughout the city. Allen placed his hand over his rapidly beating heart. Next I'm also *set for a personal visit with Theos; I hope I am ready for this.*

"You are", came a reply..... guess who?

# Chapter 10

## *The Plot*

Every part of the city was crowded. Allen tried to stay close to Gabe but frequently lost sight of him—and panicked! He sighed with relief each time he spotted him again. “I feel like a little kid trying to keep up with his dad”, he shouted to Gabe. Gabe chuckled and continued to lead the way.

As they rounded a busy corner, Allen lost sight of him again. *Where did he go?*

Panic! *I have to find him!* Because everyone towered above him, Allen couldn't see very far. He jumped up as high as he could to look around, but it was useless. He scanned the crowd the best he could, that proved useless too. He thought if he yelled, his friend would hear him. “Gabe! Gabe!”

The noise and jubilation drowned out his cry. He wasn't sure which way to go, then decided to continue down a side street that looked less busy---a dead end!

“This leads nowhere.” He often found himself talking out loud to himself somehow it seemed to help. He tried to get a grip on his

emotions, but anxiety overwhelmed him. He darted one direction and then another. "It's no use! I'm just getting more lost!" The crowd thinned out and he found himself walking alone down a path leading to a country setting.

He stopped, he thought he heard something; *voices, I hear voices!*

*A comforting hope came alive. Maybe whoever that is can help me find my way out of this place.*

He rounded a bend in the path and eyed a peculiar sight. There was a group of kingdom creatures arguing loudly among themselves. *Wow! This is very unusual. I've not heard anything like this since I arrived.*

The creature in charge was stunningly beautiful. Allen wasn't sure whether it was a man or a woman. He remembered Gabe sharing with him that in the City of Light there was neither male nor female. However, because he had never seen a woman on earth who looked like most of the creatures here, he just assumed they were all men. On the other hand, he had never seen men on earth appear like these strange creatures either.

*That's the largest creature I've ever seen!* The being wore an elegant robe that was engulfed in brightness. His very presence demanded attention. The others were also very majestic in appearance. He noticed some had wings, others didn't. He also noticed

they were all wearing one of those stunning earrings that reflected brilliant beams of light.

They were unaware of Allen's presence. Fearful of being discovered he quickly moved in behind a thick bush, remaining motionless he listened to their conversation. As it continued it became clear; they were unhappy with how the kingdom was being governed and what was presently happening.

The striking leader narrowed his eyes and his voice jeered, "We'll take over the City of Light and dethrone Theos. I will rule in His place, and you, my minions, will reign with me."

Allen felt his heart skip a beat.

Then the leader inquired, "How many others will join our movement?"

One of the other junta rubbed his hands together and growled, "We have the whole northern realm with us and many from the other regions as well."

"This plan will make us the most powerful creatures in the universe. We'll control the whole of all creation." The leader threw back his head and roared with laughter. He continued making promises. "The whole cosmos will be ours. We will be worshiped and obeyed by those under our rule."

Those listening clapped their hands and confessed with great gusto, "We are ready and willing to follow!" A full chorus of acknowledgements broke forth.

Then one of the band raised a hand, cupped his ear and cautioned, "Listen, I hear something! I think someone's hiding over there." He waved in Allen's direction.

Allen held his breath, watching and waiting, then..... *Run! What am I doing just standing here?*

He darted toward a grove of trees just off the path behind where he was standing. *I can hide behind those trees! As he tried to run his feet felt as if each one was stuck in a pot of glue. He looked over his shoulder and spotted several of the creatures emerging from the clearing. He reached the first tree. It's so huge, a hope flashed ; they won't find me hiding behind it. As he attempted to go behind the tree, something startling happened. It was similar to the experience with the computer screen. He put his hand on the tree trunk and it went right inside. Next his other hand went in and then in an instant he found himself completely hidden from view, inside the tree. He stood motionless like a statue.*

The band of creatures galloped down the path, scouring the woods. They couldn't see Allen, but he could see them. One leaned up against the very tree Allen was hiding in. Needless to say, Allen closed



his eyes and held his breath, paralyzed by fear. *I hope he can't hear my heart beating!*

The creature actually leaned against the tree and Allen heard him say to himself "this could be trouble". Of course that didn't mean a lot to Allen at the time but later it would have critical meaning. Not having any success, he soon joined the others and continued their search of the area but they didn't discover Allen's unexplained hiding place.

The leader let out a warning command. "We're wasting valuable energy and time is running out, we must finalize the plans for the takeover. Return to our meeting place immediately!"

Allen didn't move a muscle until he knew the coast was clear. He let out a huge sigh when he realized they were gone and he was safe. *How am I ever going to get out of here? I'm trapped.* That familiar feeling of panic and helplessness crept over him.

"Just walk through." Allen recognized that voice. It was Mike, standing beside the huge tree. When Allen did as Mike instructed, first, his hand, then his feet, and finally his whole body completely emerged.

"Wow! I'm free!" Allen momentarily forgot he was a tough wrestling teenager. He ran toward Mike and collapsed in his strong arms. "Man, it's good to see you!"

Mike picked him up, swung him around in a circle, and gently dropped him on the ground, then sat down beside him. "I told you I

wouldn't let anything harm you, didn't I?" Mike slapped Allen on the back again. This was becoming a common tradition between these two. The high five wouldn't work standing up because Allen couldn't reach that high.

Then Allen looked up at Mike and asked thoughtfully. "Who was that?"

"That was Vulpine and his rebel followers."

Allen's heart beat harder. "That was Vulpine?"

"That's him."

Allen had heard Vulpine's name many times before, but now he had actually seen him.

*That was the chieftain over the Dark Region?* Confusion crowded Allen's mind.

"That's right he is!" Mike confirmed out loud.

"Now cut that out, reading my thoughts again?"

"Well, I knew you'd be wondering who they were." The giant meekly shrugged his shoulders like a kid being scolded by a parent. Allen giggled at the response.

"But how can Vulpine be the ruler over the Dark Region and be here in the City of Light?"

"Remember the video replay?" Mike cast his familiar smile.

"Yah", Allen's head bobbed.

"You're experiencing the replay. You're seeing what the City of Light was like before the rebellion took place."

Allen placed his head in his hands. "Man, my head's spinning."

"Mike looked up and pointed toward the road. "Look. Here comes Gabe."

"What happened to you?" Gabe hurried toward them. "I've been looking all over for you, Allen."

Allen took a deep breath and sighed. "I'm sorry, Gabe, but I just couldn't keep up with you."

Gabe tilted his head in a way that made Allen feel he was deeply concerned and regretful for what happened.

"It's O.K. now, I'm a lot better since you guys are here."

Gabe apologized for letting him get lost. Allen warmed up to him right away and told him all about what had just happened. The way he listened reinforced his care and concern.

"As frightening as it may be, Allen, it is important for you to understand about the rebellion. It's equally important you grasp the natures of Vulpine and Theos. I want you to know everything you can about this kingdom." Gabe draped his arm around Allen's shoulders. "Now let's carry on to the palace and the great festival."

Gabe's wings fluttered. Instead of walking all the way back to the city, they flew. "Man, what a cool way to travel!"

Allen was convinced that no one back home would ever believe him if he told them what he had experienced in this new land. That thought triggered several fears. *Will I ever return to my home? Will I ever see my mother, father, sister, and all my friends again?*

# Chapter 11

## *The Celebration*

Allen peered down over the city. The emerald-colored lake glistened in front of the golden palace area and its beautifully manicured grounds. The sight was breathtaking. The lake was fed by a river flowing through the city, rolling along the streets and parks. Animals roamed freely on the park grounds. Sheep, horses, cattle, lions, tigers, elk, bears—all kinds of domestic and wild animals shared the same huge open space. *A zoo! No, it can't be a zoo because there are no cages or fences.*

As Allen continued surveying this unusual sight, he spied many of the inhabitants walking and sitting among the animals. They seemed to be having a picnic. Long tables were set up everywhere, loaded with platters of food and drink, goodies for everyone.

"Would you ever see anything like that on earth?" Gabe flashed a broad grin as he observed Allen studying the scene below.

"No way, the animals would never be able to get along. There would be hair and fur flying for sure and some of those folks sitting there would make a great meal, Allen chuckled.

A startling sound interrupted them. Allen looked up to see four animals flying from the direction of the golden palace. At least Allen thought they were animals, but as they got closer he realized they were creatures he had never seen before. They were headed straight to where Allen stood. Their sheer size and foreboding appearance was overwhelming. Fear paralyzed his body as the weird formed creatures continued their ascent. Eyes! Each one had two eyes that could look ahead, two eyes that could look behind, and two eyes that looked from either side. The first living creature had the appearance of a lion, the second one an ox, the third had a human face, and the fourth looked like an eagle. They each had six wings. The movement of their wings made a strange throbbing sound that seemed to rock the air and the ground he was standing on.

Allen's voice trembled with fear. "Gabe, who or what are they? Not only haven't I ever seen anything like them, I never even dreamed of anything like them. "They're Phims, special servants to Theos. They serve Him and they carry out His wishes. They are always ready to do whatever He wants." Gabe cast a thoughtful glance. "Their dedication is remarkable, and they serve Theos 24/7."

"I never thought I'd ever hear you use an earthy phrase like 24/7, you said there's no time here." Gabe just wrinkled his brow.

"They sure are scary looking!"

“Don’t let their appearance frighten you,” Gabe reassured.

“That’s easy for you to say. Look at the size of them!”

A loud swishing sound stirred the air, it almost knocked Allen over. All four of the creatures landed directly in front of Allen. The creature that looked like a lion spoke—or was it the eagle? No, it was the ox. Allen realized as one spoke, they all spoke with the same words and their eyes all looked in the same direction. *Unbelievable!*

“Are you Allen, a chosen one?” The creatures asked.

The voices speaking all at once and using the label “chosen one” scrambled Allen’s brain for the moment. *How am I going to deal with this, I can’t talk.*

Gabe answered for him. “Yes, he is!”

The creatures all together spoke again, “Theos sent us to make sure he is prepared for the meeting.”

The tenderness in Gabe’s response almost undid Allen. “We will make sure he responds to your wishes.”

In one accord they said, “Good. Now we shall return and bring Theos to the celebration.” The quartet bowed respectfully and flew away with a loud swishing sound and in a flash they returned to the presence of Theos.

“If you’re wondering about their appearance, Allen”. . . . , and he sure was,

“Each one has a specific reason for its looks and character. Theos is the only one who knows that reason fully, Gabe spoke slowly and thoughtfully. Many believe the lion represents the kingly or sovereign character of Theos, the ox represents massive power, and the eagle reminds us that His thoughts and ways are far above all others.”

Allen didn't speak for several moments, drinking in every word. “But the human face, what does that represent?”

Gabe looked Allen in the eye. “Everyone here knows how much Theos loves humans! The earth and its inhabitants are His special creation. They hold an extraordinary place in His heart. So you being here and being a ‘chosen one’ plays a large part in His effort to reveal how much He cares.”

Allen just rubbed his chin.

Gabe's attention stayed focused on Allen. "Theos' care and concern for us is always evident. We're never sure what He will do next, but we are confident everything is always for our highest good. As you can see, there's harmony here, even the animals have no fear of us, nor do we fear them. His greatest wish is for this kingdom to be established on your earth.”

Allen's thoughts continued to scramble as he tried to piece all he had seen and heard together. Many questions rolled around in his head like steel marbles in a pinball machine, but of all these questions



one loomed in his mind. *Where do the Duns fit into all this?* Allen decided to get ready for the big celebration and inquire later with Gabe and Mike about his puzzling question.

They were almost to their destination. Allen could see throngs of the kingdom population gathering in what looked like a gigantic stadium inside the central grounds of the palace. Everything about it was vast. Inhabitants were streaming in from all areas of the kingdom and filling this mega arena. At one end a great orchestra and choir were assembled, all dressed in brilliant white robes trimmed with gold. Allen couldn't begin to estimate the number in the stadium. Everyone appeared happy greeting one another warmly. Some waved banners, others flew flags; joy was evident everywhere. Along the top of the wall was a ring of large winged creatures in beautiful emerald uniforms. *They must be eight to ten feet tall.* Their appearance was stunning. They were holding golden trumpets. Flashes of light reflected from their dazzling earrings. Every few minutes they would all blow a single note for a few seconds. When they stopped, the whole stadium exploded with a shout of tribute to Theos.

“This is so exciting!” Allen whispered to Gabe.

“Oh yes, it’s quite the party.” Gabe pointed toward the crowd.

“Look over there, Allen!”

Allen chuckled when he saw some of the beings doing the wave just like at a huge sporting event on earth. "That's one thing I have seen before." Allen had a wonderful view of everything. The stadium was full. He sensed something was about to happen . . . and he couldn't wait.

# Chapter 12

## *The Kingdom of Light*

A holy hush swept over the crowd when a strikingly handsome figure appeared on the platform in the middle of the stadium, accompanied by an honor guard of fifty giants. He threw up his arms and looked up to the throng with a broad smile. The crowd cheered. He did it again and more shouting rang out. He proceeded toward the area where the choir and orchestra were assembled. He continued waving at the cheering admirers and really enjoyed the attention the crowd showered on him. He greeted many with a nod and slowly ascended upward, leaving the honor guard stationed on the floor of the stadium.

To Allen, his appearance was a notch above anything he had seen before and he was sure this was Theos. Just to make certain, he cupped his hand and whispered to Gabe, "Is that Theos?"

"No!" Gabe whispered back. "But this one is very special to Theos. He's the most trusted friend and advisor and has been chosen to lead all the great assemblies that gather to honor the Great One."

Allen looked again in the direction of Gabe's focus. "I see."

“He’s trusted with great power and authority. At this moment he’s preparing to lead the great tribute in honor to Theos.”

Allen’s eyes were fixed on the being as he descended to the platform and walked to the podium, where he would conduct the choir and musicians. He turned toward Allen: for the first time, he caught a glimpse of the face, he gasped under his breath, “It’s---him!”

Allen wrung his hands and pressed his lips together. *It’s the leader I saw and overheard in the forest, making plans for an uprising to take over Theos’ kingdom. I’ve got to tell Gabe.*

Before Allen could say a word, the trumpeter’s horns blared, but this time it was different. Instead of one long blast, it was a melody, a fanfare. The people jumped to their feet and a great shout echoed throughout the stadium.

Theos was about to make His appearance!

Allen was speechless. His face flushed as his breath caught in his throat. His heart pounded so hard he thought it might jump right out of his chest.

Gabe leaned toward Allen. “There He is. Theos!”

Allen steadied his anxious nerves. Surrounding Theos’ head was what appeared to be a rainbow. Not just a small one but a full-blown circular one with amazingly vivid colors he’d never seen before, and they changed like looking into a kaleidoscope. Darts of light shot out

like streaks from a laser; the source being the brilliant gem in Theos' earring.

*"He is so radiant and dazzling!"* Allen choked, words don't work.

A solid gold crown embedded with diamonds, emeralds, sapphires, rubies, and opals rested on his head; more flashes of light shot from the jewels. His hair was snow white and quite long, touching his shoulders. His robe was a deep royal purple trimmed with gold on the collar, the end of the sleeves and the hem of His robe. Tied around his waist was a golden sash. He had bronze leg coverings and shoes that glowed like fire; His whole being appeared bright as the sun. Sunlight this bright would be blinding, but the light coming from Theos brought only a sense of joy and peace.

"No wonder His kingdom is called the City of Light." Allen was in awe as this light splashed in his eyes. Not only had he not seen anything like this before he never imagined it could exist. *Oh, if I were ever going to worship any being, Theos would sure be the one!*

Everyone bowed in awe, not because they had to but because they were captivated by His very presence and appearance. His eyes were like hot coals, looking deep inside each soul in the stadium.

Amazingly Theos' gaze met Allen's, a lump formed in Allen's throat and his eyes welled up with tears. *My heart feels like it's glowing inside me. I'm undone.*

The four Phims carried Theos and His throne on their shoulders. They marched to the middle of the stadium and placed the throne on a raised platform. The stadium spectators continued cheering and applauding their beloved Theos. Then a thunderous noise reverberated through this joy filled atmosphere. Allen turned to watch as the base drums of the orchestra began a roll. All the wind instruments and strings rose in anticipation as the conductor poised his baton and began to collect their attention.

“This is a new musical composition written by Vulpine to honor Theos.” Gabe smiled and lifted his face toward the dazzling light that focused on the conductor.

Allen’s heart quieted; chills ran up and down his spine as he listened to the opening music. He sat captivated by its rhythm and melody. *There’s certainly no music that sounds like this back home.*

When the overture was almost completed, the conductor motioned to the choir to rise and prepare to join with the symphony’s instrumental composition. As they raised their voices in unison with the orchestra, for the first time in his life Allen believed in angels. *This must be heaven and these must be angels.*

He was held spellbound by what he was hearing and seeing. Something never before conceived, as the sound echoed in his ears he also saw a visual sound. *How is it possible he can see sound as well as*

*hear it?* As the audio was pleasant to the ear, the visual sound became as pleasant to the eyes. *This is a double whammy for sure! Maybe even a triple whammy because not only can he hear and see the sound, but he can feel it too.* As the music rose and fell or changed rhythm, Allen could feel this awesome sensation tingle throughout his whole body.

At the conclusion of the musical presentation, the stadium burst into thunderous applause. Even though it was bright, a laser like beam focused on the conductor. He acknowledged the ovation by bowing and waving to the throng. Even Theos could be seen acknowledging his talent and performance. A chant arose from the seats; Vulpine, Vulpine!

Everyone had obviously appreciated the abilities and the talent he exhibited. Of course, it wasn't only the music and the ability to coordinate these great gatherings, but also the strong sense of commitment Vulpine offered in governing the kingdom as well. Everyone knew of his devotion to Theos and the power and responsibility given to him. He was truly a ruler in his own right. The kingdom loved him.

Allen's mind wouldn't shut off. *Could Vulpine really be that evil?* He wondered about what he had overheard at the meeting of Vulpine and his rebel band earlier especially after seeing how talented Vulpine was and his acceptance by the kingdom. *Surely it's impossible that this*

*trusted being had any idea of overthrowing Theos, ruling the whole kingdom and placing those who would help him in roles of authority? Surely this couldn't be. No one would be discontented with the way this kingdom is ruled. To Allen this place was everything he imagined heaven could be—and more.*



# Chapter 13

## *The Rebellion*

Excitement was in the air. Everyone anticipated what would happen next in the joyous celebration. Since time was never a problem in this kingdom, often these grand occasions went on and on. No one seemed in a hurry to get home, and sleep wasn't required as it was back on earth. Bountiful food and drink were supplied. People on earth could only dream of such perfect conditions.

The atmosphere changed instantly; Vulpine shouted to the guards attending Theos on the field, "Now!"

Action began with great precision. Allen winced as he watched. Great numbers of rebels swarmed over the Phins and then secured Theos to his throne with huge chains and carried it off the field. *The rebel forces were commanded by the same creatures plotting with Vulpine in the forest clearing!*

No one in the stadium knew what was happening. They all assumed the drama was part of the celebration. Allen felt helpless and wondered if he was right in his evaluation of a takeover? *Has the rebellion begun? Could this be it?*

The radicals quickly transported the throne toward one of the passageways leading to a rear of the palace. Others blocked all the exits from the stands.

Hey! Something's wrong," one of the onlookers bellowed out!

Gabe strained intently to interpret what was going on. He turned to Allen and said, "Stay here, I'll be back as soon as I can." He bolted toward the rebels attempting to kidnap Theos. More unrest and commotion rumbled throughout the stadium as others realized something out of the ordinary was happening, and not a part of the festivities.

The kidnapers plowed through the tunnel into the rear courtyard of the palace. From where Allen was sitting, he had a bird's eye view of what was taking place. In the courtyard many other armed rebels were assembled. *Those must be the ones from the northern region that Vulpine mentioned at the forest meeting.*

Vulpine was in his glory, barking orders with that smirk plastered on his face. He was pleased his well-planned scheme was going off like clockwork. "This is like taking candy from a baby" he bellowed. Theos was blindfolded as they wrapped more iron chains around him. The Phims were also bound tightly. The whole regiment of dissenters and Vulpine had everything under control; it happen so quickly many were

still in shock. Sharply the command was given..... Mount to the sky. The sound of wings beating wildly grew louder and louder.

Allen caught a movement out of the corner of his eye. He turned his head to look more closely. There in the distance was Mike; he was leading a regiment of loyal kingdom guards. *They were the same ones they met as they were traveling toward the City of Light, sent to prevent an uprising in the Dark Region.*

Behind those protectors were battalions of others also preparing to enter into conflict.

What a welcome sight they were! Their attire was regal and brilliant. Mike's jaw was set and his eye focused on their mission to 'defend Theos'!

The flapping of their wings made another great rushing sound as they descended on the rebels. The sky became full of warriors. All had their weapons drawn and the engagement began. There in the sky, right over Allen's head, the greatest battle of all ages was set in motion. Everyone in the stadium could watch the beginning of eons of conflict—one that would spread from the Beyond Time realm to other parts of creation. These were mighty warriors: one side fighting to overthrow Theos and conquer this wonderful Kingdom of Light, to satisfy their own selfish thirst for power, verses, Mike and the others

motivated to protect Theos and enjoy what he had created for them, the one they had enjoyed for countless ages.

Everyone watching was stricken with dread as the battle intensified. Defenders and rebels were engaged everywhere. The energy pulsing from their weapons created a vast brilliance and thunderous reverberation, it held everyone breathless. After what seemed like endless warfare, it became evident to all that Mike had engaged Vulpine in direct combat. They both swirled in large circles over the stadium, each trying to find out if the other had a weakness in his defense. First, one would appear to have the advantage and then it would shift to the other. This seesaw battle became the primary focus of the rebellion. Allen and the countless beings watching the battle wondered how it would end. All other combatants had ceased fighting. The entire stadium sat spellbound as they watched this clash of the two titans. On and on it went. Everyone was riveted upon this heavy weight title match happening in the ring of the heavens. No one spoke it, but all believed the future of the kingdom hung in the balance. The victor would be their ruler. The tug of war continued—first one way, then another, they spun. Not only did they wield their weapons skillfully, but they also aimed blazing energy that appeared like bolts of lightning or laser beams at each other from sword-like tips. By carefully moving their shields, they could effectively deflect the beams.

*What awesome weapons and incredibly skillful warriors!* Allen watched intently as the two opponents were directly positioned over his head. He could hear the groans from their efforts to swing their mighty armament into place for a final advantage that would end this encounter. As Michael lunged forward with a powerful effort, Allen noticed his earring fell off and was dropping directly downward toward Allen. He cupped his hands, caught it, and quickly tucked it into the change pocket of his jeans without taking his eyes off the combat. In a flash, Vulpine propelled a mighty blow that sent Mike reeling. He moved in quickly for the final strike. Suddenly it looked as if it was all over. Allen watched in horror as Mike tumbled down awkwardly toward the ground. His body was twisted and broken from the damage inflicted during the battle, and the final thrust was too much even for him. Down, down he plummeted. To all it appeared that Vulpine was the victor. Mike continued downward and was about to meet with what Allen knew would be a momentous, devastating conclusion.

Suddenly Theos appeared! He had broken loose and those chains that bound him now dangled from His wrists and ankles. With His feet spread wide apart and firmly planted on the ground, He formed his mighty arms into a cradled position. He was preparing to catch Mike. The entire stadium gasped. Could He do it? Was anyone strong enough to break the fall of this giant? Then as one, the crowd let out a

thunderous sigh of relief; Mike landed directly into Theos' arms. He held him firmly for a moment and then gently laid him down on the ground. What a spectacular rescue! Then a thunderous cheer rang out from those watching. All the others who had been fighting on the ground had long since stopped to gaze at the battle for souls unfold. At the time, they didn't know that's what the battle was about . . . but eventually that is exactly what it would turn out to be.

# Chapter 14

## *Battle Cry*

An eerie silence invaded the atmosphere. All eyes pivoted on Theos and then moved to Vulpine.

Yes, the wicked one clapped his hands and bellowed out a victory shout as he watched Mike spiral downward to what he hoped would be his end but when Theos rescued Mike, Vulpine hung motionless in mid air.

The Sovereign One and the rebel's eyes locked and they just stared at each other. Slowly Vulpine descended and stood in front of Theos. He knew he was in big trouble. He slowly knelt down; all the warriors from both sides stood in shock, not moving a muscle. Total silence engulfed the whole place.

"Ahhhhhhhh!" Mike managed a low groan. His body lay stationary as he

was seriously wounded! Allen felt helpless and wanted to wipe that sinister smirk off Vulpines face. *He's not fooling me, bowing before Theos. He's the epitome of evil!*

Theos tenderly bent over Mike. "Arise!" His voice resounded throughout the whole stadium like a peal of thunder. Mike began to stir and he slowly rolled over on his back, opened his eyes and met those of Theos. It almost seemed like a beam of light surged from His eyes and crept along the ground stopping and spilling over Mike's whole body.

Instantly Mike stood to his feet, completely whole, no twisted body, no limp limbs or signs of the battle.

A roar of applause swept through the stadium accompanied by Allen's usual response "Wow!"

Theos bent down and whispered in Mike's ear. "Go!"

Mike and the host of kingdom protectors began to bring together the great swarm of rebel creatures who had sided with Vulpine in the overthrow attempt. There was no resistance even though there were so many of them. They completely covered the center of the stadium grounds, they were defeated creatures cowering in fear of what was coming.

Allen became conscious of Gabe's presence beside him. "I'm glad you're here. I was afraid that Mike wasn't going to make it. To be honest, I'm a little worried it's not over yet."



After a short pause, a look of importance flashed across Gabe's face. "Watch very carefully. This experience will have impact on you and those living in your world."

*This is serious business; I better not miss what Gabe wants me to see.* Allen pressed his lips together as he watched in anticipation. How could he not give his full attention when the whole atmosphere was charged with electric wonder?

He stood mesmerized as the apprehended were bound in chains, their robes have lost their normal brilliance and their earrings removed.

Theos stood in the center of the stadium. As He raised his hand, a hush fell over the crowd. Allen had never heard a voice like His before. It was similar to when He spoke over Mike, almost like the sound of thunder yet not deafening. His voice created waves of sound that could be not only heard, but seen as well. It looked like the waves on a beach as they roll onto the shore.

Everyone heard Him clearly and distinctly. Just His presence in this situation caused many to tremble because nothing like this had ever happened before. What would be the penalty? Would he just annihilate Vulpine and his followers, He had the power to do that. Everyone held their breath.

"Vulpine, what have you done?" Theos' eyes narrowed. He leaned in closer and continued, "I trusted you with great favor and gave you untold wisdom, power, and authority. No other subject in the whole kingdom equaled you."

Vulpine whimpered. "But . . . but . . ."

Theos waved his hand in front of the traitor's face. I told you at your genesis that along with your responsibility, I expected loyalty and above all obedience. You swore to that. And I told you if for any reason you rejected the conditions set forth and agreed upon, you would experience the consequences."

Vulpine opened his mouth to argue but then snapped it shut like a trap. He realized it was no use.

"You have always known I am wise above all others, all powerful, compassionate, and caring. Everything I do in the kingdom is for the highest good of those who reside here, and I chose you and equipped you to lead by example. Therefore, because of your violation of the kingdom and its one law, I am casting you and your followers out to a region newly prepared for you where you can practice your own pride along with those of like mind. You will never again rule in the Kingdom of Light." Then He paused for a moment, a sense of sadness because of the betrayal shone from Theo's eyes. His voice rang out as He waved his arm and exclaimed, "Away!"

Vulpine and his followers withered and recoiled. Changing in moments from the huge powerful creatures they had been, they shrank smaller and smaller to a height of about three to four feet.

Allen gasped, "They're smaller than me!"

Not only did the traitors change shape but long claws grew in place of their hands, and they became darker and darker. The creatures' color continued to change until they were black all over their bodies. Even their robes and hoods were pitch black. Blazing red eyes peered out from under their black hoods. Strange as it may seem, Vulpine didn't change very much. He was still huge and his robe still had a golden hue but lost much of the brilliance. He didn't have any apparent weapon, but his earring was gone.

Broad smiles spread across the spectators' faces when they looked at Mike dressed in his stately attire in command of his loyal legion.

Theos' voice thundered over the stadium, "Go!"

Mike drew his weapon, mounted to the air, and motioned toward the defeated rebels to follow him. Theos raised His arm and pointed off toward the horizon. The multitude of rebels arose in unison and began their journey of banishment in another realm. The noise of their wings created a great rumble and a sound like a gigantic moaning, a lament radiating throughout the whole kingdom. The great army of kingdom guards surrounded the brood of aliens on all sides. Moving

off into the distance, they created a great dark, foreboding mass that looked like a massive storm cloud.

Allen blinked twice and gasped, “The Dark Region! It reflects the creatures that live there. Suddenly he recognized what he had seen off in the distance when he approached the city with Mike.

A harmonious shout arose from the remaining inhabitants of the kingdom that remained in the arena. “Praise be to Theos!” The crowd’s hearts were filled with gratitude for Theos’ wisdom and discernment. They admired His handling of a just verdict but none saw the deep sadness experienced by Him as His great creations met with their consequences.

Allen tried to collect his thoughts. His lips moved as he joined the cheer. “Praise be to Theos!” Allen realized that because of Theos’ righteous judgment, the wonderment of living in this realm could continue. The giant choir sang songs of praise and rejoicing as the orchestra joined them in celebration. The entire city was rejoicing and making merry. The kingdom was safe again.

# Chapter 15

## *Unice*

"It's time to go." Gabe eyes glistened as bright as his broad smile.

"Go where?" Allen's heart hammered against his chest.

"It's time for you to meet with Theos."

"Are you kidding? Why in the world would He want to see someone like me?" With a low moan, he rested his forehead on the heel of his hand. "I'd be scared out of my wits to stand before Him. From what I've seen, He is awesome and frightening and I can't imagine what it would be like to actually stand in His presence."

"Well, today you're going to find out for yourself." Gabe did his best to soothe Allen's jittery nerves. "Remember Mike told you that he was sent to get you because you have been chosen for a very special task."

Allen tilted his head toward Gabe and lowered his voice. "I . . . I . . . I thought he was kidding."

"Come!" Gabe gently, but firmly, took Allen by the hand and they descended from their vantage point high in the stadium.

“It looks as if everybody’s gone home.” Allen gestured toward the empty coliseum. “I don’t see Theos anywhere. Maybe we should go back and call it a day?”

Gabe gave Allen an empathic smile. “Everyone is outside in the streets and parks of the city. They’re continuing their festivities. Can’t you see them over there?”

“Oh yes, I see them.” Then before Allen's eyes the scene suddenly changed. The noise from the festivities was gone and as far as he could see there were only a few beings moving around the city. He blinked a few times and rubbed his eyes. “What just happened, Gabe?”

“In time, everything will be explained to you.” Gabe gently squeezed Allen’s arm. If you’re patient, things will become much clearer very soon.”

“I’ll do my best.” Allen shifted his focus back to the issue at hand

“Are you remembering the instant playback thing?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that's what you just experienced.” Gabe clasped his hands to his chest. “You saw a replay of something that happened here many millenniums ago. It was necessary for you to see it happen as it will help you understand why you’re here. Later when you return to earth, it will help answer many questions many others have.”

Allen was still confused but thought it was best if he stayed quiet for a while and just observe what was happening around him.

Gabe pointed ahead. "We've almost reached the palace."

Allen lifted his eyes to the horizon. He was once again overcome with awe at the sight before his eyes. "The palace is gigantic, and it glows; is it made of gold?"

The whole structure sparkled. The roof, walls, great high spiral towers, and the gates were made of pure gold. Embedded in the gates were very large pearls.

"Wow"! Nothing on earth had ever entered his mind that would prepare him for this. Allen let out an extended whistle, then, breathed out loud, "It's beautiful!"

"I thought you would be impressed." Gabe patted Allen on the back, "Getting pretty normal".

The pearly gates swung open and a voice spoke, "Welcome, Allen and Gabe. Please, come in."

Allen was shocked. *How did the greeter know my name?* He looked around, hoping to discover where the voice came from. Standing before him was a most beautiful creature, as usual very large yet not threatening in any way. The creature's face was warm and friendly with gentle eyes that shone brightly. A kind smile tugged on the corner of the being's mouth. A sense of peace swept over Allen. He felt safe

and sensed he had nothing to fear, but then something else about the facial features of the creature drew his attention. They looked like a girl's face. Allen remembered no male or female in this kingdom. He just accepted the fact without knowing how to explain it.

When the creature moved slowly toward Allen, he noticed she was wearing a stunning robe with magnificent gold trim around the wrists, collar, lapel, and bottom of the robe. *She's wearing golden boots too! And she has one of those sparkly earrings!*

Allen was captivated by the creature and the warm welcome. The greeter beckoned him to enter.

Gabe took Allen's hand and said, "I am going to leave you in the care of Unice. Your audience with Theos will be conducted by her." Before Allen could respond, Gabe quickly turned and disappeared from sight. He felt a brief reluctance for a moment but then Unice held out her hand and beckoned Allen to follow her

She walked down a seemingly endless hallway. As far as Allen could see were tremendously high ceilings with skylights in the shape of huge golden chandeliers. The light coming from them cast shimmering rivers of color spilling over the walls and floor. Some looked like revolving crystal balls. They went on and on for as far as he could see. At the distant end of the hall Allen could barely make out what he thought resembled a throne. Normally he couldn't see clearly from



such a distance but its brightness and its size caused it to stand out. *It must be Theos' throne!*

Because of Unices' great size, she walked with giant strides. Allen had to run to keep up. He chuckled inside because he remembered how he would have to run to keep up with his dad when he was very little and that time with Gabe in the city, now here he was little again trying to keep up.

As they marched down the hall, Allen was fascinated by the many doors. Each one was engraved with beautiful gems and painted designs. He wondered what was behind them. Finally, Unice stopped at one. She opened it and beckoned Allen to enter. The room was colossal. At one end was a gigantic screen with a large comfy looking couch in front of it. As they approached it Unice pointed and then requested to Allen "please sit down" as she patted the cushion seat.

Allen eyed his new companion and couldn't imagine what was going to happen next.

She continued, "before I show you something very special, , I want to tell you a little bit more about why you're here. I don't know all the details of why Theos chose you, but I do know you have been given an extremely important task." Unice graciously pointed her finger at Allen as she continued. "You've been chosen to learn a universal truth. Your

purpose for being here is that after you learn it, you'll return to your people and communicate this truth to them."

"But I'm so young. How do you expect me to learn all this truth?"

Allen's face again showed a questioning appearance "and who's going to listen to me?"

Sympathy shone in Unices eyes. "Well, let me say the truth is simple and the help you will receive is powerful and unlimited."

Allen nodded as if he was making a mental note. "That sounds good, but I can't believe I can become a person that will make any difference on earth."

"At least you know you're here, so why not just plug in with us and see what happens?" Unice did her best to encourage Allen.

"Oh, all right! I guess it's the least I can do." Allen quickly got used to the idea that he really didn't have much choice. *Ready or not, here I come.*

# Chapter 16

## *Genesis*

"I understand you went through the replay of Vulpines rebellion and saw how he and his followers were banished from the Kingdom of Light." Unice gently placed her hand on Allen's shoulder.

"Yes," Allen's bobbed his head.

"As you know, that unfortunate incident took place many millenniums ago. Vulpine had been given great power by Theos and was second in command in the kingdom. Unice raised a brow as she continued. "Vulpine was not satisfied with what he had; he wanted more. And for some reason he really believed he could dethrone Theos and rule in His place. Ever since his banishment to the Dark Region, he has been trying to get even with Theos. He's very angry and treacherous—and he seeks revenge."

Allen leaned back. "I noticed he has an enormous band of followers."

"Yes, they all took part in the rebellion. Vulpine promised them they would rule with him after he became the monarch. They were all banished with him." Unice cocked her head and spoke with urgency. "They're called Duns. Vulpine controls them with an iron fist. His sole

purpose for existence is to destroy anything or anyone that belongs to Theos or is made by Him. He appears to have unlimited command of these demons and controls them with no other purpose in mind than destruction.”

Unices words struck Allen like a slap to the face. “But why didn’t Theos just kill Vulpine?”

Unice gave a quick shrug. “There are many theories. The one that makes the most sense is this—Theos never uses His power to destroy. He is the Creator. Vulpine is the destroyer. No one knows when, but we do know sometime soon there will be a final end to Vulpine, along with all those who serve him. Until then, there is a battle going on between the forces of *Light* and the forces of *Darkness all over creation*. With a sharp vocal impact she emphasized, “It’s the fiercest on earth!”

“Whoa!” Allen’s mouth dropped open as he got the picture, “Kinda like a cosmic conflict!”

“That’s a great term to describe it.” Unice went on and explained more about the forces of light and darkness and as she did, Allen remembered Stacy speaking about light and darkness, but he didn't really understand or even give it much attention then. But now things were making more sense.

"I think I've given you enough to think about for now, Allen." Unice stood and walked toward the huge screen in front of them. "I want to show you something that will add to your understand even more."

Without warning the room went dark! The sound of sudden thunderous explosions took Allen's breath away. He felt as if he had been catapulted out of his chair and was flying through space. A large hand tightly grasped his. "Unice! I'm glad that's your hand."

Unice leveled a look of sheer delight at Allen and then yelled, "Enjoy!"

Her voice trailed off as the sight and sounds played out in breathtaking splendor. *What's happening?*

Allen was astonished as the whole screen sprang to life and he was blitzing through space. An entire panorama was being created right before his eyes. Planets, stars, and galaxies were all flung into space, and there in the midst was a Magnificent Being, directing the whole spectacle. Harmonious music flooded the airways just like it did in the stadium. After each rhythmic drum roll, the Magnificent Being flung a star into space and called it by name. He placed multitudes of them carefully and delicately in their assigned orbits. Each time He hung a star in place, a cheer from an unseen throng would crest and break like crashing wave on the seashore. *This was mind boggling! How desperately he wished someone was here to see this with him.*

Then he heard a low rumble begin to increase in intensity and volume. The noise swelled until it became a deafening roar. A giant chariot rolled across the heavens, pulled by six magnificent white stallions. As they galloped, they met an invisible roadway and a cloud of dust burst into a brilliant bright vapor that unfolded into millions of stars and countless Milky Ways, each taking their positions in this vast emptiness of space. No sooner had the stallions disappeared than Allen found himself experiencing another mind-bending act in the creation of the universe. How could he ever find words to describe what he was seeing? *It's like a giant rocket a skyrocket to be exact raced through the heavens.*

Allen covered his ears with his hands as he awaited the shattering explosion; it streaked across the blackness. Then the ear-piercing boom as the blast lit up the nothingness with trails of light in huge circular balls of fire. Each pocket of light streaked across the expanse and spiraled into its own personal orbit. Great heavenly bodies filled the vastness with their splendor.

As with the creation of the City of Light, all this was happening in what appeared to be slow motion.

*Spectacular!* Allen stood in awe as planets spun around suns, moons circled around planets, and great galaxies loomed as clouds of dazzling color. Shooting stars streaked through the sky as the heavenly

host burst forth with singing. *This is breathtakingly beautiful!* Allen was totally overwhelmed. *I can't breathe! Could I be witnessing the creation with my own eyes?*

The Magnificent Being orchestrating this spectacle focused His loving attention on one creation in a manner reflecting intense caring. He carefully cradled it in His arms and brooded over it, taking more time and concern than with any of the others. It radiated a very beautiful reflection of blue. The Magnificent Being gently placed it next to a sun that orbited its equator, arranged some planets around it, spoke a word, and created a moon to reflect delicate rays of light. Allen was sure this one creation of the universe held a special place for this heavenly Architect. He wasn't positive but he was quite sure it was earth because he had seen pictures of it transmitted from space on television and this looked quite similar.

Suddenly it became powerfully still and quiet. Allen's eyes darted back and forth as something caught his attention. He noticed the outline of another being off in the distance. He blinked and squinted, trying to catch a clear glimpse of whoever it was, but it was almost invisible in the darkness. He kept blinking and squinting; then his focus revealed the creature. *Vulpine! And behind him were hoards of dark creatures—the Duns.*

Gradually the whole scene began to dim and Allen could only hear a sinister laugh echoing down through the corridors of the universe. *What could Vulpine have seen that had given him a reason to laugh and sneer?*



# Chapter 17

## *The Dark Region*

As quickly as Allen's cosmic adventure started, it ended.

"Whoa!" Allen did that shaking his head routine again hoping it might clear his thoughts, then tucked his hands in his pockets, and looked up at Unice now sitting beside him on the couch. "Was that what I thought it was?"

"What do you think it was?" Unice smiled all the way to the corners of her beautiful eyes.

"Well, I thought it was the creation of the universe." Allen gulped down a tightening in his chest. "And at the end I think it was the Creator ever so gently putting the earth in place."

"You're very sharp, young man." Unice stood and clapped her hands. "You're correct and for that I will give you a standing ovation." And she did. It was quite a sight for Allen to see this beautiful creature standing there clapping like some kid that had just won a prize from a popcorn box or something.

Allen remained seated and said 'Thank you, thank you very much, he pulled off an old Elvis Presley impersonation he had heard his dad

imitate for a laugh and would you believe it, Unice got it! And it had the same effect; a good laugh for both at his wisecrack.

Then Allen asked another probing question: "But Unice, what about what happened at the end; that was Vulpine, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was and his performance at the end that reflected a scheme he had discovered to bring great pain and misery to Theos."

"How," Allen asked?

"I can't answer that right now, but during the rest of your stay you'll find out." Unice turned to leave. "I must leave you moment; I need to find out if we should go in to Theos now or if He has other directions for us. Wait for me here, I'll be right back.

Another knot lodged in Allen's stomach and his level of stress began to rise. It looked like his audience with Theos was going to happen soon. *What will I say? How will I stand before Him? Should I bow? What if my voice quits on me like it did when I met the mayor of my city that time? I wanted to crawl into a hole, but this is a thousand times more intimidating than meeting the mayor. Theos is . . . he is . . . Well, there's nobody more powerful than He is! Machine gun kid again.*

Unice made a hasty exit, leaving Allen in the great room alone. His throat felt parched and dry and it caused him to cough. An echo from his cough came back to him just as if someone else had coughed. He

coughed again. The same echo mimicked him. Allen chuckled to himself. "Hello!"

The echo repeated, "Hello!"

"How are you?" Allen stifled a laugh so he wouldn't miss the echo.

"How are you?"

"My name is Allen."

The echo replied, "My name is Allen."

"Are you my echo?" Allen asked.

"No, I'm a real voice."

Allen was startled. What happened to the echo?

Allen noticed a figure. This one was startling in a new way. It had wings, a beautiful robe, cool boots, and snow white hair, but its features were very young, like a child. Then to top it all off, he was only about as tall as Allen.

"Hi, my name is Hellost. I have been sent to take you to see Theos."

Even though this new character's voice sounded pleasant, a shiver crawled down Allen's back.

"Thanks, but no thanks. Unice is coming to get me."

"Well, she sent me." Hellost stuck out his hand to shake Allen's.

"Come quickly! We don't want to keep Theos waiting."

Allen was a little suspicious, but if this messenger was for real, he didn't want to keep Theos waiting either. "I'm coming." The two

moved quickly to a door near the back of the auditorium, Hellost opened it and they exited.

Without warning, everything went black!

“Hey! What’s going on?” Allen’s legs were tied together and his hands were secured behind his back. It didn’t matter how hard he struggled, he couldn’t break loose. A heavy hood was placed over his head.

“Hushhhhhhhhh!” A voice hissed in his ear.

Somebody elevated Allen up in the air. He was sure he could hear the beating of wings.

His mind raced with all kinds of thoughts. *Am I going to arrive at the throne of Theos? Am I headed home? Did I make a mistake in going with this creature called Hellost? Where is Mike or Gabe or Unice? As Allen’s questions grew, so did his fear. Whatever is happening can’t be good!*

Suddenly the beating of wings stopped. Allen was let down and the chains were removed from his hands and feet. The hood was still over his head. At least he thought it was, but when he reached up to feel it, the hood was gone. He stood in darkness like he had never experienced before. . . . Wait a minute. Yes, he did. It was when he was crouched at home waiting for the wave to hit. At that time he remembered he could almost taste the darkness.

"Is anyone there?" He whispered faintly. On one hand, he hoped someone would answer, but on the other hand, he hoped no one would. Then he felt himself being dragged along. He couldn't see who it was. *Where was he? Who was there?*

"Put these on!" The demanding voice sounded like Hellost.

Allen felt something thrust into his hand. As he tried to determine what it was, he recognized the shape as a pair of very small eyeglasses. He slipped them on. When his eyes adjusted, he saw a creature dressed in attire Allen had seen before. *The Duns wore that kind of clothing!* His vision was not very clear. Objects appeared like something he had seen on television. They resembled those night vision glasses used by the military to see in the dark. Everything had a deep green color. Allen could see some creatures slinking through the darkness. He peered at his captor. "Where am I?"

A voice answered, "You are in the Dark Region!" Allen's knees trembled. He could hardly stand up. His hands began to sweat. He was determined to find out what was going on and tried to put on a brave voice. "Why?"

"You are a chosen one of Theos. I was instructed to find you and bring you here. I never dreamed it would be so easy." The creature taunted Allen with a sinister look.

Allen's spine stiffened. "Are you the one that came into the room and told me you were taking me to Theos?"

The creature never answered, but beside him Allen could see a wig, a robe, and a false face lying on the ground. He had tricked Allen. Then he remembered he never checked for the earring. How foolish of him.

"You lied to me," protested Allen.

The creature cackled. "You believed me and that's your problem."

"Hellost!" a voice shattered the darkness. "You must report at once!"

Something grabbed Allen by the wrist. Allen could feel a powerful grip lock around his arm, yanking him toward a cell like enclosure and thrusting him inside. The door slammed shut and something ripped Allen's glasses off. A deeper and darker blackness engulfed him. Oh, such darkness!

Allen searched frantically for the glasses, dragging his feet hoping they had fallen somewhere near the door, but he couldn't find them. He held onto the cell wall with one hand and crawled along on his knees, hoping to feel them with his free hand, still nothing. He continued searching in a frantic frenzy but could not find them.

A panic attack seized him! Not a sound could be heard except for the beating of his heart. As time went on, he thought he heard other sounds too. He could hear the blood flowing through his veins and,

bizarre as it was, when he took a breath he could hear the air going down into his lungs and then flow up again as he exhaled. How keen his senses were, but right now they served no purpose except allowing him to hear these eerie sounds of his own body. No matter how he strained to listen, he heard nothing.

What a force of loneliness and hopelessness swept over Allen. All he knew was he was a prisoner in a world that was black and full of nothing as far as he knew. *Will anyone rescue me? How long will I remain like this, separated from everyone and everything? Would it be like this forever? Is this hell?*

Allen covered his face with his hands, hoping to drown out the anxious thoughts racing around in his mind, but it was no use. Memories waltzed through his head: family, friends, school, the Kingdom of Light, Vulpine. He frantically searched his mind for a way to escape. An endless carousel of the same thoughts consumed him. Because of the blackness, time didn't seem to exist because with no day or no night, how would you tell time?

Fright seized Allen repeatedly like waves. He screamed for someone to help him, but nobody came. There was only an eerie silence. He shook the cell. More silence. He cried because he was so afraid and lonely. "Someone, please help me!"

Allen crept away from the door, feeling his way along the wall of the cell. He was hoping to find an end, but there never was one—only a continuous cell wall. *This is crazy! I have to get out of here. I'm going out of my mind.* Even though Allen was always moving, he never became tired or felt hungry. However, he experienced an endless thirst for something cool to drink. Everything seemed unending. He hoped that if he kept moving, somehow there would be an end to this. *Surely sooner or later someone will help me.* Like a caged animal, Allen paced back and forth. He was losing hope.

*How many miles have I walked? How long have I been in here—a day, a year, a hundred years?* He was so defeated he wasn't even sure anyone would even remember who he was. He couldn't turn off his tormenting thoughts. The constant motion and the debilitating blackness were slowly suffocating him. *It's hopeless!*



# Chapter 18

## *Hope*

Allen was afraid to move, but he was certain he heard someone speak his name. *Am I imagining this or is it for real?* The voice was so low Allen could hardly make it out. He wanted to shout back, Here I am! He paused and thought about it some more. *Maybe it would be a good idea to answer in a whisper because whoever called my name didn't want anyone else to hear him.*

"I'm here," he answered in a hushed tone. He was so excited his whole body shook. *Who are you? Have you been sent to rescue me? Or are you here to add to my torment by teasing me and making me believe you are willing to help me but then leaving me to more loneliness?* As the countless questions hounded him, a hand gripped Allen's wrist. He winced, but remained silent.

"Don't say a word. Just do exactly as I tell you." The voice gained a little more strength. "Reach up as high as you can."

Allen obeyed. *Why have I never thought of trying to climb up and over the cell wall before? How stupid of me!*

As he reached up and stood on his tiptoes, he felt himself being assisted. Strong arms lifted his whole body as his fingers grasped the top of the cell wall a few feet over his head. There was no ceiling! When the mysterious being pulled him to the top, he realized he was perched on the crest of the cell wall on a very narrow ledge. Because of the darkness, it was difficult for him to know whether he was up or down. It didn't take long for him to sense that he was going to fall off the ledge. He figured it was just a few feet to the ground so he used the wall as a guide and jumped off the other side before he fell. He had the sensation of falling but not like he had imagined. He was falling down, down, down with no ground under him. *What have I done? Surely this is the end!*

A deathly quiet enveloped him as his speed increased and his body spun over and over. On and on this sensation of racing at a breakneck speed and spinning out of control possessed his being. The pain this created seemed to be tearing his very soul from his body. It felt as if his arms and legs were being pulled from him. *Surely this is the end kept repeating itself over and over in his brain.* Suddenly he heard the sound of wings faintly beating beside him.

Strong arms cradled him as a reassuring voice spoke. "Hold tight. We're almost down."

"I thought I'd never hear those words again," Allen muttered under his breath. With a gentle thud, they landed on solid footing. Allen's body quaked. *I have to pull myself together.*

Allen opened his eyes and sat motionless in the pitch blackness. *What's going to happen next? Who saved me from the cage and that terrifying fall?*

"Here! Put these on." The rescuer placed those night vision glasses over Allen's eyes again.

"Wow! What a wild experience to be able to see again even though things aren't in full color." Allen turned his attention to the rescuer.

"Who are you?"

In a robotic tone, the voice replied, "My name is Legion."

"You're a Dun!" Allen's voice was just above a whisper but steadier than he had thought possible.

The character standing before Allen was bent over. Allen noticed one of his wings was damaged, and his apparel was dirty and torn.

Legion could tell Allen was frightened. "Don't be afraid. I am not going to hurt you. I want to help you escape from here."

Allen's heart skipped a beat. *This is the news I've been waiting for, but . . . Allen eyed other creatures slipping around in the darkness. If they see me, I'm a goner.*

"Quickly, put these on." Legion tossed Allen a black robe, hood, shoes, and everything he needed to pass as a Dun.

The only thing that might expose Allen was his eyes. All Duns had red glowing eyes that helped them see in the dark. If they saw Allen's eyes, they would know he was an imposter and the only way he could see in the darkness was to wear the special glasses.

As Allen threw on his disguise, Legion carefully opened a door. There was a great stir ahead of them. Legion motioned for Allen to follow him. As they slowly and cautiously moved forward, Allen could see they were up very high on a rocky cliff overlooking a strange panorama.

Crouching down between the rocks, Legion motioned for Allen to be quiet.

The area was flat, about the size of Allen's high school activity yard back home. At the far end was a roadway extending off into the blackness of space. As he looked closer, he thought it looked more like a narrow airport runway than a road. Exiting off it were small groups of Duns. As one group left, another group arrived. As Allen watched the action, there was something different about the ones returning from those leaving. Often those returning were accompanied by creatures who were not Duns. Allen couldn't tell exactly who or what they were.

*They look like humans, but I'm too far away to know for sure!*

At the front end of the runway was an area where smoke billowed from a large pit in the ground. A glow emanating from this abyss cast eerie reflections on a huge rock wall directly behind it.

Allen cast an apprehensive stare toward this sight. *Is it a fire?* He thought there must be some sort of blaze in a pit, but with his glasses, this glow didn't appear red. *This place is creepy!* He decided to inch his way closer. He crept up steps leading to a plateau above the pit and there he saw creatures ascending and descending. A motion off to one side caught his attention, big time. The returning Duns after a time walked up the steps and stood before a humongous creature sitting on a throne-like structure high above them. The creature seemed to be intently instructing them. They stood waiting in groups of two or more. After a few minutes of direction, they bounded down the steps and scurried off via the runway with their wings flapping loudly.

Allen squinted, trying to get a closer look. When he recognized the creature, he drew in an anxious breath. *It's Vulpine! I must be in the control room of the Region of Darkness.*

Legion's sharp eyes studied Allen. "Do you know what's going on?"

Allen's hopes had faltered. "No, it sure looks scary to me."

"I think you've guessed who that is: the master of this ghastly kingdom. He has incredible power in this realm and treacherous influence in the universe where he uses his cunning lies and deceit to

cripple and destroy truth. We're in slavery and he is the tyrant over all of us." Legion hobbled closer to Allen. "Since his removal from the Kingdom of Light, his whole reason for existing has been to destroy anything and everything Theos has created—any galaxy, star, sun, moon, and the whole universe if he could. His greatest focus is on a planet called earth. I believe you're from there."

"Yes, I am."

"There's no doubt Theos took great care and effort when He create it. He placed his greatest creation there—humanity. I don't know why He did it, but to Vulpine it doesn't matter. All he wants to do is destroy it and demonstrate his vengeance and hatred for Theos. He wants revenge for Theo's decision to banish him and his hoard of evil Duns." He hesitated and then a torrent of words spilled from Legion's twisted lips. "He constantly reminds all the Duns of the sentence carried out by Theos and drives them to a level of anger that almost matches his. They all hate Theos, His creation of earth, and earth's inhabitants. They want to get even!"

Allen found himself sympathizing with Legion. "What's your role in this, why are you helping me?"

"I once lived in the City of Light. I want to go back. I think Theos had every right to throw Vulpine out—and me too. We had it so good. I constantly wonder whatever gave me the idea that I needed more

than what I had.” Legion’s red eyes pooled with tears. “I listened to someone who convinced me I would be better off if I were in charge, if I had more and so the idea of being the authority and telling others what to do fed my pride. I believed a lie.”

Allen shifted nervously. “Man, I’m sorry, but I don’t see how I can help you.”

“I’ve wondered for so long if I might somehow be able to return. I think I’m different from the others that are controlled by Vulpine. I believe I am the only Dun who feels this way. Vulpine knows it and forces me to do twice as many of his demanding exploits than all the others. I’ve been punished for my thoughts and tightly controlled for many millenniums. There’s no end to it.”

Allen peered over his shoulder. He wondered if this was a trap. “I still don’t know what you want from me.”

“When I overheard some Duns say you were coming and that Vulpine was going to try to kidnap you, I decided to make a drastic move.” Legion’s eyes narrowed in desperation. “I devised a plan to help you escape from here. No one ever has but, I’m going to help you try.”

“You are?” Allen’s face mirrored astonishment.

“And if we make it to the City of Light, I wonder if you might consider speaking up on my behalf and maybe, just maybe, I could

somehow be given another chance.” Legion wrung his hands, sunk down on the ground, and buried his face in his hands. “I’m willing to work at the lowest job in the kingdom for all eternity if it would be possible. The risk is immense, but to remain here is hopeless.”

Allen was speechless. He was overcome with pity for this broken Dun.

A loud flapping of wings interrupted their conversation and they watched as more Duns arrived from their mission.



# Chapter 19

## *Learning Wisdom Beyond His Years*

"Where do the Duns go when they leave here?" Allen asked curiously.

"Well, as our turn comes up, we are summoned to stand before Vulpine; as we will very soon." Allen didn't want to think about that.

"He has a master plan for devastating anything created by Theos. Though Duns have access to the whole of the cosmos, our main efforts of destruction are focused toward the inhabitants of earth because they are the favorites of Theos.

Legion then made a statement that Allen found hard to believe. "We have great success there because many of those who live there exhibit the same potential for evil as Vulpine."

Allen rolled his eyes. "Now wait a minute. I know lots of people who say humans are good.

We have a social economic teacher in our school, who tells us we're all basically good, but he also said some people either allow or are forced into situations in their life that cause them to make

destructive choices and suffer dire consequences, but as a rule, he says, we're all good and the world's getting better."

"Well, Allen, some may see it that way but Vulpines' rebellious attitude is also alive and well; it's constantly tempting and deceiving you to become a top dog." Allen gave Legion an odd look and shrugged his shoulder and voiced, "Maybe It's true."

Allen felt quite bold and interrupted one more time. "My mom's always talking about me pushing to have my own way, but what's wrong with that?"

Legion's ebony face grimaced under his hood; Allen could see deep furrows appeared on his brow. He paused before he spoke. "That's a good question. Allen, your thoughts reflects your attitude. The Dark Region loves to use people's bad attitudes to stir up arguments, fights, and even wars among people on earth."

Allen let out a whistle. "I can't believe my thoughts make that much difference."

"It's key. Vulpine and his dark cohorts never give up trying to present selfish thoughts to your mind. Just think back in your own life and remember how many times you made yourself feel better by putting someone else down. Based on our experience over eons, we can guess what you're thinking and given enough opportunity, we'll

attempt to influence those thoughts that in turn impact your actions. Legion let out a sigh.

Allen listened, troubled. "You mean you can make me think wrong?" "No but after doing it so often you become your own master at it." Even though Legion had that black hood over his head, Allen could see that look of firm declaration in his expression.

At that moment Allen grew up to a level of wisdom many adults never achieve. He recognized how the conflicts between good and evil work. And the most remarkable thing about it all was..... he was learning it from Legion, a creature from the Dark Side.

In this pause before their attempt to escape, he wondered if he would ever be able to share this experience with anyone.

*What if I am caught and have to return to that horrible confinement? What if some other endless doom awaits me?*

Legion interrupted Allen's tormenting thoughts. "Don't let any thought of failure during our escape creep into your mind right now. Try to hang on to what I just told you."

"Wow! It's true. You do know what I am thinking."

Legion shook his head. "Make sure you get it right Allen; no matter what thoughts we place before you---it's you that makes the final choice.

“I may never be able to have a time talking to you like this ever again and I know your young but I believe if you see this deception process, so take it back with you and perhaps others will become messengers of Light, a Light that will expel darkness in so many lives.

“I think there’s still time for me to tell you one more thing, something that you can tuck away in your mind and as your adventure ends, and you share it back on earth, the reason all this happened will always be with you.” Allen was encouraged by the positive way Legion talked about their escape and this sound high on his list too.

Legion continued. “These are the causes of evil, not the source. Remember, they are the **cause**. It is important to remember the difference.

“Want to hear them?” Legion’s wisdom intrigued Allen.

“Of course,” Allen gave his full attention; he knew it was very important for him to get his full mind in gear.

“First, your people get pleasure out of having something but greater pleasure out of having more of it than others.” Legion’s tone intensified.

“Second, they talk, act, and live as if they are better than others.

Third, no matter what they have they’re never satisfied—even when they do have more than they possibly need, they’ll try to get even more just to show their power.”

Allen's mind whirled. He rubbed his forehead. "Wow! That's heavy. I'm not sure I understand what you mean. Can you say that again and make it real simple?"

"I'll try." Legion smiled and leaned in closer.

"The first point means you always want to have more of and better than---what others have. The old 'me first' idea. Selfishness always wants to be first."

"Got ya."

"Second, you talk and act as though you're better than others, boasting inside with your thoughts and then bragging outwardly with your actions."

"Aha!" Allen waved one finger in the air. "You mean like getting something or doing something that no one else has done, then feeling important inside and bragging about it?"

"Well, that's sort of the idea."

"I think I understand."

"Great!" Legion rubbed the back of his neck.

Allen glanced up at Legion and took a deep breath. "Go ahead. I think I'm ready for you to explain the last point to me."

Legion's face brightened.

"The final point is an attitude---"Let me show you how powerful I am. Allen, this arrogant spirit has caused death and destruction

beyond measure. Right from Vulpine to the schoolyard bully—this is evil at its worst.”

Allen let out an exaggerated moan. “Oh, I don’t think I need any help with that one. I’ve seen its results since I’ve been here. In fact, Vulpine has really shown how this works big time, right?”

Legion gave Allen a quick nod. “Now you get the picture!”

“Yeah, but are you sure those are the only causes of evil?” Allen smacked his lips and shook his head. “It sounds too simple.”

“It’s of utmost importance that you grasp what I am telling you.” Legion circled Allen. “All evil falls within these three causes. They’re really simple but very subtle.”

A chill shot through Allen. “What does that mean?”

“It means that sometimes you might not even know or be willing to admit you’re acting in any of these ways, and that’s why it is easy to get trapped.” Legion stopped, collected his thoughts, and then continued. “Maybe this will help. There is one word that describes these three evils.”

“One word,” Allen always did like to keep things simple. “What’s that one word?”

“Pride!”

Suddenly without warning a bellow rang throughout the horror chamber. Vulpine was commanding some Dun's at full volume "do it the way I'm telling you!"

"There it is!" whispered Legion. This cause them both to crouch a little lower and talk a little softer. There was a lull in their conversation.

"Let me stop Allen with this final word. On earth folks hate pride in other people, but nobody's free from it. Most humans don't even think they have a problem with it, especially teenagers, because your world has taught you that these ways are normal." Allen's head kept bobbing as Legion explained further.

Time was running out and he was on a roll.

"If we discover you're indulging in these prideful thoughts, we shriek for joy because we can fan the darkened thoughts into actions by finding ways of mingling some lies with other thoughts in your mind. You believe those lies and act on them, destroying your relationships."

"Wow, now I see it. That's exactly what's happening back home with my friends. It gets real ugly."

"That's right. The earlier in anyone's life they discern how to turn from pride, the better chance they have of succeeding as they get older." Legion stared off into space. "These are the things Vulpine

believed, taught, and demonstrated, leading to his expulsion from the City of Light. Do you remember what you heard him say in the forest?"

Allen tilted his head to one side and nodded. "Yes, I remember, it was all about him. So Vulpine believed his own lies, many others believed him too and now he's trying to get people on earth to believe them."

"I'm glad to see my word of warning isn't falling on deaf ears!" Legion patted Allen's hand. "Now you're beginning to understand beyond your years. Can you see why you're **chosen?**"



# Chapter 20

## *Legion's Lesson*

Allen clutched his throbbing head. "I can see where I've made a mess of wrong choices."

"I know it's a lot to understand, but you'll be better for it in the end if you learn this lesson early." Legion patted his hand again.

Allen squeezed out a smile. "I want to learn. Tell me more."

"Are you sure you want me to go on?" Legion asked with an inquisitive look. "Hey, try me" Allen already felt he was growing up as this timeless messenger poured out his understanding.

Legion stood taller and began again. "All beings willfully living a life of pride sooner or later will experience the consequences of their choices. High on that list of consequences is the destruction of relationships because those who allow pride in their lives always think they're more important than anyone else. You're young, but if you stop for a moment, you can think of some people you know, maybe even friends who act in these ways and you probably don't like it. But worse yet, if you're willing to look closely inside yourself, you may see these seeds growing there."

A parade of memories marched through Allen's head. He remembered his part in many arguments and fights he had been involved in.

"And here's the frightening part," Legion raised his claws and shrugged his shoulders in disbelief. "Duns don't have much difficulty tricking earthlings into believing this lie."

A shudder ran through Allen. "I know I've believed it."

Legion fell silent for a few moments as memories of his former life in the City of Light flooded over him. "I've been paying for my decision for a long time. Thoughts of my life in the City of Light with Theos have never left me; I long for it."

"What was it like for you there?" You could see Allen's concern for his friend.

"The inhabitants practice Theos' single wonderful eternal law and the result is that everyone cares deeply for everyone else. What a difference it makes! Oh, if only I could return!"

Allen's mind was spinning from all these new truths, and he wondered how much more he could absorb but he wanted to ensure that his escape partner knew the depth of concern he had for him.

"Now I have one more tidbit of information for you before we escape." Legion looked as though tears would begin to leak from his eyes. A crying Dun, Allen was touched with compassion.

He gave Legion his total attention. "Go ahead. I'm ready."

Legion's face tightened. "Your question about where the Duns go when they leave here?"

"Yes, I'd like to know that."

"For a long time on earth, things were going along well for Vulpine. He became known as *Prince of the Air*. It looked as if there was no stopping him from achieving his goal of destroying Theos' creation. However, Theos did something quite remarkable. He actually visited earth. It was really extraordinary and clever how He did it."

"Theos came to earth?" Allen's face registered amazement.

"Yes, He became an earthling. He chose an area in the midst of a major stronghold of Vulpine. He entered, lived there for quite a while, and revealed to the people His remarkable plan for delivering humans from slavery to Vulpines constant temptations and lies. He told them how Vulpine operated." Legion's story was captivating to Allen.

"He also told them how they should live by one timeless way and even demonstrated it for them. Then, a final surprise, he told them about the City of Light and how they could become a resident."

"Wow! Theos did that for all of us." Allen took a long breath.

"Yes, and there's more. During that time Vulpine used all his cunning to try to destroy Theos because it appeared He was defenceless since He no longer resembled the powerful Creator that

Vulpine knew. He was human and subject to all the temptations of humanity. One day Vulpine was watching and saw Theos walking alone in a deserted desert area.” Legion’s words tumbled out faster and faster. “Vulpine is a master of disguise and tried to trick Theos. He introduced himself as a powerful ruler over the empire that Theos was living in. He offered great power and authority if Theos would side with him in ruling over the empire. He was using the same seeds of pride he used on all those who believed him when he led the rebellion.”

“Did Vulpine’s scheme work?” Allen gasped.

“No, and with that failure, every Dun was called into relentless service. Vulpine was furious. We spent unlimited time with Vulpine and other evil ones in the war room, trying to come up with new ways to get rid of Theos. A couple of them almost worked.”

The hairs on the back of Allen’s neck rose. “Really”

“Yes. Let me tell you a remarkable incident that happened to me. Around the same time Vulpine tempted Theos, I had been dispatched to earth right into the area where Theos was living. I’d made a significant capture. I had invaded a mortal.” Legion’s lips stiffened the instant he saw the horror on Allen’s face. “It’s always our goal to take up total residence in their bodies if we can, for two reasons. First, so we don’t have to keep returning here if we have made a foothold in enemy territory. Second, we are destroying a creature Theos has

created by dominating and controlling him. Ultimately, we are commanded to rob them of their personality, steal their mind, and if possible destroy their body. Of course, we have many different levels of success.”

Allen’s jaw tightened. Under his breath he muttered, “I can think of some examples on earth where Duns have taken over people’s minds.”

“I’m sure you can.” Legion took half a step away from him and continued his story. “I had almost completed the full job with this mortal. I had his mind and personality locked up. He lived like an animal alone in a graveyard. To say the least, this was humiliating for any human and a great victory for Vulpine.”

Allen’s face whitened. “What happened next?”

“Theos came along one day and discovered what we had done. He ordered us to leave our captive. The reason I say, “us” is because by that time many others had invaded him too.”

“I’ve noticed you work in groups,” Allen replied.

“Yes, we often control in packs. That’s one way we take greater and greater control. If one of us has to leave for some reason, the others continue their hold. We had to obey Theos because we have no physical power to combat Him. We learned that at the rebellion.” Legion’s lips twitched and continued, “He removed us from that mortal with one word. Even as a human, He was still able to yield a power of

good over us greater than our powers of evil learned from Vulpine. When He commanded us to leave our possession, we didn't know where to go. He pointed to a herd of pigs on the hillside and sent us to enter them instead of the human."

"Pigs, you entered pigs?" Allen curled his upper lip.

"Yes, it was really humiliating for us. The pigs didn't know what had happened to them, but they began to run. Usually, once we invade any living thing, we can't escape from their body until their death, and then we are free to seek others to inhabit." Legion frowned and completed his story. "All the pigs headed for a cliff that overlooked a large lake. In their frenzy, they plunged over the cliff and were killed by the fall or drowned in the water. We were released."

"Man, I bet that shook things up!" Allen's gut twisted. "Just hearing it shakes me up."

"Yes, it did, but it upset Vulpine more." Legion's red eyes flashed. "It was another crushing defeat for him. He was even more furious with us when we returned to report what had happened. I was severely punished and so were the others because many mortals were released from our grip during Theos' visit to earth."

"Vulpine sure has control issues!" Allen cupped his hands together. "He wants to control everyone!"

"That's his ultimate goal, but Theos' plan messed things up for us. On top of it all, a multitude of earthlings became a part of what He was doing and teaching. His life caused quite a stir and many followed Him. They told others about his rescue plan, and we lost more and more captives." Legion's nostrils flared. "This conflict has raged throughout the ages on earth and in the whole created cosmos."

Allen closed his eyes. "This all sounds like something from a horror movie and I'm playing the leading role."

"There's a lot of truth to that." Legion managed a stiff-lipped smile. "Those Duns you see being dispatched are the main way Vulpine continues his attacks, especially on those who live on earth. We never give up and are always trying to discover any possible way to inhabit, harass, or at least confuse those who live there. We've been experiencing more success recently."

"Why do you think that is?" Allen asked.

"I think it's because of the intense interest growing in 'The Dark Side.' Humans, especially youth, seem fascinated with it. Movies, television shows, books, and of course, the Internet are full of it. Vulpine is subtly increasing his attacks, and all his brutes are working overtime to take advantage of it." Legion's gaze was unflinching.

Allen tensed, wondering what Legion was referring to. *Could there be any connection between what he was hearing and the situation*

*back at his home?* He decided to ask, "How do you go about gaining some type of control or power over humans?" Allen thought if he could understand how evil works; maybe he could make a difference.

"It would take me a long time to tell you all the ways he's been around a long time and is very sly and crafty with what he has learned over the ages but he teaches his imps well."

Legion tried to convey the seriousness of the situation. "However, the most important thing we do is try to make people doubt the reality of a creature like Vulpine. At school you've probably heard your teachers tell the class, 'Oh, there is evil, but it just happens.' Or they taught evil is a natural result of your culture." Allen's face remained expressionless for a moment. Then he frowned. "That's how it is at home, it's exactly what most of my friends believe."

"Just like that we capture young minds." Legion clapped his claws together. "Along with that is the idea believed by humans, that there is no real planned effort to destroy or exterminate mankind." Oh they may talk about a comet or overpopulation, green house gases even atomic destruction but not a Being that's trying to use any of these to achieve his goal.

"I see." Allen's head ached.

"And lastly, we do our best to convince humans that if there are some 'forces or spirits' in another dimension, they aren't to be feared.



They can be contacted and made to do the bidding of the person contacting them.” Legion rubbed his temples. “If we can get humans to think this way, we’re in. Many humans try to become familiar through some sort of contact with us. Most often this is done behind closed doors because if done openly, many humans would laugh at the behavior or argued about it---even dismissed it. Even Stacy told you not to tell your parents, right?”

Now this made the most sense to Allen. That's exactly what Stacy said about contacting the 'other side'. Allen's fear subsided and he became fascinated with what Legion was telling him. "How do you know so much?"

"We must know everything we can so we can find ways to inflict destruction on any mortals who give us opportunity.” Legion shot Allen a wide-eyed glance. “Much of our job is done after humans have accepted all this so fully that they believe these lies on their own without us needing to ‘whisper in their ear.’ Their darkened thoughts become a normal way of thinking. Vulpine has taught us well.”

Allen wondered how he got into a situation like this and how was he going to get out. His fascination with what he was being told had briefly taken his mind away from the task at hand. Escape!

# Chapter 21

## *Attempting to Escape*

Allen felt a little wobbly inside. His voice quivered as he asked, "What's the plan you have to get us out of here?"

"I have the perfect plan." Legion glanced down at his claws. "We're going to trick Vulpine into thinking we are ready to transit to earth. He never lets us travel alone. There always has to be at least two or more leaving at the same time; he's afraid if one of us went alone we may try to escape."

Allen studied every word. "Don't you think you could really hide from him?"

"There's a whole universe out there to vanish in but when you have a companion traveling with you the possibility of not being discovered is very small." Legion's answer came easily. "Vulpine figures one of his imps would rat on the other because they fear his brutal punishment. He would immediately dispatch his controlling goons of darkness that inflict those swift and severe consequences on any that disobey him. That is not a pretty sight to behold. No one has succeeded in escaping yet!"

Discouragement flooded Allen's face. "I was afraid you were going to say that."

Legion's expression grew more serious. "We have a bigger problem than that."

"What's that?" Allen felt his heart sink.

"You have no wings!"

"Oh my gosh!" exclaimed Allen.

"Shush!," Legion pressed his claw to his lips. "We're dead in the water if they hear us."

"Sorry." Allen's shoulders slumped forward. "What are we going to do?"

"I've made a pair of wings for you. Of course, they're fake and you won't be able to flap them to fly. I'll have to hold on to you and together we will try to make our way off the ramp." Legion didn't look a bit worried as he continued, "Vulpine often instructs us and tells us where to go, but he doesn't watch us leave. He's too busy barking orders. We'll have to time our climb up the steps just right, so that when we come down others are getting their instructions."

At first, Allen's words didn't come quickly, but after a few moments they tumbled out this confession, "Boy, this whole plan sounds risky to say the least."

"You're right. There is a risk, but after considering the countless alternatives, I can't see any other way." Legion shifted from one foot to the other. "You must not say anything, but be very careful to do everything I tell you. We can take all the time necessary for you to get the hang of what needs to happen. Watch closely and let's rehearse the actions carefully."

Allen looked over his shoulder. "Are you sure it's safe?"

"We're quite safe for the time being."

Along with Legion, Allen watched and studied Vulpines briefing session. All the creatures approached their leader in a definite way and addressed him as Prince Vulpine. That was new for Allen; he had always just heard him called Vulpine. Legion told him Vulpine had taken the title after he was expelled to the Dark Region. They watched carefully as certain bows, salutes, and other rituals were performed.

Allen whispered softly to Legion, "I noticed nobody gets real close to Vulpine when they approach him." "He won't let anyone come near him, I wonder if there's a sliver of fear that someone might try to harm him. There isn't any love lost between him and any dweller of this confinement. Only fear."

Legion and Allen continued to study every aspect of the briefing session. They realized when their turn came, they only had one chance—and it had to be perfect. An intense period of time had

elapsed as they concentrated on every move the ‘destroyers’ performed before taking their flight.

Then the moment of decision; “I believe we’re ready.” Allen nodded slowly and turned his eyes to Legion.

Legion crept over to a cleft in one of the rocks and motioned for Allen to follow. “Here are your wings.”

The feathery wings looked quite real to Allen, at least from what he could tell with his night vision glasses. He wished he could take a peek without the glasses, but he couldn't chance being discovered. Legion had made a harness to hold the wings securely to Allen's body. He tightened them carefully and then cut two slots in the back of Allen's robe so the wings would protrude. Legion winked at Allen, "They look quite real if you ask me.”

“I sure hope so.” Allen clutched the harness tightly. “Let’s roll!”

Legion waved one claw in front of Allen’s face and cautioned, "When we get to the top, just before we approach Vulpine, take off your glasses and hold on to me. If he should see them on you, he would know immediately that something was wrong. I’ll guide us through the whole process; follow my lead and keep your head down. Are you ready?”

"Go”, Allen took a deep breath, they were on their way.

They descended down from their secure rock hideaway and crossed over the flat area to the bottom of the stairs leading up to Vulpines throne. Allen never said a word but complained in his mind. *Man, it sure is a long way up. I bet there are at least a hundred steps.*

The stairs were carved out of solid rock and displayed signs of heavy wear from the countless feet ascending then descending over the eons. As Allen climbed higher, the vista became more breathtaking with every step. At one point he could see down into the huge abyss that Vulpines throne overlooked. The walls were vertical, and it resembled a huge boiling pit. Dark clouds of vapor rose from its surface, and a strange odor filled the air. A sick feeling filled Allen's gut. The higher they climbed the more he struggled to breathe. *How can this endless number of creatures ascending and descending on those narrow ladders bear this suffocating heat?* As Allen looked around, he suddenly realized this dark world had existed for countless centuries and was locked into endless repetitive acts, playing out over and over again. *These inhabitants are living in agonizing slavery. What would it be like to be ensnared here?* A loud noise jolted Allen back to his senses.

"Oh, oh," Legion's red eyes flickered. "It's Helop he whispered, the commander of the demons. He's charged with the security of this kingdom."

Allen gulped when he spied an enormous being emerging from the edge of the huge pit; “He looks like something out of a nightmare; a full blown Halloween winner.

Helop had some human characteristics: arms, legs, and an oversized head. Its shape constantly changed with fluid movements. The nightmare emerged from inside the great caldron. Allen watched with wonder as he glided toward the runway that allowed the creatures to come and go, he bellowed commands! A group was preparing to depart. He suddenly charged into the middle of them and began to hurl them back, away from their exit. The fighting was fierce, loud shouts and groans filled the great chasm. Courageously they struggled but were no match for this enforcer of their doom.

“Those aren’t Duns!” Allen’s eyes grew wide and he gasped. They resembled human forms, but because of the darkness Allen couldn’t be certain. A question captured his mind; are there others trapped here like he was?

The conflict continued with fierce intensity. The end was inevitable. Those trying to escape were no match for Helop. With one great show of strength, the demon commander forcibly swept those trying to leave and forced them to the edge of the great crater. Instead of hurling them down into the pit, he barked the order “Open the Doors of Darkness!”

Allen winced as he watched them forced through the door. *Oh no!*

The door was slammed tight. The beings were heard as they were plunging into its depths of loneliness and blackness. The sounds made Allen's blood and breathing become suspended. He stood motionless and became further terrified because the demon commander had turned and looked up toward him. *He's spotted me?*

Then, a sigh of relief, he realized that the fiend was looking past him and up to where Vulpine was seated.

"No one escapes from here, master!" Helop shrieked. Vulpine gave a nod of approval. "Well done, my faithful one."

The monster turned and headed back to the edge of the inferno fueled abyss and slowly slithered down a ladder to its abode.

*No one escapes from here!* The words seared Allen's thoughts and he felt his heart skip a beat. *Here we are in the midst of an attempted escape and this happens.*

"It's too late to turn back now." Legion narrowed his eyes, squinting against the glare from the pit that just irrupted with its choking gas bellowing upward.

Allen was convinced they were about to experience the same as those whose escape attempt had just failed.



# Chapter 22

## *Panic*

The further Allen and Legion reached in their ascent toward Vulpine, the more Allen's knees shook. As they neared the top, they watched four other Duns leaving after receiving commands from Vulpine. Allen shaded his eyes, watching them make their descent. Panic seized him. He felt paralysis setting in and breathing became more difficult. He was certain his heart was about to burst.

"Almost there. Keep moving." Legion tried to encourage but sounded slightly nervous.

Allen sneaked a quick glance at Vulpine; He was as massive as Allen remembered and was dressed very similar to what he wore in the City of Light, but it didn't have the bright shimmering glow. *I bet it's because this place is so dark and gloomy.* Vulpine's face was set like a rock— expressionless, grim, but certainly not ugly. Allen was surprised. *I thought he would look like a monster.* Vulpine's eyes were fixed. Even from a distance, they appeared to look right through Allen. *He has x-ray vision. I'm doomed for sure.*

"Take off your glasses," Legion muttered under his breath.

Allen reached up very slowly, removed the glasses, and tucked them into the pocket inside his robe. *So far so good!*

Total blackness swallowed him up. He clutched for Legion's robe. As they finally made it to the top, Legion stopped. All the intense rehearsal they had practiced in the safety of the rock ledge was on the line.

Allen followed Legions lead. They bowed, saluted, and performed all the other rituals.

*Oh, God, please help me!* Allen held his breath, watching and waiting.

Vulpines command pierced the darkness. "Continue the invasion of Jason at 1000 South Main . . ."

Allen's mind went blank and black as the air around him. He knew that name and address! *Jason is the guy Stacy's mother cast a curse for!* In his nervousness he didn't catch all the instructions connected to hearing Jason's name. He didn't know what they were instructed to do but at this point he was convinced hanging on to Legion was his priority. *If I can just get back down those stairs and away from this scary place, I'll find out the details about Jason later.*

Legion led in the final salute. Allen responded in perfect unison. Then they turned, walked to the steps and began their decent. Intense noise echoed throughout this area of the Dark Region and Allen felt it

was safe to whisper a message to Legion without being overheard. "I think this is going to work. Can I put my glasses on?"

"Not yet. Wait until I tell you." Legion's voice was dry and raspy.

With just a few steps left to go, Allen suddenly tripped and lost his balance. Legion scrambled to hold him up but lost his grip. Allen tumbled down the last few steps and crashed to the ground! One of his wings broke off. A great commotion arose behind them. Allen heard Vulpines voice bellowing orders in the background, he also heard footsteps he knew were the Duns running toward them. Any moment he expected to feel himself seized and dragged before Vulpine, but then Allen had an outrageous thought. *Get up and battle your way to freedom! After all, you've been on your high school wrestling team for the past two years.* Allen took a deep breath and continued to psych himself up. *The Duns aren't as strong as the demon commander, and he's not here right now; wrestle for your life!* Allen was convinced he had nothing to lose. *If I'm going to clash, I gotta be able to see clearly.*

Before he could find his glasses, someone grabbed his leg. He frantically struggled to get free. Something else put a firm clamp around the other leg. Hope was fading fast as he was pinned down. *I'm going to be trapped forever in this chamber of horrors.*

A greater horror than Allen had ever experienced seized him. A bellow resounded throughout the darkness. *I recognize that voice. It's the demon commander!* Even without his glasses Allen could see him. There he was, bounding up over the edge with a host of creatures very similar to him, moving toward Allen and Legion.

*I wonder why he needs all those additional imps.* Allen felt an icy chill seize his whole essence.

His question was immediately answered when he heard that loud voice shout from what sounded like a huge bullhorn. "The chosen one has escaped!"

*The chosen one! There's that term again.* Now Searing heat and choking smells engulfed him and he had only an instant to grab the glasses in order to see the direction of the runway. He couldn't remember which pocket he had put them in, maybe in his jeans pocket. In a last ditch effort and with all his remaining strength, he reached in his pocket and moaned, "Not there! Oh, no" But he did feel something strange that he hadn't felt before. As he pulled it out, a startling event resulted.

Dazzling light expelled the black fog. A light so bright and pure it lit up the whole Kingdom of Darkness. "The earring is giving us light!" Allen waved the earring over his head. It had been in his pocket since the battle between Mike and Vulpine at the rebellion. The light

splashed blazing rays throughout the darkness, blinding their enemies. "I can see clearly now, Legion!"

Allen kicked the Duns who had grabbed his legs. His foot caught one of them right beside the head. He howled loudly and let go of Allen's leg.

The other one let go and cowered in fear when the light blinded his eyes.

The demon monster was ready to strike. Allen grabbed Legion, who was also blinded by the light, and shouted, "Trust me, Legion, and do what I say." Allen tugged on Legion's robe and together they ran to the edge of the runway. "Fly, Legion. Fly!"

Legion struggled. He didn't have the strength to lift both of them into the air. They stumbled and fell.

"Try harder, Legion. Try harder," Allen urged.

With his last bit of strength, Legion strained every fiber in his body. Then something happened that Allen had not experienced since he arrived in this strange world.

A breeze blew!!!!

Legion's extended his wings, into a glide position, the breeze gave them lift and both doomed candidates slowly mounted into the air. Higher, higher they ascended: with the wind under their wings and the light from the stone in the earring showing the way, they soared. Allen

quickly glanced back over his shoulder then reported “No Duns are following us, Legion.” So they departed the Dark Region, that chamber of horrors.

The Duns were blinded by the light. Their eyes could only see in darkness and were very slow to adjust to such a drastic change in light level.

The last glimpse brought relief like he hadn’t experience since entering this dimension. He spotted a host of demons railing and screaming in total confusion.

But then as so often happens here, a curt reminder that it may not be over. He heard a feeble frightening vocal threat. It was fading but still audible; we’ll get you! You’ll be sorry. No one has ever escaped from the Dark Region!

For an instant fear sliced again through Allen’s heart, but only for a fleeting moment. Free!!!!!! He let out a fierce shout of joy as he saw that the light was remaining with them but darkness was returning to the evil region.

They had escaped!

"We're free, Legion! We're free!" He couldn't stop shouting that word.

Legion rubbed his blind eyes. "Allen, what happened?"

"Let me tell you, my friend." As they headed away, Allen described all that had taken place. As the wonderful and happy account flowed from Allen's lips, sounds of giggling and bursts of laughter broke forth from both of them and drifted out over the land.

# Chapter 23

## *Flipped Out*

As Legion rubbed his eyes, he informed Allen that his sight was returning.

A delighted look spread over Allen's face. "That's wonderful! Can you tell where we are?"

Squinting, Legion rubbed his eyes again and said, "I think so."

Allen's voice was filled with anticipation, "Can you find the City of Light?"

The joyful reply came back, "Hey, no problem! I've traveled these regions for most of eternity you know." The delight and certainty in Legion's voice heightened Allen's hope and was accompanied by a chuckle.

Off in the distance Allen spotted some winged creatures quickly approaching, a new alarm rushed into his thoughts. *Is it the Duns? Is the demon threat about to become reality? Will we be recaptured?* As the group moved closer, sudden relief swept over Allen.

"Michael! Gabe!" Allen let out a welcoming whoop; it was a whole garrison of warriors from the City of Light. "Am I ever glad to see you!"



When Michael and Gabe threw their arms around Allen's neck, he was almost smothered under their great size. "Hey, give me some air" he pleaded. The two Goliath's quickly backed off and roared with laughter as their miniature charge joined in.

After this moment of joy Allen noticed two of the warriors had secured Legion in chains. One of the warriors shouted, "We've captured a Dun and have him as a prisoner!"

"No, no, no, he's my friend." Allen came to his defense immediately and pleaded with Mike to let Legion remain free.

Mike clenched his jaw and raised his tightened fist. "But he's a Dun and a threat to us."

"Please, Mike," Allen pleaded, "I'll explain it all to you later. Please let him go free."

Mike's heart softened when he saw the sincerity in Allen's eyes and gave the nod to release him

. "We were on our way to rescue you!"

Allen massaged his temples with his fingers. Hot tears welled up in his eyes, and he collapsed in Gabe's muscular arms. The strain of the whole experience had finally caught up with him. In a voice feeble from exhaustion and stress he asked, "Gabe, I was a prisoner for many years, where were you?"

Gabe spread his fingers over his heart. "I know it seemed long to you, but it wasn't long to us in this realm. Remember, there is no time here. The Dark Region is not a place where anyone wants to find themselves because there is no time there either and therefore no way of measuring it, captivity seems endless and escape seems hopeless."

"But I escaped, didn't I?" Allen's voice fell and he dropped his head in his hands.

"For now but soon you'll be given back to time in your realm; someday you could return here." Gabe raised his arm in the air. "This whole adventure is to show you the way to make your return and countless others a reality."

Allen didn't understand the full meaning of Mike's statement, but as he briefly pondered it, a question surfaced in his mind that countered Mike's incentive to return; *if people didn't enter the City of Light, where would they go?*

Suddenly in one sweeping motion, the whole troop banked umpteen degrees and started the journey back to the City of Light. Off in the distance, Allen could see the dark cloud over the domain that had held him captive and felt a shudder ripple through his body.

As they approached the city, Allen felt much better and found himself wondering what would happen when they landed. Even though Legion wasn't restrained, he was still surrounded by guards.

Allen was determined to defend his friend but wasn't sure how to go about it. He decided to chat with Gabe about this dilemma. He shared the whole story about his kidnapping, imprisonment, Legion's coming to rescue him out of the cell, and finally the escape plan and how it almost failed. While he was making his final point about reaching for the night vision eyeglasses, he remembered the earring in his pocket.

"Excuse me, Gabe. I have something I have to do right now." He cupped his hands over his mouth and hollered, "Mike!" From the front of the troop Mike answered back,

"What do you need?"

Allen beckoned for Mike to come to where he was. Mike exchanged a few words to another protector and turned the leading of the unit over to him. As Mike approached, Allen plucked the dazzling earring from his jeans pocket and handed it to Mike. "I have something for you."

The giant whooped and did a complete back flip in mid-air. Everyone cheered and laughed. Allen watched in amazement as these huge creatures celebrated. He made a funny face and asked, "Gabe, why is there so much excitement about giving the earring back?"

"Every one of our earrings are personally given by Theos. If you inspect each one up close, you'll see everyone is different. Each citizen

is given just one. Ownership allows access to Theos at any time.” Gabe grinned and shook his head. “Do you know what that means?”

Hope soared through Allen. “I think so.”

“Well, let me explain it to you. Imagine being able to ask for His help in any situation, to have access to His wisdom in making decisions addressing concerns or problems you may have.” Gabe’s eyes never left Allen. “To lose the earring is to lose a great privilege. Mike has been devastated since he lost his. Of course, he’s known and loved by everyone and all were feeling sadness for him.”

“I bet.” Allen struggled with his feelings. Man, I can't seem to keep my emotions under control. Everything is so real here.

Gabe told him a great search has been going on throughout the whole kingdom, but no one had found it. He didn’t have any idea how he lost it. “Do you know?” Gabe’s expression was earnest as he questioned Allen.

Again Allen's heart melted when he swapped looks with Gabe. He paused, pulled himself together, and described what had happened when Mike and Vulpine were in combat. “The earring fell into my hands when Mike and Vulpine were fighting just above my head.”

Gabe whispered “Amazing!”

Allen nodded firmly and turned to speak to Mike. "I'm so sorry I've kept the earring. To be honest, I had totally forgotten about it. Even when I was imprisoned, I never realized it was in my pocket."

Mike's hand swallowed Allen's hand. The giant said, "Do you remember what happened when you took the earring out of your pocket?"

"Yes. Darkness turned into light." Allen replied.

"That's the power of the earring. Not the earring itself, but the access it has to the protection of Theos. As long as you wear it, darkness cannot capture you; it may still harass you but never bring you permanent harm." Mike patted Allen's hand. "It's a sign that you belong to Theos. Darkness can never overcome the light. When I lost it, I was defeated by darkness."

Allen's mind flashed back to everything he had seen and heard since he arrived. "Wow!"

Mike confessed, "if Theos had not taken extraordinary measures to rescue me, I don't know what would have happened. Since I lost my earring, I've had a very difficult time remaining strong. I don't know what would have happened if it hadn't been for those who care for me like Gabe and all the others around me, Vulpine may have engaged me in combat again and I would have been defeated and taken captive.

Thank you, my young friend. You have no idea how precious this is to me.”

Gabe stretched out his arms “Time for a group hug!”

"Man, this group hug thing wouldn't fly back home with my buddies, but it sure is fun here." Allen laughed as he threw his arms around Gabe and Mike. It was like trying to hug a red wood tree.

Everyone cheered and jumped for joy. Then they did another round of back flips, front flips, and somersaults. Delight permeated every fiber of Allen’s being. *How wonderful it would be to live in a place like this forever!*

# Chapter 24

## *City of Light*

*The City of Light!* Allen spied the beautiful celestial city below. He observed something he had never noticed before. *I've never seen a sun, but there never has been any night. Where does the light come from?* Then he spotted the palace at the foot of the mountain where Theos lived. The light from His splendid home spilled out over the entire kingdom. It was like waves that rolled endlessly, sweeping over and through the whole Kingdom.

“Hey! That looks familiar!” Allen gazed at the gigantic stadium below. He was still amazed at its vastness. As gigantic as it was, everyone had a perfect view of whatever was happening. Allen was again overwhelmed, it was full of joyful citizens waiting to party. Allen, Gabe, and Mike along with the whole troop of warriors, headed for an empty section. They descended and found their seats. Music from the massive choir, trumpeters, and orchestra filled the arena. Allen was touched to the depths of his soul.

Gabe drew a long breath and pointed. “Look! There He is!”

Theos and the Phims entered with splendor. As usual, Allen could not find words to describe it. Praise, adoration, and applause ebbed and flowed throughout the stadium.

*"I'm getting goose bumps!" My emotions are going haywire again!"* His heart was deeply moved as he watched the love and appreciation everyone demonstrated toward Theos. *Is it possible for this kind of kingdom to really exist? There are never any disagreements. No one puts anyone else down. There is no disease! No crying! No one grows old! Everyone is wise and caring. Everyone showers love on everyone else!*

Gabe gently elbowed Allen in the ribs; he sensed the many questions rolling around in Allen's head. "It's been eons since Vulpine was cast out of the kingdom. Since then, unity and peace have ruled this entire domain."

"I see."

"Theos knows when the ultimate single action is practiced, the peace and harmony experienced here is available to all creatures no matter where they live."

"Boy, if everyone on earth knew that it, would it change the world, Gabe?" Allen's heart filled with wonder.

"Yes, it could. Do you want to know what it is?"

"Of course; is it long and complicated?"



"Not really." Tenderness showed in Gabe's face. "Theos has provided a key of truth for living in harmony in the universe.

"In all dealings with any being and with the best of your ability, look out for their highest good. That's the simple request. Remember rules are made to avoid consequences not to control behavior. Though often necessary neither rules or self-will will ever achieve the power to live this other centered life style which is called love.

Gabe's words tugged at Allen's heart. "That's all?"

"That's all," repeated Gabe. Then he continued, "But if you embrace this requested style you will be called on to sacrifice. Many times you'll have to give up your own way for the good of others, and that's very hard where you live. It may not bring you money or power, it may even bring suffering, but it will bring you great friendships and a peaceful heart toward others. The future looks good too. Look closely, what you see and encounter here is the result, just asked yourself if anything else is more important."

"Well, that sounds too simple to be the most important truth in the universe." Allen scratched his head.

"The truth is simple—living it is a different story. Look what happened to Vulpine and all his followers. Look at the tragedies, hunger, fighting, addiction, broken homes, interest in the occult, and other horrifying things happening on earth. Compare all that to the

peace here where this wonderful opportunity is lived out. Many earthlings refuse to believe it will work because their not willing to sacrifice by letting go of their selfish ways.”

The truth of Gabe’s words caught Allen by surprise. “I sure don’t like sacrifice.”

“No earthling does, but when Theos visited earth, He promised to help those who decided to live this way. He promised them His presence. When they ask, He will dispatch many who live in the kingdom to help them. Remember, the ever-present combat between good and evil rages on. Each wants the souls of mortals for their kingdom.” Gabe’s expression grew more serious.

Allen felt honored to have such a life-changing experience. He wished everyone back home could have had it too. He hoped he would have the courage to share all he had learned when he returned. “Gabe, surely everyone would want to know all that you have shared with me!”

“Well,” Gabe hesitated, gazing toward Theos, “now you know the reason you’re here.”

As the music came to a close, thunderous applause and loud cheers erupted from the assembly in the stadium. Theos raised his hand and the crowd immediately hushed. Allen noticed Mike was standing next

to Theos. He nudged Gabe. He whispered, "When did Mike go down there?"

"Shhhhh. listen." Gabe put his finger to his lip.

Allen was awestruck when he saw Theos motion for Mike to speak. He began, "My friends, my family, I have something I want all of you to know. My precious earring given to me by my Sovereign has been found." A great roar resounded around the stadium like the wave Allen had seen so many times. Theos raised His hand again. Once again silence fell. "I want to say thanks to our visiting chosen one. He is the restorer of my extraordinary gift."

As Mike pointed to where Allen was sitting. More cheers and applause echoed throughout the stadium. Allen felt the blood rush to his face. *How do I handle this?*

"Theos has given me the privilege of allowing you to witness an event that has never happened before. In order to do it, I must ask Allen to come down here with me." Mike flashed the okay sign toward Allen. "Come on down, Allen. You're among friends."

Allen felt faint. *I can't go down there where everyone will be watching my every move!*

Mike motioned with his hand. "Come on, Allen. It's okay."

Allen looked at Theos. He couldn't move. Theos appeared so majestic. *He has unlimited power. He is the Creator of the universe and*

*is worshiped by all the inhabitants of the kingdom. There's no way I can walk down there. I'm not worthy.*

"I'll help you, Allen." Gabe plucked a bewildered Allen from his seat and transported him to where Theos and Mike waited.

There was nothing Allen could do but submit to what was happening. All eyes were fixed on him. Gabe paused for a moment and then set Allen beside Mike.

"Thank you, Gabriel." Mike gave Gabe a grateful look.

Allen had never heard Mike call Gabe that before. He dug his hands deep in his pockets. *The only being he had ever heard called that was in the story of Christmas. It was the name given to an angel that visited earth and told about the Christ Child.* Mike flashed an encouraging smile at Allen. *He's Michael! Another angel he had heard about in a church youth group. Could this be true? What can happen next?*

Allen's head was bowed low. *I must look at Theos. The time has come.* Fear shot through his body. He dropped to his knees and covered his head with his hands. The silence seemed to go on forever. Allen never moved a muscle.

# Chapter 25

## *Restoration*

Theos tenderly spoke. "Come to Me, Allen."

His kind voice soothed Allen's fears. As he stood and peered into Theos' face, calming warmth saturated him. He felt as if he was caught up in a pool of purity. Allen knew he was in the presence of the One who was all-powerful and full of compassion, wisdom, and love.

*He knew my name!* Delight filled Allen's heart. *No wonder all the beings demonstrated their affection so willingly to Him; it's like He's a personal friend.*

Theos gave His full attention to Allen. "Michael told me what happened to you during your time in the Dark Region; He also told me about Legion."

*Legion!* Allen had completely forgotten about him. He suddenly remembered he had promised to speak up on his behalf if they accomplished their escape.

Quickly his mind was refocused when Theos said. "I would like you to tell your story to all those present here." Love spilled from the Sovereigns eyes.

Calmness flowed into Allen's soul; he didn't feel the least bit afraid. He sensed renewed inward strength and willingness. What an opportunity; all of a sudden he realized he was now able to demonstrate the most important act in the universe: looking out after the highest good of the other person and right now Legion was that other.

Allen also realized his request on Legion's behalf could be granted or denied. He began sharing his story.

Not one creature in the stadium moved as the account unfolded. When the conclusion was reached, Allen paused, looked at Legion, then turned to Theos and boldly asked for permission to request an undeserved favor. Theos nodded for Allen to continue.

Thought His eyes were tender and merciful on one hand at the same time firm and wise. The 'requester' knew He could look right into his heart. After a brief silence, Allen stood to his full height, took a deep breath, looked over at Legion and said, "Most Sovereign One, would you grant mercy and pardon for Legion, not based on his rescue of me, even though he risked his being while doing it, but rather on his confession that what he did was wrong. He also acknowledged that you had every right to expel him from the kingdom for his actions. But most of all because he wants to abandon Vulpine and all he stands for and will embrace any sentence you impose upon him. Then he will

serve you and only you for as long as he exists.” Allen took a giant step of courage and continued, “if you please, one more thing: I will agree to do anything you require of me to help reinstate Legion.” Allen could hardly believe he made such an offer, but that was exactly how he felt.

Utter silence!

Not a sound was heard. All eyes were on Theos. He turned to Michael with a broad smile on his face and said, “Our decision to ‘choose’ Allen has proven to be a right choice.” Michael also smiled then nodded in agreement.

He once more turned all His attention to Allen. “I will take you at your word. Here’s what I would ask you to do. Go back to earth, tell all who will listen what you have seen and learned here. Be willing to demonstrate to others just what you offered to do for Legion. Urge all to do the same. This is why we brought you here. And remember this vital truth—you will never be abandoned or alone. Friends from here will always be with you.”

Allen looked over at Legion. “Your eyes, Legion your eyes.....they’re no longer red but deep blue! And you are growing taller!”

“My claws are gone! Legion brushed his robe with his new hands. “Look! My robe is changing color, its turning blue too.” Shouts of

victory rang through the stadium as Legion returned to his original likeness before the rebellion.

Theos tenderly beckoned, "Come to Me, Legion."

Legion promptly obeyed. Theos leaned down and positioned an earring on his ear and whispered [but the whole stadium heard it] "Legion you don't have to do anything to prove your worth or loyalty to me, I rejoice over every prodigal that returns." A wild roar went up from the crowd! Allen knew a great party was to begin.

As Allen was about to thank Theos, he felt someone tapping him on the shoulder. "Allen! Allen! Wake up!"

Allen's head throbbed and he felt light headed. His vision blurred. He could still hear his name being called. *Am I dreaming? Who's calling my name?* He squeezed his eyes shut, shook his head, and tried to clear his muddled mind.

"Allen! Allen! It's Mom. Are you all right?" Allen's mother continued to gently shake his shoulder.

Allen opened his eyes, "Mom! Where am I?"

"You're in the hospital." His mother dabbed his parched lips with a cool washcloth.

"How did I get here?"

"There was a terrible storm and . . ."



Allen heard his mother's voice and saw his father, sister and some other relatives beside his bed. "Where are Gabe and Mike?"

His mother wrinkled her forehead and asked, "Who?"

"I traveled to the Kingdom of Light!"

"Oh, Allen," His mother's patted his arm. "You've been unconscious for several days now."

Allen's father piped up, "We were so worried about you, son. We didn't know if you would live or die."

Allen rubbed his temples. He mumbled under his breath, "Was this whole thing a dream? It was so real. No way could it have been a dream. It had to be true."

"You received a blow to your head hit your and it's believed you have a concussion."

Then His mother leaned in closer to Allen with a look of concern on her face and asked, "Where did you get that beautiful earring you're wearing?"

"Mom, have I got a story to tell you!" Allen lifted himself up from the pillow and patted the side of the bed. "Sit down. It's going to take a while."

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For you, dear reader and Allen's mother, there is an answer. The answer was given many years ago by the wisest and most influential Person ever to walk the earth. Here is what He said:

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Revelation 2:17 NIV