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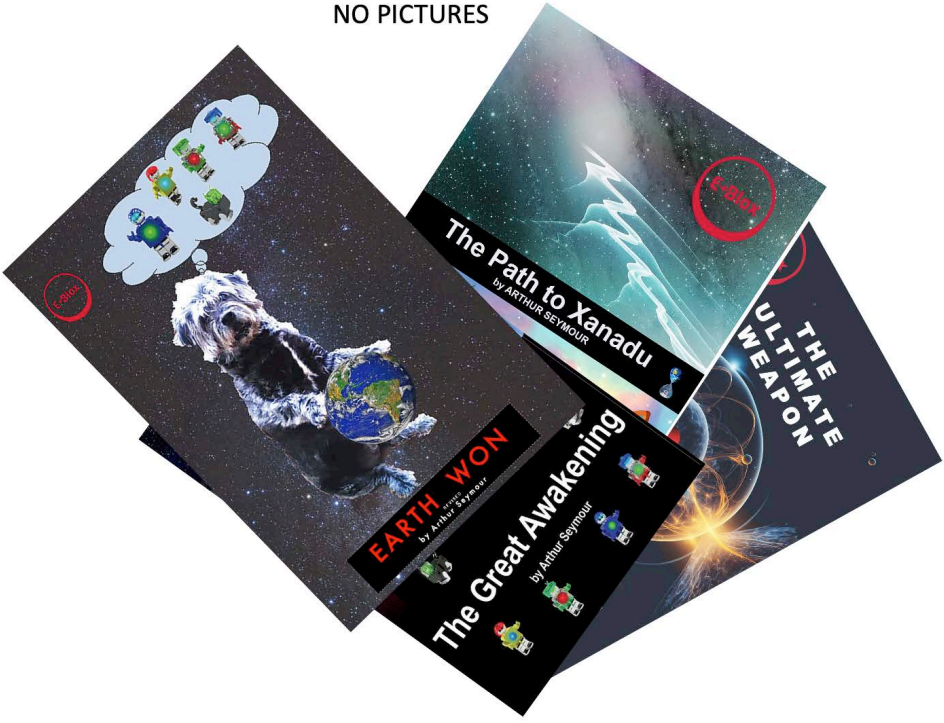

EBLOX SERIES

Book 1 "Earth Won"

Book 2 "The Great Awakening"

Book 3 "The Path To Xanadu"

Book 4 "The Ultimate Weapon"

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Martin Luther King Jr

BOOK 1

Earth Won

Chapter 1

The Island

The day started like every other day as the early morning sun forced its way around the edge of the thick lightproof shade and chased the darkness from the room. Seymour could hear the ocean waves pounding the beach in the distance as he slowly tried to pry his eyes open for the first time. Suddenly the sound of the ocean's heartbeat was broken as Robyn's soft voice announced, "Good morning sir, it is 06:32 in the morning."

Robyn was a robonaut that had been programmed to greet people differently every morning, but this time stamped greeting seemed to be her favorite. Seymour looked at the robot's glowing blue and green eyes and knew she was waiting for instructions. "Good morning, Robyn," he finally said. "Would you please feed Glen while I take my shower and get dressed?" "Yes, of course." Robyn responded as her servomotors whirred into action and she turned and glided slowly out of the bedroom. She headed towards the den where Glen spent most of his nightly hours.

Glen was a happy little rascal who knew Robyn was going to give him breakfast. As soon as Robyn entered the den, Glen jumped to his feet and greeted her with three wags of his tail and a deep but friendly "Woof". After less than a minute of gulping down his food and twenty licks at his water bowl,

Glen ran over to the back portal that led to the beach and performed the ‘Glen sit’. Robyn followed and transmitted a code that opened the invisible door so Glen could run out. As the fog lingered on the beach, Robyn and Glen gazed out over the mist. They could see a faint light off in the distance.

Because Robyn was programmed to be curious, she instantly sent a message back to Seymour who was out of the shower and sitting at his desk checking his morning messages. The message read, "Light at sea. Should we investigate?" The spirit of adventure grew as much as it could in a robot as Robyn's program shifted to 'Scan and Protect' mode. Robyn waited for instructions. Then somewhere in the robot’s top-secret receiver the answer came through, “Send Glen home and take the boat to check it out.”

Robyn beeped twice at Glen. The pup wagged his tail, and took off for the back portal of the science lab. He was a young dog, but always understood Robyn and did what he was told. Robyn used her boot jets to lift her into the boat and sent a radio signal to the boat’s control panel to activate the engines and set the course. The boat was well on its way as Robyn gently landed astern and on the port side of the deck. Soon an island with a stairway came into focus. The light they had seen earlier was actually a red and green light at the top of a stairway. Robyn’s memory recalled the building that used lights to forecast the weather a long time ago called the Berkeley Building in Boston, and then the new more recent “Poem of the Lights”:

BOTH LIGHTS GREEN, NO DANGER SEEN;
GREEN AND RED, SOMETHING TO DREAD;
BOTH LIGHTS RED, THERE'S DANGER AHEAD.

A mystical “danger” bubble formed instantly in Robyn’s unique Metatronic™ brain and in just a millisecond the boat was sent a docking command. There was something moving underwater and very close to the boat. Slowly the boat maneuvered itself toward the pier at the bottom of the stairs in order to carry out the command. But Robyn was focused on the water, five feet off the port side with her right arm aimed and her laser ready to fire. Then it happened; a sea creature jumped from the sea and drifted alongside the boat!

Robyn recorded the sea creature’s image in memory, searched and compared it to over three thousand images, and had it recognized in half a second. Knowing it was not dangerous, she lowered her laser and sent a message with the creature’s image back to the lab. “I just discovered a very large spotted Hippocampus abdominalis very far from home.”

Then Robyn turned and watched the boat slide up against the pier and silently glide to a stop as it rubbed against the wet moss-covered planks. Even with all sensors on maximum, Robyn never saw the other figure hiding in the dark shadows under the pier. Robyn was busy sending data back to the lab. She had just transmitted the message “Location of creature at 54.32463, - 9.637499”, when there was a flash of black and white fur and a single powerful leap that landed a different creature on the deck staring up at Robyn. When Robyn’s mechanical structure finally caught up to the swiftness of the creature, she realized it was a black and white cat that was staring at her with penetrating green eyes. The cat wore a silver collar around its neck that started beeping a message in code the instant their eyes locked on each other.

Robyn's programming left little deviation when adventures produced unexpected results like this one. She instantly analyzed the feline and a message was transmitted. "Devon Rex encounter with audio collar." Almost instantly the reply was received, "Her name is 'Devyn' and I need that collar. Return home." Robyn never questioned how Seymour seemed to know things with such limited data. She was programmed to be curious but also her subroutines made her a faithful companion. Because Robyn's Metatronic brain allowed emotions and spiritual thoughts, you might say Robyn thought of Seymour as her father. Robyn raised her eyes slightly and said in a soft and sweet voice, "Hello Devyn." Even though Robyn was sure she never met Devyn before, the collar beeped out the response "Hello Robyn, nice to meet you." in a very old form of Morse Code.

When they finally returned to the lab, Seymour asked Devyn to report on what she found.

The data was transmitted in Morse code from Devyn's collar and both Robyn and the lab's supercomputer recorded the translation. Seymour then asked Robyn to take care of Devyn and Glen by feeding them both while he looked over the data. The message was from the Island and it was very clear and precise. Although the meaning was not totally clear, Seymour knew he would have to visit the Island soon.

When Seymour finished, he was surprised to find Glen and Devyn had retired to the den and were already settled in for the night. As if Robyn could read Seymour's mind she announced, "It's 23:18 and all are safe." Seymour replied, "OK, thanks Robyn", and then he slowly shuffled down the hall to the sleeping chamber. After a quick electronic cleaning of his teeth and a sip of water, Seymour slid between the sheets and closed his

eyes. Robyn did not need sleep, and her fusion power source was good for at least 80 more years. She stood in the corner, activated her long-range scan-and-protect subroutine, and waited.

She could hear the heartbeats of all her biological friends in the lab, the soft rhythmic pounding of the ocean, and the gentle breeze caressing the trees nearby. She knew she was fulfilling the purpose of her existence, and her Metatronic brain was at peace.

Chapter 2

The City

It was just after 2 AM, and the city was quiet and mostly asleep. City hall, however, had one room full of activity. Even though the room had no living beings in it, at least the way most of us think of living, it was still alive with activity. Computer screens were flashing everywhere, some showing pages of flashing data, while others had pictures changing so fast, they appeared to be flashing colors. Computer screens

One screen had a drawing that looked like a flow chart with areas slowly changing color or shape. The overhead lights were all off except for one, but the room was glowing green from a light source that seemed to be part of the walls. Meanwhile the power meter inside the building was recording power being used by the building. It showed too little to support all that was ta kin g place in this green room.

The architects of the city hall saw the building as a giant sphere hanging over the Thames. It had no front or back in conventional terms but derived its shape from a modified sphere, looking much like an armadillo in a protection posture. The activity in the room only lasted a few minutes, and then everything seemed to stop. Every computer screen had a picture of a bridge, the same bridge, but viewed from different angles. The green light brightly flashed and the room suddenly returned to normal. Only one small light in the ceiling, acting as a nightlight, dimly lit the room. All the computer screens were off and all evidence of any activity disappeared.

In a lab far to the northeast, a supercomputer suddenly came alive and on its giant screen the pictures

of the bridge from each angle appeared. There were pages of data and a strange looking chart. One monitor showed a factory that was dumping waste into the river. A chemical chart was blinking on and off and different formulas were flashing in a small window of that screen.

At 3 AM, in a bedroom attached to the lab, Seymour jumped from the bed and put pressure on his left foot to bend his toes back as far as he could. A severe leg cramp had produced enough pain to make sleep impossible. He limped around the room in an attempt to get the calf in his leg normal when he noticed that his companion robot, Robyn, was not there.

He limped from the sleeping chamber and down the hallway as the lab's supercomputer lit each room he was about to enter. As he passed the den, he noticed the bridge and data displayed on the screen that took up the entire far wall.

The pain in his leg was instantly dismissed as he rushed back to the sleeping chamber, discarding clothes as he hustled directly through the shower tube and into the dressing area. After dressing faster than he even thought possible, he turned and saw the stairway going down to the labyrinth that existed below the sleeping chamber. The stairs were glowing green so he wasted no time descending as the floor opening above him sealed and totally isolated the lab.

Robyn was waiting at the bottom of the stairway with a small briefcase that was really a remote arm of the lab's computer. 20 feet away, sitting in an underground canal, was the top half of a small submarine-type vessel that blended into its surroundings like the mimic octopus, or Thaumoctopus mimicus as Robyn would say. Seymour called the vessel Mimi.

Mimi could change color and texture in order to blend in with the environment, as well as changing shape to blend with any objects it touched. The side latch to Mimi was open and a red glow came from inside.

As Seymour snatched the briefcase from the robot's hand he said, "Thanks Robyn." and headed toward the open hatch. He could hear Robyn say as he entered the vessel, "Good luck, sir" and as soon as the hatch automatically closed behind him, Mimi telepathically said "Welcome aboard, sir."

Mimi wasted no time submerging and activating the fusion-powered cavitator located in her hull at the front. Mimi soon created a pocket of air around her hull. Inside this bubble, Mimi could travel much faster without friction of water creating drag and slowing her down.

Within minutes Seymour was traveling under water at almost twice the speed of sound. Because Mimi had special radar (sonar would not work at this speed) and an ability to somehow communicate with the Earth itself, the journey was quiet and smooth.

During the trip, Seymour was studying the data on a display in the lid of the briefcase that was still linked to the lab's supercomputer. Due to water pollution, the footings of this very old bridge were about to give way and the bridge would almost certainly collapse.

Seymour could hear the water rush up against the hull as Mimi slowed and stopped, removing the bubble that surrounded her. Then Mimi made the hull totally transparent and the city buildings suddenly came into view. A large clock tower was the first thing that caught Seymour's eye, but there was no time for sightseeing.

Seymour could see the footings of the bridge on both sides of the transparent hull and realized he needed to act quickly. He strapped a large blue box on his back and said “Activate.” A second later he was surrounded by a light blue transparent bubble that acted like a portable caisson.

The coloring made him almost invisible in the water that surrounded Mimi. Then he stepped into a small area near the hatch and seemed to walk right through the hull and onto the sandy bottom near one of the bridge’s footings. As soon as he touched the footing, the bubble expanded and surrounded the entire damaged area with an intelligence that seemed to come from nowhere.

Seymour knew the box on his back, the computer in his lab, and the Earth itself were all controlling the repair. The footings seemed to be damaged by bacterial corrosion and calcium leaching. The source of the damaging stimuli that produced these effects in the exposed concrete on the footings would need to be stopped.

It only took a few minutes at each footing and Seymour was back inside Mimi before 5 AM. The city was starting to come to life, but Seymour knew he had more work ahead as he softly said, “Park me near the bridge please, Mimi.” In a few minutes the small submarine had moved parallel to the brick walkway that followed the water and transformed to look like an old pier that was barely visible to any pedestrians that might pass.

Pier - Seymour hoped people seeing the pier that they never saw before would just dismiss it as a bad memory.

Under the bridge where no camera or person could view, Seymour came magically through the holographic pier boards and started walking to a ladder that led to the walkway. Once on the walkway, he found himself standing in front of an old structure built between 1087 and 1100 by Edward the Confessor. He recognized it because it was one of the largest medieval halls still in existence. It had always fascinated Seymour because at one time it had an unsupported hammerbeam roof. After a fire, it was rebuilt and became a landmark with the clock tower that chimes on the hour. He walked directly toward the entrance of the building. It was still very early and only a few people were on the walkway.

Seymour entered the building with the briefcase from the lab hanging from his left hand. He looked like any other businessman dealing with the decision makers that would soon be arriving. He proceeded directly to an overnight mail slot located next to a locked door. On the glass in the door only three letters were printed, GLA. A sealed envelope slowly ejected from the side of his briefcase into his right hand. He dropped it through the slot, left the building, and was back inside Mimi in a matter of minutes.

Mimi then returned him back to his sleeping chamber. A few hours later the GLA, which was responsible for the strategic administration of the entire city, was buzzing like a fallen hornets' nest. Multiple reports of industrial pollution with data and charts had somehow been discovered. There was a nearby factory located on the Thames that was seriously highlighted in the report. Even the Mayor and Crime division were getting involved.

Seymour slipped between the warm sheets and said, "Just a couple hours, Robyn." His faithful

companion stood motionless in the corner of the sleeping chamber and responded in a sweet soft voice, “Yes sir.” The chamber was not very dark, but sleep was taking over fast as Seymour thought, “Another adventure was over...or was it?”

Chapter 3

The Cave

After a long day of climbing the mountain on the Island, Seymour's stomach and legs were telling him it was time to rest and get something to eat. From the position of the sun, he knew it was late in the afternoon and began to worry a little about his situation. The instructions he had received from Devyn's collar told him to take nothing but a light source, water, and climbing tools. However, that hunger was now starting to make an appearance in this latest adventure, while trust was starting to make a retreat. He sat on a chair-size rock to give his legs a break and took a sip from his waterskin.

A cloud passed overhead and blotted out the sun for a few seconds, and then he saw the dim light glowing from a crack in the mountainside in the distance. Since Earth had communicated with him like this before, Seymour knew the cloud was no coincidence, and the ache in his legs suddenly vanished. He jumped to his feet and started making his way toward the area where he noticed a dim light. The cloud was gone and took the dim glow with it. Only Seymour's faith in what he saw motivated him now.

Seymour knew faith without action meant nothing!

It was a very difficult spot on the face of the mountain, and it took almost an hour to reach the narrow crack located on a nearly vertical wall of the mountain. He was almost out of pitons when he reached the crack that was only a few inches wide. Darkness had nearly settled in and Seymour felt fear for the first time. What was he doing on the side of a mountain just to look into a crack? He almost fell when he placed his hand in the

crack to pull himself closer, but instead the rock slid back to make a doorway that allowed him inside.

Seymour steadied himself and entered the hidden cave. The floor of the cave was smooth and flat and as he stepped forward, the door to the cave completely closed behind him and all light vanished. He unclipped the light source from his belt and turned it on. He said to himself, "Now I know why I was told to bring a light source. Thank God I brought the best one I could find." He knew the batteries in this lamp could last for days and it was smart enough to adjust to the environment.

The sensors in the light source set the lamp intensity, then the microchip changed the color for best viewing. It was the same shade of light the crack displayed when the cloud passed over. Seymour's eyes slowly adjusted to the new conditions and the cave walls came into focus.

There were two symbols carved into the rock on each side of the cave. The first one looked like an umbrella with a fat straight handle followed by an arrow pointing to a downward passage. The opposite wall had a symbol that looked like a triangle and was followed by an arrow that pointed to an upward path in the cave.

Just then, Seymour's stomach growled for food loud enough to produce an echo in the cave. He decided to move on the downward path and started cautiously and slowly into that passage. As he made his way down, the walls displayed strange carvings. One of them reminded him of an ancient mammal that he had studied in school, called the Mastodon.

He recalled, as he slowly moved down the path, how much fun it was to discover facts from the past that helped to form this world of today. The cave path slowly

turned to the left and opened into a large underground chamber.

He could hear the sound of water running, and the air grew heavy and moist. His lamp automatically adjusted to a brighter setting and he could see the chamber was as large as a sports stadium and had a small pool of water on the far side. There were at least three other openings he could see in the walls of the chamber and he felt like a cave explorer that was going spelunking.

Seymour's stomach once again demanded attention, so he decided to head over toward the pool to see if there was anything edible. When he reached the side of the pool, he found a good- sized field of mushrooms and realized that the umbrella-shaped carving was a signpost to this spot. He sat on a rock at the edge of the mushroom garden and pondered his fate.

There were no footprints in the dust around the mushrooms. Then again, there were no bones to be seen either. There was only one thing he could trust now. He flipped off his lamp and the chamber went totally dark. He waited as the pupils of his eyes dilated to let in more light.

Nothing!

Minutes went by and still nothing. Seymour's faith was strong and he trusted Earth would give him a sign. He could hear the trickle of water running into the pool nearby but could see nothing. He felt a slight breeze on his right arm like someone had just walked past him and the hair on his neck uncurled. He slowly glanced in that direction and there it was, a small patch of Shimeji mushrooms with a dim color-changing glow.

Seymour flipped the lamp back on and ate without fear. He knew Earth would not give him anything

harmful. He remembered those days when he was very young and his grandmother would give him strange things to eat, but always with a smile and great love in her heart. He felt that same love coming from Earth, as he took his first bite of the mushroom. It was chewy and slightly sweet. He thought it sort of tasted like the homemade licorice candy his grandmother made when he was young. He ate his fill and started looking for a place to sit. Finding a mossy flat spot near the wall of the cavern, Seymour sat with his back resting against the wall and recorded the day's events in his notebook. When all was faithfully documented, he put away his notes and enjoyed the beauty of this underground world.

How lucky he was, for even inside the belly of a mountain, Earth was like a loving grandmother – old, ma j e s t i c , and beautiful. Even the pilea cavernicola flowers that surrounded him seemed to be planted by his grandmother. He flipped off the lamp and used his arm as a pillow as he laid down on the hard moss mattress. He felt more like he was in the bed in his grandmother's attic with all the love that surrounded him in those days and drifted off into a peaceful sleep.

During the night, Seymour dreamed. Not the normal vague type of dream but a lucid dream with vivid images and fantastic colors. He could see the cave as it was before man walked the Earth. There were animals on the planet then, and a few presented themselves to Seymour in a manner that did not feel like a dream. It was more like a tour through a holographic museum. And there was sound in the dream, yes, the actual sound of these strange creatures. Some of them he had never seen before. Others were more familiar because their bones were discovered and put into museums he had visited on school trips when he was young.

He recognized a T-rex that stared into his eyes and roared to show how ferocious he once was. Still this once mighty animal was subject to Earth and its ever-changing climate. The T-rex, with all its majesty brought a flavor of sadness into the dream, a taste that would stay with Seymour for many years to come.

Then suddenly, Seymour opened his eyes and found the chamber was full of light. The sun that always retires in the west had risen in the east and found many tiny cracks at the top of the cavern that illuminated this underground world like a thousand stadium laser lights.

With the dream still fresh in his mind, he sat up, grabbed his notebook and pen, and started recording everything he could remember from it. He made sketches of every animal in his nightly adventure that was new to him and wished he had a way to add the color, but that would have to be done when he got back to the lab.

He also remembered the sky from his dream. It was strangely scary and filled with foreboding. Perhaps, he wrote in his notes, it was a clue to the extinction of these creatures that lived over 60 million years ago. He knew the two theories, but now he was convinced that it was not a meteor from another world, but the Earth itself that had changed everything in preparation to the existence of man on the planet. His newfound belief supported the volcano theory and just made more sense. But then, not everyone was as closely connected to Earth as Seymour.

He was anxious to get home and record his dream in the super-computer. He also wanted to search for data on the animals that appeared to him in his dream and were new to him. He trusted his connection with Earth and followed a path that led him straight to a hidden underground river that flowed swiftly into the ocean, about ten feet below the surface at low tide. He could see

the light from the ocean as he stared down into the river. He knew he would be safe, so he dove into the river toward the light and was swiftly pushed down by the current and out into the ocean.

He realized the current was too swift to swim against and the only way back would be another tough climb to the hidden door. He also knew that his submarine, Mimi, could take him back. It was almost noon when he finally got back to the lab. He was home again, but this time he knew there was another place that could be a home to him ... the cave.

Chapter 4

The Iceberg

Warning sirens were sounding all over the ship as the Research Vessel, the Thomas G Thompson, received an SOS and Mayday from the Science Bio-Copter that fluttered into sight. Like a large dragonfly, the out-of-control bio-copter banged onto the deck and slid into a cargo area. The four transparent wings disappeared into the side of the downed copter and its invisible shields were removed so Seymour could jump from the cockpit and stagger onto the deck.

The emergency crew ran toward the copter with foamers ready to put out any fire, as Seymour raised his hands and shouted “It’s OK, I just had a fuel cell fail and lost power in the main Tri-Blade. There’s no threat of fire." When he explained that he was on his way to investigate a sighting of an unusual Iceberg, the Captain welcomed him aboard and stated they were on the same mission.

Seymour accepted the invitation to join the crew and scientists already aboard and travel with them to the last transmitted sighting of the Iceberg. It was an old ship, but the vessel could still berth up to 36 scientific personnel as well as 21 officers and crew and two technicians.

Seymour had been away from home for almost a week now, and his eyes longed to see Robyn floating around the lab. His hands wanted to reach down and pet Glen. He longed for the lab and all of its blinking lights and familiar humming sounds. He was homesick and wondered why he felt it was important that he take this trip on the Ocean Research Vessel. Like many of his

adventures before, he just knew he had to be on this ship at this time.

A blast from the whooper alarm and people running towards the bow snapped him back to reality as he joined the scramble to the front of the ship. The smell of Ozone was strong even though the wind had increased significantly. The ship was being tossed from side to side as the waves were now coming from every direction. Just as the rain started, Seymour caught a glimpse of people pointing at a shiny Iceberg in the center of the approaching storm. He also felt TB, Seymour's Tri- Blade Bio-Copter, directly above him with shields at maximum and a rope ladder swishing all around him.

He was having difficulty climbing when suddenly the ladder stiffened as though someone was holding the loose end. Looking down he noticed someone with a large backpack was on the ladder behind him and climbing toward him. He quickly scurried to the top, entered the copter, and turned to help his pursuer through the door as the Bio-Copter jerked forward and threw them both up against the back wall.

Seymour had little time to study his new companion with the large backpack, wearing a bright yellow hooded rain jacket that only exposed a small portion of his face, but he looked young and eager to get to work, whatever that was. Then the copter landed on the Iceberg with such force that both of the copters' passengers bounced forward.

The storm seemed to vanish as the shield from the bio-copter expanded to cover the entire Iceberg. Seymour knew exactly what needed to be done as he pulled a lever at the top of the cockpit and released TB. The Tri-Blade jumped from the bio- copter and fastened itself to the tip of the Iceberg, which appeared to be made

of glass once the rain and waves were removed by the invisible shield that eliminated the storm's fury. For a moment he had forgotten about his uninvited passenger that seemed to be a very young boy wearing a bright yellow hooded raincoat.

Because Seymour was watching TB and had his vision focused on the tip of the Iceberg, he failed to notice that his new companion had jumped from the copter and removed four red brick like objects from his backpack. He was attaching them at the point where the water met the "Glassberg" with a laser ray from a strange looking welding tool.

He worked with incredible speed and had finished attaching the fourth and last red brick when Seymour suddenly realized that the young man was also in touch with the spirit of the Earth and was performing without question what he knew must be done.

Snapping back to reality, Seymour opened the cockpit door of the bio-copter and reached out to grasp the hand of his new companion just as the shield collapsed and the ferocity of the storm returned. His new friend was almost sucked into the hurricane level winds and it took both hands with feet braced against both sides of the doorframe to pull him into the cockpit. Seymour slammed the door and the roar of the hurricane outside was reduced significantly.

The Thomas G. Thompson Research Vessel could no longer see the iceberg due to the heavy rain and waves that tossed the vessel around like a ping-pong ball in a shower stall.

Then suddenly the storm stopped. The waves were gone and so was the iceberg. In the sky, using clouds for cover, a huge triangular object was moving north at

incredible speed. It was surrounded by an electro-magnetic field that bent electronic waves and made it undetectable by any existing radar.

Inside the body of the bio-copter that was attached to the flying triangle, Seymour's new companion had just untied the string on the hood of his raincoat and pulled the hood down. Long beautiful red hair fell to cover the shoulders of the most beautiful woman Seymour had ever seen. She turned and looked into Seymour's eyes and spoke for the first time. "Wow! That was fun," she said. Seymour stared with his mouth open, looking like a carp in a fishbowl and said, "You're a girl?" She laughed at his comment as she pulled off the rest of her raincoat and then extended her hand and said, "Hi. I'm Ruby."

Seymour's shock seemed to disappear as he closed his mouth, reached to take her hand, and said "Hi, I'm Seymour." Their hands engaged, and the universe evolved to a new level. A moment in time that will never be recorded in any book but will be forever part of the Earth's history. Like two soap bubbles touching in space and gently becoming united, two souls amplified each other by an order of magnitude and many mysteries of the Earth were revealed.

They increased their grasp, stared into each other's eyes with wonder, and both had an epiphany. It was a moment of great and sudden revelation.

They knew the great triangle they were riding on was made of pure carbon. It was a diamond the size of a mountain! They knew that a group of Giant Isopod living at extremely high pressure on the ocean floor had taken carbon dioxide from the ocean and created this pure carbon diamond while releasing oxygen into the air. They knew the Earth was using a group of creatures in a

new way to lower the carbon footprint man was creating. And they knew they were now two of the most advanced creatures in this group.

During the trip Seymour and Ruby shared the many adventures they had been on that were similar to the one they were on now. Seymour explained how he found TB when he was very young and Ruby explained her discovery of the four red antimatter bricks. They knew now that they both were required to perform this task and understood why the diamond needed to remain a secret. The impact that a global economic market would have if the diamond industry discovered this secret would be devastating.

Their discussion was interrupted by the descent and reduction in speed. They both suspected that this diamond would be placed on a high plateau on an island near Seymour's lab. It would be covered by earth, rocks, and sand so it would appear to be just another small mountain peak. As they watched, their suspicions were made reality by the Tri-Blade, the anti-matter bricks, and the spirit of the Earth that guided the mission.

After replacing the Tri-Blade and disconnecting all the antimatter bricks, Seymour and Ruby returned to the bio-copter and flew to the beach near Seymour's lab. A blue light was glowing from the lab window and Seymour knew it was time to leave Ruby in the hands of TB. As he exited the copter, he gave her hand one last squeeze and without speaking they both knew they would work together again.

Seymour entered the lab through a hidden portal that opened just as the bio-copter whooshed off the beach. The first to greet him was Glen, the little dog he loved so much. Then Robyn, his companion robot, floated into the room and said, "Welcome back, sir."

Seymour hesitated and stared at Robyn for a moment. Robyn's voice was always very feminine, but now it had a familiar ring to it.

He finally answered back and said, "Thank you Robyn. I'm really glad to be back." Robyn did a 180 and led Seymour out of the room and down the hall. As she left she remarked, "Food has been prepared if you are hungry." There was no denying it; there was something in Robyn's voice that made him think of Ruby.

Later that night, after TB and the bio-copter had delivered Ruby to her home far away, her faithful robot companion, Max, greeted her as she entered the house with "Welcome back, miss." Ruby hesitated and stared at Max for a moment. Max's voice was always very masculine but gentle, and now it had a familiar ring to it.

She finally answered back and said, "Thank you Max. I'm really happy to be back." Max did a 180 and led Ruby out of the room and into the eating area. As He left, he remarked, "Food has been prepared if you are hungry." There was no denying it; there was something in Max's voice that made her think of Seymour.

That night many storms around the globe ended, all but one at the top of a mountain near Seymour's lab. And as Seymour watched it through his sleeping chamber window while he lay in bed, he knew the earth was at work protecting its children. He closed his eyes and slipped into a peaceful sleep.

Chapter 5

Sea & Sky

He was dreaming of those days long ago, when he was only 14 and had spotted something glowing in the water. It had been hot that summer and Seymour was looking for an adventure when he walked barefoot down to the bayou to cool his feet. The water was extremely low due to lack of rain, lower than he had ever seen it before. There it was, a curved object with a blue glow sticking out of the muck on the other side. The dream was vivid with all the details of how it took him and his father two days to pull it from the muck and drag it back to the farm. Suddenly he was awake with all the dream details poking at his brain. Robyn, the robot by his bed, sensed something was different and replaced her usual greeting with "Is everything alright, sir?" Seymour responded, "I'm not sure, Robyn, but I think TB is trying to tell me something." Robyn knew that TB was the Tri- Blade that her friend communicated with long before she met him, so she waited for further instructions. "Robyn, please take care of the lab while I get a cup of coffee and think about this for awhile." Robyn knew no response was required and went about completing the request while the super-computer that ran the lab was already pouring a cup of coffee in the kitchen.

Seymour sat at the counter, took his first sip of coffee, and let his mind drift back to the day he had first launched TB with his father.

Seymour just took his last sip of coffee when he heard the whooshing sound of TB landing on the beach near the lab. He knew the dream last night was not a random event, but a communication from TB and was anxious to find out what was so important. Seymour

smiled as he put the cup on the counter because he knew it would be cleaned and back in the processor before he returned. He quickly went back to the sleeping area, walked through the shower chamber, and dressed for a trip outside.

As he walked toward the wall at the far side of the sleeping chamber, the lab's super-computer seemed to sense his intentions, and a hidden portal to the beach opened. He hurried towards the biocopter that used TB as a lifting source instead of wings that were hidden in its sides, and the portal closed behind him. The cockpit's pure blue light got brighter as TB removed the invisible shield to allow entry.

Seymour knew that TB was really controlling the bio-copter, but then only he knew the real power of the Tri-Blade. Like many of the miracles on earth, TB was connected to the Lab's computer by millions of invisible pathways that surrounded everything.

Every molecule was used by the earth to connect, transmit, and unite the structures and creatures like nerves in a living organism. Very few understood this connection or how to use it.

Seymour was one who understood best, as he let TB force the bio-copter to cut through the sky at a clip near the speed of sound. The sky ahead appeared to be changing to a deeper shade of blue as Seymour stared through the cockpit windshield and wondered what the emergency was. His mind drifted back to the first trip with TB in control. He was just a teenager and was using the Tri-Blade to push his homemade swamp boat up the bayou toward the Kankakee River. As he continued to reminisce about this first trip with TB, he recalled that suddenly the Tri-Blade seemed to have a mind of its own as it turned the vessel pushing it through the cattails and

into the tall grass of the swampland. Seymour tried to turn back but could not turn the boat and then it just stopped right next to a large fourteen-point male deer that was stuck in the vines and muck. Without thinking, he made a loop in the end of the boat's docking rope and threw it over the horns of the exhausted animal.

The Imperial Stag turned and stared at the Tri-Blade and the animal's eyes seemed to turn blue. The Tri-Blade suddenly came to life and Seymour was thrown back and forth in the boat, as the Tri-Blade and stag seemed to work in unison until the stag was free. Then the Tri-Blade stopped, and the blue glow left the stag's eyes as he lumbered through the water toward the edge of the forest where a doe and fawn were cautiously watching. After this rescue, Seymour always thought of the Tri-Blade by the name TB because he realized it had an intelligent nature and was much more than just a propeller.

The journey was getting turbulent and it shook Seymour out of his daydreaming. TB slowed the bio-copter and dropped down to about one hundred feet above the ocean surface. The water below was bubbling furiously and the gas released into the air made it feel like the bio-copter was in a violent storm. The cockpit light turned bright blue and Seymour knew this was where TB needed to be. As they flew south and slowly away from the boiling ocean, a ship came into view. It was a cruise ship, very large with many women and children on the deck. TB wasted no time and landed the bio-copter on the copter-pad near the bridge. TB shut down, dropped the shields, and turned the cockpit's blue light off. At the same time the bridge lights turned bright blue and reminded Seymour of the stag's eyes those many years ago. Knowing what TB was doing, he jumped from the cockpit and ran towards the bridge. All the people on the

bridge were staring up at the lights and wondering why they were blue. The captain of the ship jumped as Seymour burst onto the bridge and shouted, "Stop the ship! Now! Full astern! Deadly waters ahead!" The lights on the bridge turned deeper blue as Seymour yelled, "Hurry!" The captain, not wanting to be the cause of a disaster, repeated the orders and the ship suddenly lurched to a stop and started moving away from the bubbling ocean that could now be easily seen dead ahead.

Deck chairs slid forward and passengers staggered on the deck. A couple of books fell off the shelf on the bridge, but no serious damage was reported. Everyone started calling the bridge to ask what happened and for the next few minutes the Captain was very busy telling them everything was all right. He kept saying "I will fill you in later" to each caller. Finally, the phone lights stopped blinking and the captain turned to Seymour and asked, "What's going on?"

Seymour explained how gas from the ocean floor was being rapidly released and lowered the density of the water. The large ship could not be supported in this low-density water and would have plunged to the ocean floor. Just then the bridge lights returned to normal and the bridge returned to normal. "What's going on with these lights?" asked the captain "And how did you do that?" Seymour replied, "It means you're safe now. Just keep away from that swirling bubbling water and everything will be OK"

As Seymour replied he noticed TB had turned the bio-copter cockpit lights blue. "I've got to go now" was his response to the second question and Seymour hurried off the bridge and back to the bio- copter that seemed to be powering up on its own. Before he was even inside, TB lifted them off the platform and headed back toward

the lab. There was a message beeping in Morse code on the headset as Seymour placed it around his neck and let the speakers hang down near his chest. He knew it was TB transmitting back to the lab the coordinates of the hot spot he was sure was in the triangle and asking Robyn to get a warning out to all the ships in the area. Knowing it would be late by the time they returned to the lab, Seymour tried to close his eyes and get some sleep. There were many memories running through his mind about all the rescues he and TB had made together. This was just like all the rest, do what needed to be done and quickly disappear. It was strange how TB seemed to talk to him without using any words or language.

Was it telepathy with the planet? He felt more connected to the earth through TB on each rescue. TB was surely part of it, but somehow there was something greater happening. As home and the lab came into view, he could feel the lab calling him. It was as if it was saying, "Welcome back".

Then he heard it again, that faint clicking sound, coming from nowhere and everywhere at the same time. He pulled his notebook out of his pocket and tried to record the sound that was much like a distant rattling. He knew it was a message from the planet, but how do you write down a rattling sound?

TB dropped Seymour on the beach near the lab and waited until he was safely inside before lifting the bio-copter to the hanger high on the nearby Island mountaintop. Seymour heard TB's departure from inside the lab and sent a mental message "Good night, TB". Although there was no real response, he could feel TB answering, "Good night my friend."

Then he asked Robyn if Glen was asleep and she told him he was not back from his latest adventure. Glen

often disappeared for a few days but always found his way back so he did not worry.

Seymour tried to record all the events of the day in his computer logs while he ate a sandwich and drank the hot chocolate Robyn had made for him. Soon the day's adventure demanded rest and Robyn helped get Seymour showered and in bed. The last thing he heard as his mind surrendered control was Robyn's sweet voice saying, "Good night." It made him think of Ruby and he knew he was about to have a beautiful dream.

Chapter 6

The Moon's Face

It was one of those nights when the sky becomes a picture to remember in the earth's museum of art. Seymour was lying in bed with his hands behind his head and fingers interlocked. He was staring at the moon through the one-way skylight in his sleeping chamber watching as clouds slowly strolled through the scene. He was thinking how the face on the moon always looked like someone with one eye closed trying to get a better look at the earth.

Suddenly the face changed! The other eye opened and both eyes turned bright red. Seymour thought he must be dreaming, so he sat up. He rubbed his eyes. Then stared back at the moon. It was still there. Both red eyes staring back at him. Robyn, Seymour's robot companion, glided into the room holding a wet suit with diving belt and a special backpack. Her Metatronic brain seemed to know things that needed to be done and Seymour trusted her more than anyone else he knew. He climbed into the suit and as he struggled to secure the backpack he asked, "Do you know where I'm going?" "Our MCT has failed and the lab is running on auxiliary power." she explained. Then she added, "I will need to stay here in case backup fails. If it does, I will switch the lab over to my fusion power source until you get the Turbine fixed."

Seymour strapped on the diving belt as he walked toward the back wall of the sleeping chamber. He stopped short when the invisibles portal did not open. "You will have to use the side door." Robyn said matter of factly. "All unnecessary power is on hold." She then led Seymour out of the sleeping chamber and down the hall to the seldom- used mechanical door that led to the

beach. Two red lights were showing that the door was now unlocked and ready to be used. Robyn opened the emergency door and Seymour carefully stepped down onto the beach.

As Robyn closed the door behind him, he touched a small patch on the backpack strap and said "Activate!" A blue bubble of air, captivated by a force field shield and holographic display appeared. He heard Robyn say, "Good luck, sir." and knew the communications link was working and she would be monitoring the task ahead. He quickly jogged into the ocean pausing only slightly as each wave was split by his wet suit. His progress slowed as he submerged and the force field air bubble displaced enough water to make him start to rise to the surface. The microcircuit in the backpack immediately adjusted the size of the breathing bubble to make Seymour perfectly buoyant. Like a submersible going to zero bubble.

Then two small jets on each side of the backpack engaged and he was propelled forward at significant speed. He heard Robyn's voice proclaim, "You will be at the site in 12 minutes and 18 seconds."

He knew the earth and the moon, somehow through Robyn, were now in control. His body was adjusted to a slight downward angle to keep him close to the ocean floor as his speed gradually increased. With depth came darkness but his backpack lit up and cast two red beams of light to show what was ahead. Then it came into view just as Seymour noticed a decrease in speed. From the ocean surface it looked like a large coral reef, but from his view it was a giant structure that funneled ocean water into the Turbine. The structure used Bernoulli's Principle to accelerate the tidal flow that passed through the turbine generating electrical power for Seymour's home and laboratory.

There was a grid in front of the tunnel that led to the turbine designed to keep fish and debris away from the blade. The backpack, guided by Robyn from the lab, put Seymour safely on the side of the rushing waters going through the angled grid that pushed the fish to the side but let the water rush through. As his feet touched the ocean floor, he heard Robyn say, "You're in control now".

The holographic display led him to a maze around the grid and away from the water rushing through the enormous turbine blade. The blade was spinning five times faster than normal and Seymour could feel a vibration getting stronger. He knew there was no time to waste as he moved quickly toward a three-foot control wheel that would divert the water away from the blade before it cracked or exploded.

Turning the wheel clockwise forced a titanium plate to slide in front of the blade and at the same time open a new path for the water. The vibration slowed and finally disappeared when the plate totally covered the blade. Two red lights came on showing a passage to a chamber door.

Seymour never considered himself as a hero, but the rapid pounding of his heart as the vibration stopped told him fear abounded. There was a connection, however, with the earth itself, that drove him to do these things without question. Then there was Robyn, who always kept him on track, as her voice filled his bubble of air, "The lab is at 20% reserve and I am connecting my power source to slow down the drain on the batteries. Please hurry." He knew her Metatronic brain would make her sacrifice herself to save the lab, and that was not an acceptable scenario.

Pulling a lever on the chamber door allowed sea water to fill the interlock and turned the two lights a dim yellow. He entered the interlock that operated like a torpedo tube chamber in reverse, closed the door, and reset the lever from inside.

The seawater quickly drained through a grate in the floor and the lights turned green. A panel on the wall opposite the seawater door slid open and Seymour entered the well-lit generator room as he touched the strap on his chest and removed the air bubble surrounding his head. The smell of hot steel filled the room but there was no fire or smoke that could be seen. The Generator Repair Robot or GR2 was motionless and standing by the blade shaft with something in its claw. GR2 was a highly advanced industrial robot.

Upon further inspection, Seymour discovered a gear had exploded and a piece must have pierced GR2's power source. GR2 had pulled it free but the robot's power ran out before it could do anything.

The missing gear allowed the blade to spin freely and overheat a bearing on the shaft that was no longer connected to the generator. Pulling a spare power source from storage, Seymour first repaired GR2 and told him to get the bearing replaced. In his earpiece he heard Robyn's voice reporting, "Down to 15% energy level." and knew he had to get the generator back online soon. There were no spare gears in the storage area and he was at a loss on what to do next. Then it happened! Seymour felt a small breeze, as if someone had just passed him. There was no one else in the room and goose bumps made the hairs on his arm stand up as he felt it again.

A small whirlwind of air had formed in the corner of the room and revealed three shapes of gears in the clay floor that had been covered and filled with years of dust

and dirt. GR2 was still working on the bearing on the other side of the room and there was no visible source for this mini tornado. Then it moved and hovered over a pile of steel pellets lying on the floor for a few seconds and disappeared.

Seymour moved swiftly as he placed some of the pellets in the clay mold of the correct sized gear and pulled a laser welder down from the shelf. He attached a cable from the backpack to the laser to give it maximum power, set the dial on heat, placed it about six inches over the pellets and pulled the trigger. The steel turned cherry red, then white hot and started to act like a fourth of July sparkler and finally melted. His backpack beeped, letting him know the energy level was extremely low, so he released the trigger on the laser. He added a few more pellets to fill the mold and thicken the gear and watched as they slowly melted and became part of the pool of liquid steel.

GR2 suddenly appeared at his side and started spraying the new gear with a fire extinguisher to rapidly cool the gear and set the temper.

They worked as a team now to replace the gear and finish the repairs. Just as they finished, he heard Robyn's voice announce, “Energy level at 10%”. Pressing the patch on the backpack strap, he activated the air bubble as he entered the interlock. Water quickly filled the interlock, but the air bubble was flashing a red light indicating there was less than one minute of energy left in the backpack.

He reached the gate wheel and started to turn it just when the bubble turned solid red and he knew this was it. He took a long last breath of air as the bubble vanished and the sea slapped his face. He finished turning the wheel until the gate was fully opened then started making

his way through the maze and back to the open ocean. He knew he could never remove the backpack or weights in time to make it to the surface. His lungs were already starting to burn as they desired a fresh supply of air.

Then he heard it again, that clicking sound that he had heard before on other missions. After stumbling from the maze and into the ocean he stood straight in the dark to hear where the sound was coming from.

Two dolphins appeared from behind him, placed themselves on each side and pressing against him quickly lifted him to the surface.

Seymour remembered the wonderful taste of the fresh air as his head broke the surface. He remembered how the two dolphins clicked the same pattern of sounds as they swiftly took him to Robyn standing in waste high water waiting to carry him into the sleeping chamber.

Removing his backpack, wet-suit, and getting into bed was just a blur. He remembers staring at the moon one last time before he closed his eyes. The moon's face was normal and even seemed to be smiling. But what he remembers the most before he drifted away was the song the dolphins sang as they brought him to Robyn. The rhythm of the clicks, he had heard it before and wanted to know what it meant. Like a lullaby, it put him to sleep.

That night he dreamed about Ruby. Perhaps it was hearing Robyn's voice before he hit the pillow that made him dream of her, but his dreams always meant something. He pictured her as a princess in a castle with servants and loyal subjects that lived all around her. The dream seemed real and in it they were getting married. When dawn came, he did not want to open his eyes. He did not want the dream to stop. Then he thought it was just a silly dream ... or was it?

Chapter 7

Night Stars

Ruby was not aware of the drop in temperature as she continued to stare at the Stars from her mountaintop bench. It was just a short walk back to her palace chamber, but she was mesmerized by the clarity of the night stars. Max, her robotic companion floated in quietly behind her and gently placed a soft, thick blanket over her shoulders and back to eliminate exposure to the cold. Ruby welcomed the blanket but never took her eyes off the sky as she pulled the blanket around her and remarked, “I can see them all so clear, Max.” Then jumping from the bench and pointing low in the sky Ruby filled with excitement yelled, “Look! Look at Delphinus! Can you see it?" Although Max had a Metatronic brain, he was not always capable of seeing like some of the gifted humans he had met. He knew the constellation of stars that was called Delphinus or the Dolphin, but that was all he saw … a cluster of stars. He responded with his unemotional deep masculine voice, “Yes Miss, I see it.”

Ruby knew he was only seeing the constellation of stars called Orion and not the Dolphin. She knew this was a message from the past or a prophesy of something to come. She picked up the blanket that had fallen to the ground, wrapped it around her, slowly sat back on the bench and said quietly, “I wonder what it means?”

Ruby recalled from Greek mythology the story about a Greek poet Arion of Lesbos.

She wondered if this sign was for her, or perhaps someone she knew. She rose from the bench and followed Max back to the palace built inside the

mountain. He was a faithful companion that seemed to know what she was thinking most of the time, but this time he could not help her.

Meanwhile, far away in another land, Seymour sat looking at the night sky from a flat rock on the beach near his laboratory home. He was not aware of the drop in temperature as he continued to stare at the Stars from his favorite resting place. It was just a short walk back to the laboratory, but he was mesmerized by the clarity of the night stars. Robyn, his robotic companion floated in quietly next to him and placed a soft, thick blanket over his shoulders and back to eliminate exposure to the cold sea breeze. Seymour welcomed the blanket but never took his eyes off the sky as he remarked, “I feel the stars have something to tell me, Robyn.” Pointing he exclaimed, “Look at that grouping over there, Robyn. It’s so bright and red!”

Robyn responded sweetly in a soft whisper, “It almost looks like a ruby.” Then she turned and floated slowly back toward the lab.

Seymour stayed for a while wondering what it all meant. He remembered his adventure where he had met Ruby, and how much he enjoyed their conversation and time together. Another constellation caught his attention before he left the beach. Suddenly an arrow seemed to shoot across the sky. It was from the bow in the star cluster known as Orion, the Hunter. The next morning Seymour was awakened by the clicking of Dolphins on the beach. It was not a gentle sound, but harsh and shrill, almost like a call for help. Robyn entered the room with a tray that supported the smallest breakfast he had ever seen and stated, “Please eat quickly, sir, there is an emergency at the beach.”

Seymour gobbled down a piece of toast as he slipped into the wet-suit that Robyn had previously laid on the chair by his bed. He flushed his throat out with half a glass of orange juice and slipped the power pack on his back without comment. No need to ask, he knew Robyn would fill him in before he hit the beach. The portal in the sleeping chamber wall that led to the beach opened and as he rose to walk through it Robyn said, "They need your help."

She handed him a waterproof medical case called the MedTab as he stepped onto the beach and tapped the switch on the power pack strap to activate the air bubble, camera, and holographic screen.

When Seymour reached the water, he noticed two large dolphins swimming in a circle around a small pup. The pup was motionless and floating on one side. An arrow from a spear gun was protruding from both sides of the pup's dorsal ridge a few inches behind the dorsal fin. Seymour steadied himself and aimed the MedTab camera at the pup. And within seconds an x-ray image of the pup appeared on his holographic screen at the front of his air bubble helmet.

He thought he heard Robyn speaking behind him, but when he turned, he saw Ruby in a wet suit, similar to his, holding a red anti- gravity brick. She placed the brick under the pup, lifted him out of the water, and they both rushed toward the labs operating room where Robyn and Max were ready to take over. Max looked at Seymour and said, "Hello, I'm Ruby's companion, Max" and then began working with Robyn to save the pup. Seymour had never met Max, but his voice could have made him Seymour's twin brother.

With the aid of the Labs computer, Robyn and Max removed the spear gun arrow and sealed the wound

quickly. The pup was weak but resting normal as they gently lowered him into the warm recovery tank in the Lab floor that was often used by Seymour as a spa pool. The only difference now was an AC Current flowing through the water in the pool to aid the healing process.

As the frequency of the current changed, the light in the wall of the tank would change color. When they knew the pup was going to be OK, Seymour and Ruby went down to the beach to assure the dolphins that the danger was past.

Somehow, they already knew and the loud clicking had changed into a soft gentle rhythm that almost sounded like a lullaby. It was a familiar song, and Seymour was sure he had heard it somewhere before. Then Ruby spoke to the dolphins with a series of gentle clicks of her tongue and the lullaby stopped. Only the soft splashing of waves on the sand and the sound of the breeze brushing the trees on the ridge prevented total silence. The afternoon sun was low in the sky and night was slowly approaching.

Suddenly a loud groan from Seymour's stomach made Ruby laugh and comment "Let's go to the food center and feed that beast!"

On their way to the food center Seymour and Ruby checked on the dolphin pup and found Max and Robyn standing by the spa like worried grandparents. Knowing the pup was in good hands, they moved on to the processor and ordered their favorite meals and drinks. It was a pleasant evening as they ate and discussed the events of the day and the night sky that had brought them together again. Max entered the food center and asked, "We are returning baby to her parents, would you like to join us?"

The happy reunion proceeded with a ritual like appearance as they proceeded to the beach with dimly lit beacons on each side of the dolphin pup. It was dark out and the night sky was clear as it helped to light the beach. There was a great aura of peace and joy surrounding the small group when the family of dolphins was made whole again.

Without speaking, Seymour and Ruby walked slowly to a flat rock near the beach, sat, and stared at the night sky. A warm breeze, like a blanket, covered them and they both felt a burning desire to dedicate their being to making the universe better.

At that moment, the Spirit branded both of their souls and their lives changed forever. Lightning flashed across the sky branching into every constellation but there was no thunder. And for a moment the stars were replaced with the face of a Creature. Then everything returned to normal, everything except Seymour and Ruby. It seemed as though the Metatronic brains of Max and Robyn could sense the change in Seymour and Ruby, and they both moved to join them on the beach. Ruby looked at them and asked, “Did you see the creature in the sky?”

They both answered at exactly the same time with, “Yes.” Seymour stared at Robyn and said, “What does it mean?” and Robyn answered, “Much to do, need to prepare.” while Max moved and stood next to Ruby. Seymour turned and took both of Ruby’s hands into his. He gently pulled her toward him and they kissed. It was not just a sign of love but also a seal of the mission to fight the Creature in the days to come.

Then Ruby climbed onto Max’s back and protected by an invisible shield around her, they rose into the night sky and were gone. Seymour walked slowly

back to the lab knowing that Robyn would explain what needed to be done.

Later that night as Max started his descent into Ruby's palace high inside Mount Whitney, she opened her eyes and could see the east face of Fisherman's Peak. She knew she was home and welcomed the strip of bright purple Sky Pilot flowers blooming just below the summit. Max flew through the holographic granite slab on the east cliff that hid the palace and gently landed near the main entrance. They had made trips like this many times before, but Max knew Ruby was now different and there was a great adventure ahead.

Both Ruby and Seymour found it hard to sleep. Although they were located far from each other, staring at the night sky made them feel close. Simultaneously they wondered why Max called the dolphin pup "the baby". Max surely knew it was a pup, and never made this kind of mislabeling. Then there was the face of the Creature. It made for a very restless night but sleep finally came just as Max and Robyn knew it would. They stood watch and for the first time linked their Metatronic brains and shared the events of the day.

Chapter 8

The Creature

The sun had just risen when Ruby and Max returned the next day. Thunder was booming and lightning flashing from dense clouds overhead when they arrived. Ruby had slept on Max's back during the trip home and back again but was a little stiff from the journey.

After a quick "Good morning" and a high- speed breakfast, Seymour started packing all the advanced technology from his hidden home. Meanwhile, Ruby worked with the two robots, Robyn, and Max, on the supercomputer and power center of the lab. The faster than sound submarine had already been moved to the river under the cave in the island nearby. The storm was not just a coincidence. The Earth was keeping the satellites overhead blinded while the newly formed crew moved everything to the island cave. Everyone knew the Creature was coming and would be there as soon as the storm was over. Even TB, the tri- blade helicopter, with the help of Ruby's antigravity bricks was busy transporting large parts of the lab to the cave entrance. Each section of the lab was enclosed in a force field to protect it from the storm while it was being moved. Both Robyn and Max used their Fusion Power Sources to keep the supercomputer section powered during the move. Only Glen, the Wicklow Terrier, seemed to be enjoying the work as he would sit and watch in each room. Then there was Devyn, the cat, who was busy chasing those ugly rodents that appeared now and then as the rooms were stripped to the bone exposing their dens.

The final task was setting the explosives that would destroy the cave under the lab and leave only a dwelling that appeared to be simple and boring

a technical minded inspector. The last boom of thunder covered the explosion and the job was done. Everyone moved to the cave in the nearby island except for Seymour and Glen. The dog refused to leave Seymour and the storm was ending quickly. Besides, Seymour somehow felt better with his little scruffy companion at his side, and prayed Glen would be OK when the creature arrived.

They both went back into the newly formed dwelling. Seymour sat at a simple table, with Glen at his side, and watched the beach as the storm slowly vanished and a blue sky started to make its appearance in little patches overhead. Then a jet boat appeared out of nowhere and zoomed up onto the beach. A military looking helicopter and three different land vehicles quickly followed. As soon as the beach was secured a large Van drove onto the beach and parked in a strategic area surrounded by this private militia.

Seymour somehow knew this was the Command Center for the "Regulators Ending Environmental Destruction" known as REED.

Reed was a global organization that answered to no country's laws with the pretense of saving the world. They really used the deception of protecting the environment to control and accumulate wealth.

Glen turned, faced the door, and for the first time since Seymour could remember produced an aggressive low-pitched growl. The door blew open knocking two men wearing body armor to the ground. They quickly

rose to their feet and pointing their weapons entered the room.

Seymour snatched Glen into his arms and shouted, "Don’t shoot! We are unarmed!" Others followed into the house as Seymour, with Glen in his arms, was escorted out onto the beach. The area looked like a crime scene, with people in different uniforms and robots searching everywhere. A man in a white coat holding some sort of scanner approached them and pointed the object at Glen. Once again Glen softly growled and the scanner sparked and started to smoke.

Instantly, Mr. White Coat dropped his scanner and backed away. This incident forced two robots to turn and approach them. Again, Glen produced a slow deep growl and both robots appeared to stop and go to sleep. Then a woman in uniform, who appeared to be in charge walked up and said with an angry look, "What's the problem?" Mr. White Coat replied, "There seems to be some type of field in this area that is disrupting our equipment and the robots, Lieutenant." She replied, "Follow me to the command center. We know that area is safe."

With an escort on each side, Seymour and Glen followed her across the beach with no further problems. The entrance to the command center was really a chamber filled with scanners and electronic sensors. Two robots guarded it with powerful looking laser weapons. The Lieutenant held up a special coded card and like an elevator entrance, two thick steel doors slid away from each other to allow passage.

She glanced at Seymour and demanded, "Follow me, but leave that animal outside!" A high pitched but soft cry from Glen seemed to change her mind and she said, "Alright, but keep him under control."

After they entered the small chamber and the thick steel doors had closed behind them the Lieutenant declared, "This will take about five min....." Glen softly growled, the lights went out and the doors into the command center slid open. Someone in the room shouted, "What just happened?" A man in a blue lab coat sitting behind a monitor panel shouted back, "The scanners are down and all the chamber electronics just went dead!"

Seymour felt an electronic jolt from Glen to his chest and a transformation began that would change him for the rest of his life. He heard a faint but familiar rattle sound that he heard before, but now he knew what i t was. All digital equipment uses ones and zeros that form binary codes. Seymour could now hear that electronic language, understand it, and even control it with his mind. Microprocessors in the robots, the handheld weapons, the master computer, and much more were all under his control.

The center of the room held a long rectangular table with three robed individuals wearing white wigs at the far end. The walls on each side of the table held monitors with the faces of at least another dozen witnesses to the room. On the opposite end of the table was a boxed in chair, slightly lower than normal, so the judges could look down on the person in it. Using his new power from Glen, Seymour mentally ordered a cushion for the chair.

A robot instantly appeared from the back with a large red velvet cushion and placed it on the chair. Seymour walked to the newly made thrown, sat down, and Glen curled up in his lap. Looking slightly downward from his new position Seymour spoke for the

first time, "You came to judge me, so let your trial begin."

The utter chaos that followed was comical. Every monitor in the room was active with questions, commands, and swearing. Technicians were shaking their hand- held instruments and banging on keyboards with puzzled looks. Military guards were looking around with no idea of what they should do next. Finally, the center judge at the end of the table, banged a gavel and shouted,

"Quiet! Quiet!"

The room noise slowly diminished, and the man with the gavel shouted, "I am the judge for this ...". Seymour cut in, "Yes, I know. I will call you Mr. 'J'. And the lady on your right is your lawyer. I will call her Mz. 'L'. The man on your left is your technical guide and I will call him Mr. 'G'. I need no defense lawyer; truth will be my defense. You may proceed."

Extremely annoyed but in a hurry to get this over, Mr. J said, "Very well," and turned to Mz. L and said, "Proceed."

Mz. L stared at a small display in front of her and said, "Let's start when you were very young and you destroyed REED's swamp vine that was developed at great expense from the Venus fly trap. This plant was created to clean the waters in a swamp in Indiana ..." Again, Seymour interrupted with a loud laugh and said, "Your poison vine was developed to kill endangered species and was being tested in Indiana. You had made deals with leaders in various states to buy the protected lands below value after the animals were removed and then sell them at great profits. Those contracts were signed in advance and appear on all your monitors now. The

project was scrapped when you discovered that the animals could learn to escape and I am proud to say I was there to help teach them. Since the REED organization is 'global', it needs a G placed in front of its name. I will call you

GREED because it is a better acronym for what you really are." Chaos again erupted and an elderly man on one of the monitors shouted, "I Object!" Seymour raised his hand to produce silence and turned to that monitor and said, "No, Mr. 'O', since you were the negotiator of the political bribes you may not object." Then Seymour said, "In fact the contract you made to rebuild the bridge that your factory was destroying in the city is on all monitors now and is the truth." The trial was totally in his control now so he added, "All your other charges were equally motivated by greed. You set shipping routes so ships could be destroyed for your salvage companies and were short selling stock in the insurance companies to make a double profit on these tragedies. Your orders to the salvage companies are on your personal displays right now. Orders to go to places in routes you had set for commercial ships, but I diverted the ships and they never sank."

Seymour stopped, took a cup from a robot that seemed to know he needed water, drank a little and placed the cup on the table. The room was so quiet you could hear the servomotors on the robot as it retreated to the kitchen area. He then turned to another monitor on the wall and said, "I will call you Mz. 'D' since you were in charge of making the very large diamond to cut into enough stones to take over the diamond markets. Again, look at your screens to see the sales that were promised but never delivered when the diamond disappeared in a storm.

After another short pause and sip of water, Seymour turned to another face on the wall and stared. Although his expression was blank, there was anger in his eyes. Finally, the face declared, "Why are you looking at me? I just write software for maintenance robots."

Then Seymour responded with, "No, Mr. 'S', you wrote software and sent it to many maintenance robots to shut down generators so the GREED repair division could make huge profits. Lives were lost at hospitals and communities that survived on these energy sources. I almost lost my life trying to repair my unit. You are the worst kind of killer, hiding behind code and software. It's all right there on each of your screens."

A silence took over the command center as all were reading the data displayed on their personal screens. Then Seymour turned to a face on the furthest monitor in the room and declared, "You are the accountant. I will call you Mr. 'A'. You are another killer that hides in the shadows of software and the 'bottom line'. You use your job to justify your evil."

Seymour took a sip of water and turned to face a display of a young woman. "You think you are innocent? I will call you Mz. 'I'. You sell human body parts and tissue from clinics to companies to make lotions and perfumes. When the scandal of your dealings became public you had to find a new source, so you started hunting baby dolphins. Thus, the spear in one of these babies brought you here.

"Mr. 'J' slammed his gavel on the table so hard it made Glen sit up and lean on Seymour's chest. Mr. 'J' shouted "We are not on trial! You are!" Seymour put his arms around Glen, stood up and explained "Wrong! You have just been through your trial. You are all infected by

the Creature know as Greed. I have given you the cure, the Truth. How you use it will determine where you will be sent in the end. Use the letters of the names (J, L, G, O, D, S, A, I) I have given you to make two words of four letters each. If you do not change, the solution to the above anagram will be your destiny and you will meet the Creature's master and live out eternity under his rule. You all had good hearts once. Listen to the Spirit of the Earth and avoid this terrible end. As Seymour turned the doors of the command center both opened and he walked onto the beach.

Mr. 'J' was shouting "Stop him! Shoot him! Kill him!" But nobody moved. Seymour walked across the beach to the pier and onto the small boat. He was only out of view for a few seconds as the boat turned and headed out to sea.

Suddenly the command center doors slammed shut, all the electronic equipment came back to life, and robots were back in control. Mr. 'J' screamed "Everyone sink that boat, now!" All the weapons turned, aimed at the vessel, and fired. Over 20 laser beams from handheld weapons, command center roof, ships in the sea, and tanks on the beach all fired at once. The small boat burst into flames and burned so fast and bright it looked like magicians flash paper. When the laser appeared to go right through Seymour and Glen, they too burst into flames and in seconds all was gone.

Mr. 'J' sat back in his chair and announced, "Now there's a truth I can live with. Let it be recorded that Seymour E. Blox and his dog died at sea." There were some in the center looking down at their displays and wondering. Only one seemed to take Seymour's last words seriously. For the sake of this one, the Spirit had given them all a chance to repent before it was too late.

Truth is often not what we see or hear.....

Truth is what really happened. When the boat turned and Seymour could not be seen, a portal was opened and Seymour with Glen in his arms dropped down into Mimi, the invisible submarine directly under the small boat. Simultaneously a small electronic device was placed on the deck of the boat that projected a holographic movie of Seymour and Glen on the deck. While the boat was heading for the open sea, Mimi invisibly brought Seymour and Glen to the cave in the nearby island. Everything happened so fast that everyone was watching the burial at sea on a monitor in the cave. Only Glen seemed oblivious to the burial as he played with his favorite toy. Seymour turned and noticed for the first time that Glens favorite toy was a small ball with all the lands of the earth on it. It was a miniature globe.

Chapter 9

The Spirit

Two days had passed since the raid by REED had forced Seymour and his friends to move into the Cave home near his old lab. Ruby was eager to return to her home but afraid to chance the trip for fear of being seen by a satellite controlled by REED. Everyone was busy making the new home in the mountain comfortable. A strong romance between Seymour and Ruby was turning into courtship. Robyn and Max were even getting attached as much as their Metatronic brains would allow. Devyn was busy ridding the cave of the undesirable rodents in a manner cats seem to enjoy. Glen, however, had disappeared and no one knew where he was. He often disappeared for a couple of days so no one was concerned.

On the morning of the third day everyone was awakened by Glen sitting on a large rock at the far end of the cave and barking. He continued to bark until everyone was at the rock. Then before anyone could say anything, he jumped down from the rock and ran right through the cave wall. Ruby went to the wall and tried to touch it but her hand disappeared into the rock. Seymour put his hand around Ruby's waste and they both walked through the Phased Array holographic rock doorway into a long corridor that sloped downward.

Glen was nowhere in sight. A force seemed to pull them gently down the path toward a totally dark area. As they walked the force increased until they were no longer in control and flew into the dark hole. It took only a few seconds to pass through the darkness and float out into another lit passage where Glen stood wagging his tail.

They floated gently down in front of Glen and staggered as dizziness prevented total control of their legs. A few minutes later Robyn and Max joined them and also appeared to be disorientated for a few seconds. Glen woofed as if to say don't wait for Devyn and proceeded through the passage that was now sloped slightly upward. During the walk Ruby stated, "I think we just passed through some sort of a Black Hole." Robyn was more concerned with the light that seemed to come from nowhere. Seymour, however, kept his eyes on Glen and pondered how much this small dog has done for him in the past few days. The passage ended with another rock wall that Glen passed through and out of sight. They all followed without hesitation as if it was a normal doorway. Ruby grabbed Seymour's arm and shouted, "I'm Home!" Seymour stared at a beautiful castle inside a mammoth cave. The cave was at least five hundred times larger than the one they just left and there were gardens and smaller houses around the castle. Ruby was so excited she ran across the field as fast as she could while pulling Seymour and shouting to people she passed. It was a small village inside a mountain and Seymour was awestruck! Robyn and Max followed them like two shadows in the sun. Only Glen noticed Devyn enter the cave with a large dead rat in her mouth. She pranced over to Glen, dropped the rat, and licked him on the side of his face. She sat there while her collar blinked and transmitted a message to Robyn that made her stop and look back.

Seymour had lost his shadow because Robyn was recording Glen bury something in a patch of wild garlic that grew near the far wall of the cave. When Ruby reached the palace, she shouted to an elderly couple that had come out on a balcony to see why the normally quiet little town was suddenly filled with people shouting.

"Mom, Dad, I'm home and I brought someone with me I want you to meet!" Before her parents could answer, a loud noise came from above.

Everyone was shocked to silence by still another unexpected event. A large door in the side of the mountain started to slide open. It had been decades since this door had been used to help build the castle and only a few of the older people even knew it existed. The opening caused panic in many and they started to scurry for protective shelter. Then the Tri-Blade helicopter flew in and landed in the field behind Seymour. Two passengers disembarked and Seymour recognized them immediately.

"Mom! Dad! What is going on?" "We have no clue." His father said. "This helicopter just landed on our farm in front of the house and I recognized the Tri-Blade instantly. We were told you died in a boating accident but knew if you were alive the Tri- Blade would take us to you. So, we got in to see if it could. And my God! It did!"

The large door had closed and people were starting to come out of their small dwellings as Seymour and his parents hugged and kissed amongst tears of joy. It took a little while for the chaos to turn to regimented confusion, but everyone eventually gathered in the field and the introductions began.

After few weeks everyone knew each other and wedding plans for Seymour and Ruby were well on their way. Many workers were traveling between caves improving the new base of operation on the other side of the world. Even Seymour and Ruby were using Mimi the faster than sound submarine to expose corrupt agencies that still plagued the City. Robyn and Max had also made a new friend, a robot named Min that lived with the

village's doctor, Paul. Like them, Min also had the plate with the letters GA. Min's Metatronic brain instantly bonded with Robyn and Max and a large amount of history was shared by all three. Most people just knew Paul as 'Doc', but now the GAs knew much more than even Paul knew about himself.

Paul was in his late fifties and had accepted Min to be his companion without question when she appeared as a gift over three years ago. When she first spoke, her voice brought him back to when he was young and in love with someone with that same voice. They had traveled to many nations helping the poor and healing the sick. Then she left him to join an organization that was going to eliminate environmental destruction. Paul was devastated and spent years searching for plants that could heal when he stumbled upon this mountain village that needed a doctor. As the next few months passed everyone seemed to have more work than they could handle. A wedding was in the wind and there were many problems in the world that looked like they were created by the Creature and needed Seymour and Ruby's attention. They both also realized that Glen was missing and started to worry. But they took comfort in the saying, "Coincidence? I think not." This came from a book they both read about another dog named Sophie. Somehow, they knew that Glen was working on something important.

Ester lived on Jarvis Island located in the South Pacific Ocean. It was an unincorporated territory of the United States until purchased by REED. The island has no ports or harbor and was quickly secured by vessels of REED's military forces. The Center of Jarvis Island has a dried lagoon where deep guano deposits were mined for about 20 years during the nineteenth century. Because of the island's distance from other large

landmasses, its high point is the 36th most isolated peak in the world. Ester had joined REED many years ago and was now the head of the personnel department with the highest security rating. She lived in an isolated building with no cameras and was considered next in line to be the head of REED.

No one questioned how her robot bypassed all her security. He simply announced "Hello. My name is Feeniks, like the mythical bird but spelled differently. I will be your global assistant. I can translate all known languages for you. Ester assumed the plate marked GA on the robot stood for global assistant, but it was his voice that shocked her.

He had the same voice of a man she loved years ago. She had come to regret leaving him to join REED, especially after seeing the killing of Seymour and his little dog and hearing how a Creature had turned the organization into GREED. She was one of the faces on the wall monitors and at one point during the out-of-control trial, she felt the dog's blue eyes staring at her. Then just recently this little dog appeared, and he had the same blue eyes.

Feeniks instantly commented, "He is a rare breed that can do what is called the 'Glen Sit'." Ester remarked, "Well I guess we will just have to call him Glen then." And the dog sat up and wagged his tail. For the past few months Glen and Feeniks endeared themselves to Ester as she prepared to campaign to be the head of REED.

Then one morning, Glen seemed to be all excited as he barked and ran to the door. Feeniks remarked, "He wants us to follow him." so the three started on a long trek to one of the old, abandoned mines near the dried lagoon. Glen ran into a small opening that was left after an apparent collapse of the mine's entrance and Ester

hesitated to follow. Again, Feeniks remarked, "It appears to be safe. Let's see what Glen has found."

They both entered into a dimly lit shaft that sloped downward and followed Glen deeper into the mine. Ester was puzzled by the fact that after a thirty minute walk the shaft was still dimly lit. Then something seemed to start pulling them off their feet and they were propelled into an area that was totally dark. On the other side of the dark area the shaft was much brighter and sloped upward toward a flat rock wall. Glen was more excited than Ester had ever seen before and he ran right through the stone wall. Without thinking, Feeniks and Ester followed.

On the other side of the wall was a beautiful garden with a castle in the distance. Around the castle were small dwellings and everything was inside the largest cave that Ester had ever seen. But the thing that made her heart stop for a second was the man standing and facing her with three robots at his side.

The minute Paul saw Ester was not wearing a wedding ring, he grabbed her and kissed her. "I never should have let you go!" he said softly, "Now that you are with me again, I will correct that mistake." Feeniks only took a minute to connect with the other three GA's via Metatronic brain telepathy and then remarked, "Hurry, there is not much time." What happened next was the shortest engagement ever when Min produced a ring box and handed it to Paul standing with his mouth open and staring at Ester. He dropped to one knee and started to ask, "Will you ..." Ester interrupted and said "Yes!" Max said, "Hurry the ceremony has already started. I have the wedding rings. Follow me!" Robyn had run ahead with Glen to pause the nuptial long enough to turn the wedding into a dual ceremony and

then Robyn placed two more figures on the top of the wedding cake.

In the months that followed the infection of the earth by the Creature was being cured. Ester became the head of REED and removed many of the people that were only there to make money. She would take long periods of time off and disappear every now and then. No one seemed to know how or to where. Paul also was seen with a nurse in countries that were being helped by doctors without borders.

Corrupt agencies all over the world were being exposed by anonymous sources and computer messages that could not be traced. The forces of good against the Creature were growing and Greed in the world was now being exposed.

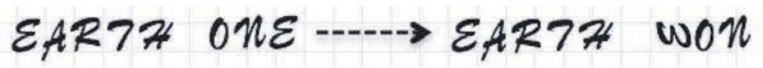
The Creature could not understand the shift towards good and had all his spies working for an answer. His best spy, a large rat named Vile, had disappeared months ago. Even his super buzzards flying high in the sky could not sniff out the remains of Vile if he was dead. The Creature had searched every known garlic patch because he knew that was the only place the smell of Vile could be blocked. Nothing on Earth could be found. It was almost as if something underground was working against him.

On a farm in Indiana in the woods by the Kankakee River Glen was kneeling with his paws crossed in prayer. It may have looked like the "Glen sit" but this is how he prayed. The bush in front of him glowed with many colors as Glen communicated silently with the Spirit. It was not a normal conversation but more like a video of pictures showing flash backs of how it all started here with the Tri-Blade that guided Seymour when he was young. Quickly the flashbacks moved to Robyn, who

like the first bird to tell us the earth would soon come back to life, appeared to help Seymour in this rebirth. Ruby's lifetime, the arrival of Max, Paul, and Min were all shown and how they helped in this battle against the Creature. Finally, Feeniks, the last robot with a "GA" plate was shown to be like the mythical bird Phoenix that rose from the ashes of REED to help complete the earth's rebirth. It had been many years since all this took place and the Earth had changed to a healthy, loving planet to live on. Glen had offspring now that were helping the underground. The Guardian Angel Max kept egos in check by limiting everyone's worldly exposure, while Min made sure enough help was provided to keep the Creature away.

Glen ended his meeting with the Spirit and returned to the farmhouse. He knew it was time.

He curled up on the porch floor between Seymour's parents and closed his eyes for the last time. But in those final moments he knew that he had helped Ester's life to be turned back. He knew he had helped move her to the front of REED. He also knew that he had helped take the silent "E" in the title "EARTH ONE" and turn it counterclockwise a quarter turn to make it look like a "W". He knew that like Ester he had helped move that "W" to the front of the letter group to make the title of this book read true. In his final moments, he knew that he had served his God and by doing so ...



Epilogue

When Glen went to sleep for the last time, he had a dream. He was exploring a cave that had a bright light

in it instead of a dark hole. As his feet left the ground, he could feel the joy and happiness that was in the light. He could hear Sophie calling him. He was sleeping but his feet were moving as he tried to run into the light. Devyn was with him and put her head on his neck to let him know he was not alone. His best friend helped him make that final journey.

Book 2

The Great Awakening

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

The greatness of humanity is not in being human, but in being humane.

Mahatma Gandi

Chapter 10

Sally

The cool spring breeze softly caressed Ruby's face as she sat in Seymour's arms on the balcony of the castle. It was rare to feel a breeze inside their mountain cave, but Today was different. Then a pure white crow landed on the ledge that surrounded the balcony and strutted toward them. It had been many years since Glen, the dog that answered all their questions, had gone into the light, and now they were on their own. After all the adventures the Spirit had sent to them, they both just sat still and wondered. Finally, after watching the bird bob his head up and down with an annoyed jerking motion, Ruby said "Now what?" A moment of silence and then Seymour said, "There's something in his beak." Ruby put out her hand and said, "OK, Al, drop it in my hand." Seymour gave a strange look to Ruby and remarked, "Al? Do you know this bird?" Ruby replied, "No. But he is obviously an albino crow so..." Seymour cut in, "Maybe our friend here is not a 'he', but a 'she'." After a very short pause

Ruby said, "Your right. She's too pretty to be a 'he'." Again, Ruby extended her hand and this time said, "OK, Sally, drop it in my hand." Instantly the bird dropped her gift into Ruby's hand. Turning to face Seymour, Ruby smiled as if to say, 'Well there you go!' but said nothing. Seymour laughed, took her hand gently and said, "Let's see what your new girlfriend has brought you?" Carefully picking the tiny berry out of Ruby's hand, Seymour whimsically pronounced, "It's an elderberry! I used to eat these all the time during my walks to the bayou on the Kankakee River. What do you think our feathered friend is trying to tell us?"

While they both examined the little berry, the silence was interrupted by a young child's voice. "Oh! I see you met Sally. Isn't she pretty?" They both turned to face their daughter, Stacey, and said simultaneously "How do you know her name is Sally?" Stacey replied, "Robyn told me when I first met Sally in the garden by the bush with all the berries on it." Robyn was a humanoid robot and Guardian Angel that watched over the family. She especially watched Stacey because she tended to explore frequently. Robyn's Metatronic brain was not only a supercomputer with unusual capabilities, but it also had precognition and the ability to see things that would happen in the future. So, it was no surprise to Seymour and Ruby that she knew what they would call the bird. Stacey extended her arm and Sally jumped, flapped her wings, and flew over to her like a trained pet. Ruby asked Stacey "Where is Robyn?" Stacey replied with a young girl’s lack of concern, "She's helping Ester and Paul. There's some kind of an emergency." Then Stacey turned and said as she skipped from the balcony, "Come on Sally, let's go pick some flowers."

Rising from the bench Seymour took both of Ruby's hands and pulled her close. He kissed her with a

soft lingering kiss, placed his cheek on hers and whispered into her ear, "I love you." Pulling back slowly so she could look into his blue eyes she replied, "You better!" A small joke she used because she knew no reply was needed. They were one soul in two different bodies. Then Seymour smiled and said, "Here we go again. Let's go see what the emergency is all about."

They found Robyn helping Ester pack her suitcase. Before they could ask, Robyn without even turning to face them said, "A very contagious disease is putting people in a coma by the millions all around the world. Ester is going to REED to get groups ready to help.

Paul, is in the lab with Min trying to find a possible vaccine." Turning to face Seymour, Robyn looked into his eyes and said, "You have something to tell Paul?"

Seymour whispered to Ruby, "It's scary how she knows what I need to do before I do." Then taking the little berry out of his shirt pocket, pausing to look at it one more time and think about it, he finally said, "Yes, I believe I do." Then Ruby gently took Seymour's other hand and pulling him toward the door said, "Let's get moving. Sounds like some sick people need our help."

When Seymour and Ruby entered the lab, Paul, who was often called Doc, was bent over a microscope. Min, his robotic assistant, was searching all the recorded flu vaccines on the computer screen linked to a Supercomputer in another cave far away.

Without turning from her task Min announced, "Seymour has something you should look at Paul." Ruby whispered to Seymour, "Boy! These GAs don't waste any time, do they." Paul mumbled something incoherent then glanced up at Min who had turned to look at Seymour. He jerked his head to see what she was looking

at, stood up straight and said apologetically, "Oh! Hello. I didn't hear you come into the room."

Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of childish giggles coming from a tiny hidden speaker in a piece of jewelry hung around Ruby's neck. "The twins are up to something." Ruby said then added, "I'll go take care of it." As Ruby turned to leave, Seymour held out his hand to Paul and showed him the small black elderberry he received earlier from Sally, the albino crow. Paul took it with one hand, pulled his glasses out of his shirt pocket with the other hand and said, "What's this?" Before Seymour could answer, Min instructed Paul to put a drop from that berry on the Flu Virus under his microscope and see what happens. Paul did as she instructed because he knew that Min, like Robyn, could somehow know the best path to take. Paul was intensely watching a drop of elderberry juice battle the virus while Min connected the computer screen to a website that showed how elderberries were once used to combat the flu.

Seymour noticed Sally landing on a ledge of an open window high above everyone and walking between the bars to enter the room. The bird just stood there looking down on everyone and bobbed her head up and down as if to say "Yes, Yes, Yes." Then Paul, with eyes still glued to the microscope shouted, "I don't believe it!" Min added, "It's all right here on the computer display." Paul jumped like a man bitten by a bee over to the display and started reading. Sally flew down, landed on Min's shoulder, and watched as Paul digested all the detailed information from the super-computer.

Seymour was so absorbed by the excitement coming from the lab team that he never noticed Stacey. She entered the room with a vase full of elderberries,

walked directly over to Paul, and waited for him to notice her. Sally finally gave out a loud crow call that sounded almost like she shouted "Paul!" The Doc turned and recognizing Stacey standing with a vase in her hand he said, "Oh hello child. What have you brought me?" Stacey replied, "I wanted to pick some pretty flowers, but Sally would not let me. She kept pushing me over to the bush with these berries and made me pick the black ones. I tried to get some of the pretty purple ones, but Sally would yell and pull them out of my hand. She made me fill the vase with these black ones and then she came here. I figured she wanted me to follow her and give them to you. The flowers would have been better but..." Paul interrupted her and said, "Sweet child, that is the most beautiful bouquet I have ever seen. In fact, right now, that is the most beautiful bouquet the world has ever seen." Then he added, "Who is Sally?"

After Paul's mind dismissed the mystifying fact that Sally was an albino crow, his thoughts returned to the emergency of the flu pandemic. He quickly and silently turned and went back to work. With the help of both Min and Seymour, they prepared many bottles of vaccine from a diluted mixture of the black elderberry juice and distilled water. Paul tested every bottle to make sure it had the same effect on the virus and then labeled them and sent them to Ester. He knew that she would get REED to bring them to all the countries that were being infected.

Meanwhile, Ruby found the twins, Andy, and Joey, in the playroom with Max. Max was their favorite of the GA robots and Ruby believed it was because his voice was the same as their fathers. Andy looked over at Ruby as she entered the room and with great excitement in his voice proclaimed, "Look mom! Joey and I made this fortune telling machine." Then Joey added, "Max

helped us a little to get it working." Ruby looked at Max who instantly proclaim, "It's some kind of answer maker." Ruby sat down on the floor between the twins and next to the strange looking machine. She put her ankles under her and leaned between her knees to get a better look at the 'Fortune Telling Machine' and asked, "Can you show me how it works?" Andy said, "Just ask it a question then push that button right there on the top and you'll see."

The device was made entirely of E-Blox parts, but Ruby figured she would do what Andy said and get a little mom type orders in at the same time. She asked, "When will Andy and Joey clean up their room?" and then pushed the button on the top. Everything started to move. Lights were flashing, music was playing, a motor was turning gears, and the center tower was turning in a clockwise direction. This was not what Ruby expected so she slowly leaned back to get a better look. Then everything stopped, and a tiny little voice from the machine said, "Soon."

Andy and Joey looked at their mother and then both started to laugh. The expression on Ruby's face was one of total surprise and shock. Seymour entered the room and seeing the look on Ruby's face inquired, "Now what have AJ done?" Seymour often called the twins by the one name of A for Andy and J for Joey because they always seemed to work together on everything. Ruby replied, "They made a machine that can answer any question you have. Come over here and sit down. Ask a question and push the button on the top." Joey added, "Only one question per day, so make it a good one."

Seymour maneuvered his way around Max and found a space on the floor near the structure that AJ had made. Like Ruby, he was trying to think of the best

possible question that could trap the twins into doing their chores. "OK", he finally said, "Are Andy and Joey going to do what their mother wants?" He pressed the button on the top and leaned back to watch the contraption do its little song and dance, and finally stop. The tiny little voice from the machine once again said, "Soon."

This time Andy, Joey, and Ruby all looked at Seymour's face and burst out into laughter. Having expected a yes or no answer, he had the same expression of surprise Ruby displayed when he entered the room. The laughter stopped instantly when Jimmy, the oldest child, entered the room and said, "What's so funny?" Ruby asked, "You are home early, did something happen at school?" Jimmy replied, "They closed the school until further notice because of some contagious disease that is spreading all over the world. They told us all to go home and stay there until our parents were notified of what to do next. But what were you all laughing at?"

Seymour stood up and reached down to help Ruby to her feet as he explained the answer machine the twins had invented. Andy told Jimmy to try it so he walked over to the machine, said "Are many millions of people going to get sick because of this disease?" He then bent over, pushed the button, and watched the machine perform its dance and song and stop. Once again, a tiny little voice said "Soon." There was no change in the expression on Jimmy's face as he added, "That's exactly what they said at school." This time there was no laughter but instead a somber, foreboding silence filled the room. Finally, Max declared, "There is much to be done." Turning quickly Max left the room. Everyone except the twins, followed as Max led them to the Lab to join in making the medicine that Paul hoped would slow down the attack by this virus.

Chapter 11

Moses

After a hard day's work in the lab making medicine, the family sat down around the dining room table to eat their supper. Robyn had prepared the family's favorite meal, corned beef and cabbage with boiled potatoes and carrots. Seymour took one look at his plate and instantly his mouth began to water. He hurried everyone to sit down, bowed his head, and they all followed in silence. He then thanked God for the peace and safety the family enjoyed in these troubled times. He also thanked the earth for providing the wonderful meal. He thanked the cow for giving his life to nourish others. He thanked Robyn for making the meal. Then he thanked the children for being respectful during his prayer. Like every night, they knew that was the end of his prayer so they all quickly said "Amen." Then with the clinking of silverware and an "Oh boy!" or two, the feast began.

After the peak pang of hunger was squashed by a few swallows of food, the conversation started. The children always waited for mom or dad to start the conversation. Finally, Ruby said, "Is anybody worried about anything they learned today?" Andy quickly responded with, "Is it true that millions of people are going to get sick from some disease?" Jimmy followed with, "They also said at school it would happen soon." Then Joey added, "Just like our answer machine!"

Sensing there was fear building in the children Ruby swallowed a mouth full of food quickly and proclaimed, "There have been times like this before, but God loves His children and He will not let them go astray. We must all listen to His Spirit here on the earth, and work to help the suffering people." There was a short

period of silence as everyone savored the meal and contemplated Ruby's words. Finally, Jimmy changed the subject and after a short glance at Andy and Joey queried, "Just how did you get that contraption to say 'Soon'?" Andy replied, "Oh, that's the answer Moses the white moth gave us when we put him into a little room inside the machine. We wanted to see what he would say so Max helped us add a very powerful amplifier with a microphone in the room that Moses lives in." Joey added, "He only talks after the lights flash and the room spins around for awhile and then stops." Then Stacey butted in with, "Sometimes bugs have important things to say." Jimmy laughed and sarcastically proclaimed, "Now Stacey, that's just plain dumb!"

Ruby held up her hand, stared at Jimmy and firmly said, "Motto time!". The whole family recited in unison, "Criticism Kills, Praise Builds." Then Ruby very gently asked, "Where did you hear that bugs talk?" and Stacey answered, "In Pappy's poem called the bug and the flea." Pappy was the nickname they gave for their grandfather on Seymour's side of the family. The grandfather that lived in Indiana near the Kankakee River. "I like that poem so much I memorized it." Stacey added. "Do you want to hear it?" They all answered with nods and yeses. So, she stood up, pushing her chair back as she rose, took her place at the end of the table so everyone could see her, and began.

" We can make a difference! "
Said the bug to the flea.
" The world will change a little
Just because of you and me. "

" What ever could you do?
In a universe so vaste.

Bugs have never done a thing
In all the years gone past. "

The tiny bug pondered his fate
As he nibbled on his leaf
And then turning to face the flea
He said, " It's my belief

That all of my ancestors
Were eaten by the birds
That spread the seeds,
which became trees
To shade the roaming herds.

Without us bugs there would be no shade
And the grass would not grow.
The earth would be a barren waste
All these things I know. "

The flea snickered, then laughed out loud
" Why your nothing but a bug!
The way you talk the whole wide world
Should stop and give you a hug!

Well, I've got to go and do my job. "
Was the last thing the flea did say
And off he flew to find some dog
To make him scratch his day away.

The bug walked on in silence,
And as he walked he thought,
His life would make a difference,
He would not live for naught.

Even if he became a meal
For some young feathered thing
His life would have been spent,
So one more bird could sing.

She ended her recital with a bow as the whole family loudly applauded her performance. Jimmy even whistled to show his approval. Ruby thought, "Now that's more like it!" Only Seymour noticed Robyn standing quietly in the corner of the room and staring at Stacey. Robyn's eyes were sky blue, a shade he had rarely seen on her before. Curiosity made him ask, "What did you think, Robyn, of Stacey's little poem?" Robyn turned her head slowly and connected her sky-blue eyes to Seymour's dark blue eyes and lovingly whispered, "I believe all the creatures on earth, no matter how small, have a mission." Then her eyes darkened and she turned to pick up the dishes. This was not the answer Seymour expected. In fact, it was not a very robotic answer at all! He knew something big was going to happen and as Moses the moth would say, it was about to happen soon.

The remainder of the evening proceeded as usual. Robyn and Ruby cleaned the dishes and put them away. During the process they discussed tomorrow’s meals and the garden products that would need to be harvested soon. Anyone listening would have a difficult time determining the person speaking because their voices were almost identical.

The twins were doing their homework on the kitchen table and would interrupt Robyn and Ruby now and then for help. When they announced that they were done, Ruby inspected the results and pointed out a few errors they needed to correct. After passing the final inspection they ran to the family room to play one of their

favorite games called E-Moolah. They would guess different numbers on a grid and win or lose e-coins depending on the colors that were displayed. The e-coins were also used in other games played on the grid known as SceeTM DeLite.

Seymour was in the den walking on the treadmill built into the floor and staring at the wrap around wall screen in front of him. The screen was usually used to create the allusion of a real hike. The treadmill would tilt slightly whenever a slope or slanted path was encountered to further enhance the journey. But this time he was using the video screen as a large monitor to search the Internet. He kept briskly walking in a straight flat path as he queried the computer to show different information.

Stacey was in her room sitting in a comfortable chair with Devyn the family cat in her lap. She had the book of poems her grandfather wrote in one hand and was petting Devyn with the other. Trying to memorize more poems while making the cat purr lovingly brought her a feeling of peace.

Jimmy, however, had embarked on a new course of study. He was researching medicine and all the different diseases that existed in the past. Something in Pappy's poem had sparked him to make his life mean something and since this pandemic was getting worse, he decided to investigate further. Perhaps, medicine could be the area where he could make a contribution. Being the oldest always seemed to carry with it a more intent sense of responsibility. Later the children all had their teeth electronically cleaned and slipped into their nightclothes. After one last family gathering for family prayers, they went to their rooms and had ten minutes

before the computer slowly dimmed the lights to emulate a golden sunset.

When the lights were all out and Seymour and Ruby were laying cuddled like newlyweds in their large king size bed, Seymour unromantically proclaimed, "Did you know a white moth represents something pure, light and soft. It represents a human soul, just as a white butterfly. A white moth can represent grace and mercy. It reminds me how beautiful simple things could be. Matter of fact, in Asian folklore, a white moth often represents the soul of a person in heaven." Then Ruby gently squeezed his hand, pulled him closer and said, "Yes dear." Knowing this really meant 'enough!' he said no more and was content at having the love of his life in his arms as he closed his eyes and let his thoughts drift him into sleep.

In the lab, Paul was still awake and talking to a holographic image of Ester at the REED headquarters. The medicine was slowing down the effect of the virus. The virus was mutating, however, and spreading faster than any disease she had ever seen. Feeniks had informed her that the black hole tunnels would all be closing in 12 hours, and she needed to return soon or be trapped on the island. Paul asked how Feeniks knew when the tunnels would be closing? Ester said she assumed the GA on his plate made him a government assistant robot so the government that made him must have informed him. No one really knew where the GAs came from. All the different governments did not trust each other, and wars were ongoing between many of them. So, nobody asked. Paul told her to come back before the tunnels closed and let Feeniks take care of the medicine distribution. She agreed and ended the call with, "I love you." Then the

image changed to a picture of them holding hands, as it slowly faded to off.

After Paul retired, Max and Min remained in the lab to set everything up for tomorrow's production of medicine. Robyn stopped in to help but they telepathically told her everything was under control. They also communicated the information from Feeniks and Ester about the virus mutation. Even though Feeniks was thousands of miles away, he joined into their telepathic conversation. He told them to prepare for major isolation and that he would remain in the world to keep them informed. He added that the disease was man made in a country that was looking for a chemical weapon. It got out of control and now it threatens the entire world. Knowing it was a man-made disease meant that it would be hard to cure with natural resources. They trusted the earth and the Spirit that controlled everything, so they closed the meeting by agreeing to wait for further instructions from the Spirit.

Robyn went back to clean up the playroom before she would go into night watch mode and contemplate the telepathic conversation she had recorded in her memory bank. The master computer turned the lights on as she entered the room and the first thing she noticed was the answer machine sitting on the floor. She carefully picked it up and placed it on a table nearby so no one would trip on it. After picking up other scattered objects and returning them to their designated spots on the shelf, she headed for the door. Before leaving she recalled the dinner conversation about the moth in the machine. She stopped in the doorway, turned to look at the house that Moses the moth was supposedly living in and said, "Good night, Moses." She waited for a moment but hearing no reply continued out and down the hall. The lights slowly dimmed in the playroom and silence filled

the area. Everything was quiet except for a small voice that no one could hear in the playroom. It said, "Good night, Robyn."

Chapter 12

Lockdown

Sunrise brought with it the troubles of a changing world. A laser ball that moved from east to west at the top of the cave artificially produced the sunrise, but it still was a new day for those living there. People from the little village around the castle were gathering in the streets and demanding to know why they could not leave. The tunnels were closed. The main door that led to the valley was gone and replaced by a wall of rock and stone. During the night many relatives from the town called 'Hidden Valley Village' were brought into the cave and told all would be explained in the morning. Seymour's parents were the last to arrive just before the tri-blade left and sealed the large door in the roof with layers of rock and stone. Confusion was at the bare edge of chaos, when Doctor Paul with his wife Ester walked out onto a high palace balcony overlooking the town. There was no need for a microphone because the main computer was tuned into his voice. He raised both hands high in the air and announced, "Quiet please!" His voice echoed throughout the cave and the people all looked up as silence slowly prevailed. Paul continued, "Please watch the large screen that will soon appear on the west wall of the cave. All will be explained." Paul knew that Min had heard his request as a 50 by 50 foot holographic display started appearing on the west wall of the cave. An image of Feeniks standing in a large field with people all around him lying motionless on the ground soon came into focus. The silence was only broken by sighs of horror at what was on the display.

Next the voice of Feeniks, which was identical to Doctor Paul's voice, filled the cave. "These people are

not dead. They are all in a comatose state. The virus known as DP20 has infected them. DP20 was man made and designed to spread quickly. Total isolation is required to prevent infection. The coma takes only a few hours to manifest. We have taken care that you are all clean." The people knew by the robotic precision of the comments that it was Feeniks speaking and not Paul. Still, the voice made a few turn to look at Paul to see if he was the one speaking. Feeniks continued, "Man-made virus will be hard to stop. Complete isolation may be required. I will stay here and try to keep people in comatose state alive. You must find cure. Listen to Doctor Paul! I will keep you informed." The screen snapped off and for a moment dead silence filled the cave. The same voice suddenly but calmly said, "You are my family and I want to assure you we are going to be alright. Please, do not be afraid! I want everyone to go home and someone will come to your house with an instruction sheet to get us organized to fight this disease. Remember, the people out there are counting on us. The Spirit of the world and the spirit of this community will rise to the challenge and win again." Although his voice was calm, the people could sense great confidence in his speech. They did as they were instructed and the streets were cleared.

That day changed all of history. A new calendar was made with each day being numbered from that day forward. The first square in the calendar was labeled, LD1 for lockdown day 1. Every day thereafter would be increased by 1 until a cure was discovered and the cave could be opened again. First, however, a daily routine to keep the people in the cave alive and healthy had to be worked out. The cave was sealed so tight that not even water could be brought in from the outside. The stream that once flowed through the cave was sealed off and dry.

The enormous challenge of just living underground was the first priority.

Day 2 started with instruction sheets being given by Robyn, Max, Min, Seymour, and Ruby to every family. The first thing that was addressed was the fact that the family members brought in last night were not allowed to bring anything with them. There were people from many different ethnic groups now in the cave. A Grandmother, sitting in a chair knitting told Ruby, "I was told to take all my close off, the robot sprayed me down with a warm liquid she had brought and made me put on a sheet with holes for my head and arms. I could not even bring my toothbrush. Of course, I refused at first but when she said I may never see my family again and could possibly die, I did what she asked. She said her name was Robyn. She sounded an awful lot like you." Ruby answered, "Yes, a few of the GA's have the same voices as the people they work with." Then the Grandmother asked, "GA? What's a GA?" Ruby replied, "I use to think it stood for Government Assistant, but now I believe it means Guardian Angel." The old lady looked up from her knitting and commented, "I really am thankful they let me bring my pets, I would have hated to leave them behind. The robot said they will be happy here, is that true?" Not knowing how to answer Ruby could only say what she believed, "If Robyn told you then yes, it is true."

Each family filled out a sheet describing the skills in their household. It would take time to get the cave capable of supporting those that dwelled inside. The cave was now equivalent to a space station that had to support life with no outside help. Like a space station, radio communication with the outside world was one thing still possible. The cave also had a very large salt-water lake in an area where the ceiling was too low for homes or gardens. Max had helped the engineers build the lake and

install in the low ceiling thousands of lasers to produce strong artificial sunlight. They had diverted the little stream to fill it and then transported tons of sea salt to make the water emulate the ocean. It was then seeded with the best oxygen producing plankton to help make oxygen for the people living in the cave. When the oxygen was not needed, the sunlight ceiling would turn off. Now, this would be their only source of oxygen. Caretakers were quickly appointed and trained by Max to make sure this lake functioned properly.

By LD15 the town was starting to look like a well-designed corporation. Everyone knew their job and were trying their best to do what was required. Paul and Min had spent these first two weeks in the lab working on a cure and communicating with Feeniks. Ester, with Jimmy helping her, was acting as village doctor so Paul could stay focused on his work. Stacey would monitor the radio stations, but they all were gone except for the few automated transmissions that repeated the same information every day. Stacey and Sally turned to the garden and started helping the newly trained farmers. The twins, and an African American boy named Martin, would bring drinks to many workers during the day. Martin was a couple years younger than Jimmy and new him from school. After doing their work the twins and Martin would stop by the playroom to check on Moses. On LD15, however, Robyn was cleaning in the playroom when they arrived. Andy went over to the answer machine and asked, "Is anything new going to happen today?" The machine did not go through its normal dance, but instead just quickly repeated the normal "Soon." Robyn's audio sensors heard the "Soon", but her telepathic brain heard "Warn Feeniks, beware rover!" She did not know what the rover was or what the message meant but instantly transmitted the message to

Feeniks. After a short delay a reply came back to her, "Thanks, you just saved me." The twins were complaining about the same message every day as Robyn left the room and went directly to the lab. Upon entering the room Paul instantly said, "OK, She's here now. Tells us what is going on out there!" The holographic image of Feeniks in the middle of the group started speaking. "There are robots out here shaped like large boxes on wheels. They look a little like the Mars rover from long ago. They are selectively taking certain comatosed people to a building guarded by military robots. I tried to approach one of these rovers and it fired a laser weapon at me. Robyn's warning came just before it fired so I had my body shield at full power. The laser still penetrated my shield and warped my chest plate. This was a weapon grade laser. I instantly shut down all systems and tried to appear dead. The rover inspected me then turned and went hunting through the people until it found one that satisfied its programming. A scoop came out of the front and the rover took that person to the building with the military robot guards."

Paul shouted, "Oh my God! No! No!" He slumped into a chair, put his face into his hands and started to weep. Ester went over and put her hands on his shoulders and said, "Paul, what is it?" Everyone in the room wanted to know but they stood silently by until Paul could compose himself enough to speak. He finally whimpered, "It's worldwide Genocide." Min brought him a glass of water and a clean cloth to wipe his face. After a couple swallows of water and a quick wipe of his face he continued. "I suspected this disease was man made because of the way it was spreading. Now I know it was the result of a worldwide organization that wants to kill everyone that does not agree with the way they think. This is something that has been well planned out for

years and probably has bases in every country. I don't know what we can do to stop it?" Putting his head into his hands he started to weep.

Feeniks took the groups focus off Paul as he announced, "A military robot is coming my way. I think it can detect my transmission. Got to shut down." and his image blinked off. Paul looked up and sorrowfully proclaimed, "They even have a robot army ready to kill anyone or anything that tries to stop them." Every knee in the room was suddenly too weak to support standing, and everyone found a chair and sat down in silence.

Max finally broke the long silence produced by the horror just revealed with, "We need to shut down all wireless communication before this new enemy locates our village. I will start the process now." Min quickly added, "I am receiving telepathy from Feeniks. He says he used his holographic shield to make him look like a large stone and the military robot inspected and moved away. Looks like he can hide but he is not equipped to fight these military guards." Robyn added, "I will go check on the children." Ruby said, "I will go with you." Seymour quietly stood up and slowly walked out of the room.

He first went to the chapel to sit and ask all the heavenly powers to help. He did not know what to do. He remembered how Glen used to be with him in past times of trouble. A mental picture of Glen came sharply into focus as tears slowly worked their way down his cheeks on each side of his nose. Glen seemed to be saying, "Don't worry. I will always be with you to help."

Seymour used the back of his hand to wipe his face dry and left the chapel. Walking slowly through the halls of the palace brought him to the playroom. It was empty but for some reason he walked in and looked at

the answer machine that AJ had built. He heard a soft voice say, "Use my gift." He stared at the machine in disbelief for almost a minute and heard it again. "Use my gift." Seymour left the playroom and walking faster now headed for the main living room. While he walked, he remembered what he had read about white moths. "Could Moses be the spirit of Glen?", he thought. He knew what Glen had given him during the trial to fight the Creature. He was sure the Creature was responsible for making people develop this terrible virus. For the first time since Paul revealed the evil plan Seymour felt hope. Glen had given him the power to read, understand, and control any binary language. This allowed Seymour to modify computer software with his mind. He had to use that gift to stop this catastrophe. Using Glen's gift was the answer! But how?

Chapter 13

The Gift

On LD22 Seymour was busy trying to use his gift from Glen to mentally change software in computers. It was easy when he was in the room with the computer but now, he had to connect from within the cave to computers in the outside world. Then late in the week Robyn told him that Feeniks had sent her a schematic of a special hat made from a frying pan that could help connect by mental telepathy to Feeniks Metatronic Brain. Everyone was on the edge of their seats when they ran the first test on the hat the next day. It worked! By holding the pan with the circuitry on his head he was able to communicate with Feeniks just like Robyn. There were no radio waves transmitted and he could actually see where Feeniks was scanning.

Seymour could talk to Feeniks by just thinking of what he wanted to say. Thankfully, not all of Feeniks thoughts were transmitted, just the ones he wanted to send. The same was true in the reverse direction so Feeniks could see where Seymour was looking, but only receive what Seymour wanted to say. Eager to test more Seymour transmitted, "Get near a computer I want to see if I can read the software!" Feeniks went over to the computer that was used to control the building he was hiding in and scanned the front panel. "I'm getting nothing. Get closer." Feeniks went over to the computer and placed his hand on the front panel. Seymour sadly said, "Still nothing. Hold the small antenna used to transmit commands to objects in the building." About three seconds after touching the antenna the lights in the room flashed off and on twice. "I'm in! It works!" he shouted to everyone in the room and Feeniks also

received his verbal excitement. For the first time the group felt there was a way to fight the enemy that made this disease. But who were they?

No time was wasted on making a plan of attack. Feeniks would have to get close enough to grab the antenna on an enemy rover and Seymour would use Glen's gift to get into the software and control it. Once in control, they hoped to find out who was behind this sinister plot to put the world asleep and kill anyone that would not obey. There was one thing that worked in their favor. The coma was actually a state of suspended animation that was developed for space travel. Paul determined this human stasis from information Feeniks had sent in the beginning of the pandemic. This gave the team a little time to be cautious. They did not want to lose Feeniks. He was the only one they had in the outside world right now.

Seymour and Feeniks were working as a team now. Feeniks would search for an enemy rover while Seymour watched and advised. They found two that were too close to the military robots and decided to not take a chance with these. Then in an industrial part of the city they found one that was alone and searching factories and offices that were mostly abandoned. They decided to get ahead of the rover and hide near someone placed in an open area and sitting in a chair with his arms and head on a table. This would force the rover to approach from only one direction. After setting up the trap, Feeniks used his holographic shield and appeared to be a vending machine against a nearby wall. The perfect trap was set. Now all they could do is wait for the rover to get there.

While they patiently waited, Seymour telepathically showed Feeniks how many years ago Glen, a Wicklow Terrier, had the power to control

software in computers. He sent his memories of Glen controlling the military robots and the doors to the room that was going to be used as a courthouse. He let Feeniks see and feel the static shock that jumped from Glen's body to his chest and then the orange flow of light that went from Glen's paw into his hand. After that happened Glen no longer controlled the computers, he did. It was a gift from Glen and helped save the world from the Creature that was controlling REED. Seymour mentally added, "I believe that over the years since 'Earth Won', the Creature has infected powerful leaders all over the world to believe in the global destruction of those who will not obey him. After that he will kill even these followers, because the Creature wants this world to be only for him and his demons." Feeniks only responded with, "Your right."

Suddenly all communication ceased because the rover entered the room. It approached the person at the table as predicted. When it was focused on the person in the coma, Feeniks drop his holographic disguise, zoomed into the rover and grabbed a small antenna on top near the front panel. He predicted the rover would try to escape so he turned on a powerful magnet that held him in place as the rover spun around and tried to buck him off. If this were an old fashion rodeo, Feeniks would have a golden belt buckle for staying on. Then all movement stopped and Feeniks heard, "OK. I'm in and shut it down. I'm afraid it transmitted a help code before I could stop it. I am programming it now to follow you and make no more transmissions. You better hurry. I'm afraid some of the guards are on the way to see what happened. OK, it should follow you now. Let go of the antenna and get out of there!"

Feeniks turned off his magnet and let go of the antenna. He scurried out of the building and hurried back

to his hideout using untraveled roadways. The rover followed like a trained pet. Seymour took the frying pan hat off his head and told Min to keep in touch and let me know when he's safe. Ruby could see her husband had a severe stress headache, so she offered him some pills and a glass of cold water. He said, "The water is OK, but I can't take the pills. They may affect me when we start up again. Thank you anyway." She put the pills in her pocket and stood behind him. She put her hands on his shoulders and gentle gave him a massage to help him relax. Everyone waited as Min was telepathically following Feeniks back to his hideout.

Min finally announced, "They are back in the safe place. Feeniks wants to wait for twenty minutes to make sure they were not followed." Seymour started to reach for his frying pan hat handle, but Ruby grabbed his hand and said, "Wait!" He sat back in the chair and did what she commanded like a husband that new when his wife meant what she said. His headache was starting to vanish and twenty minutes more of the massage would surely help. Precisely twenty minutes later Min said, "OK. He's ready to resume." Seymour put on his brain hat with no resistance from Ruby as they smiled at each other. He found Feeniks was already holding the rover's antenna so he went right to work searching all the memory banks for something that would be useful. He did not need passwords because he was able to read binary data and turn it into programs designed for the rover. He found the directory section of memory and started reading the file names out loud to the group in the room. When he reached the title Herrenvolk, Max interrupted and said, "Check that file." A few minutes later Seymour responded, "I believe we have the group behind this. The file is an instruction book for those who believe they are the 'Master Race'. There are Herrenvolk groups in every

country and many places I have never encountered before. Min needs to record the list in her memory with the many groups identified. I am sending to her now." Seymour continued reciting the names of the files in the directory until he came across one called Medjay. Again, Max interrupted and said, "Check that file." After a short pause Seymour came back with a verbal, "You did it again Max, this is the file that connects the rovers with the military robots. It is quite large, so I want Min to put it in her memory. I'm sending now."

Ruby could see the sweat running down Seymour's face. His teeth were clenched so hard his jaw was starting to swell. She firmly ordered the group, "OK. We need a break. Shut down for awhile." Ruby grabbed Seymour's hand and pulled the brain hat off his head. He was too weak to stop her. She ordered, "People in the room go get something to eat and rest up for awhile. We will meet back here in two hours. Robyn, would you look after the children. Max and Min please find a way my husband can look into the files Min has in her memory banks without wearing that awful hat." Seymour took Ruby's hand and said, "We can't afford two hours. We must keep going." Ruby stared into Seymour's tired eyes and with her bright green eyes glaring and red hair swishing around her head emphatically declared, "Don't you get my Irish temper up. You will take a two hour rest or I will give you one by hitting you with this frying pan hat so hard you will be out for two hours!"

She held the hat by the handle and waved it in front of him and he knew, one way or the other, he was taking a break. Min then added, "I told Feeniks, and he said good. He wanted to hide the rover in case the police robots came inspecting." That did it. Seymour went to lie down and take a short nap while everyone else did what they were told.

Ruby, however, went straight to the playroom. No one was in the room, so she took a chair and sat next to the answer machine. She recalled what her husband had told her in bed one night about white moths being the spirit of someone that died. When Seymour later told her that Moses said, "Use my gift", she knew it was Glen's spirit in the moth. She sweetly whispered, "Hi Glen. I miss you. I don't know why you are here, but we need your help. Will you guide us like before? Tell us what to do. Please." Then Moses spoke without being rotated or shaken. Plain as day he softly said, "Dream." Ruby responded with, "Thank you, Glen. I love you." She hurried to tell Seymour but found him sound asleep in a lounge chair in their living room. She sat on the couch next to him and lovingly waited while watching him sleep.

An hour passed and Seymour opened his eyes to see the love of his life looking at him and smiling. When the fog left his mind, he softly said, "I've got to get back to work and find a way to decode that file called Medjay." Ruby locked her eyes on his and said, "I had a talk with Moses. You were right, he is the spirit of Glen. He is here for a reason. I asked him to guide us. He said dream." Seymour instantly sat up straight with eyes wide open he almost shouted, "Ruby! I just had a crazy dream about Glen. I was back in the old lab and Glen came in through his doggy door in the back. He pushed a water dish full of clear water that you could see through over by me and barked at me. I had my hands cupped and filled with dirt. I dropped the dirt into the water and made it mud that you could not see through. Then Glen went back to the dog door. He sat and stared at the door. When a big ugly rat came in with a green pinecone in its mouth, Glen grabbed and shook him until he dropped the pinecone. Then Glen took the pinecone and gave it to me to study. After

careful inspection I put it into the mucky water dish next to me. When I looked at the pinecone in the water it magically grew into a large and beautiful dandelion!"

Ruby thought to herself, "My husband has finally popped his cork! How can he get so excited about a crazy dream like that?" Seymour knew what she was thinking so he said, "I will explain it all in the lab. It's time to get back there. Now I know what to do. Thank you for being so smart and asking Glen what to do next. God bless Glen!"

Chapter 14

The Three Step Plan

Everyone was back in the lab and focused on Seymour because he was so excited. He got everyone to sit down and told Min to pass on what he was going to say to Feeniks. Then he told them about the dream. Paul thought the tension made him snap and was suggesting a sedative, but Seymour just put up both hands and shouted, "Let me explain what it means!" Everyone sat down and he had their full attention. He Continued, "Every good programmer always gives himself a back door to get into the main program if something goes wrong. In my dream the dog door is the back door for our enemy. Our back door was Glen's gift to me and allowed me to get into the main program through the antenna. The main program is where basic controls like power on or off and motor commands are stored. The real powerful programs, however, are encrypted with a digital key that would take years to decode. That is why we cannot open the files we need to see. The water in the bowl represents all the powerful programs we cannot see because they are transparent without the encryption key that our enemy has. The dirt in my hands is our key that we will put on top of their key. This is known as a Key-Encryption-Key or KEK and will make it impossible for them to see the programs. Now it will take two keys to control or change the programs. The rat is the enemy, and he will come in through the back door to try and fix the problem. His first attempt would be to use his key to see if that fixes the problem. The pinecone is his key. Using Glen's gift, I will get his key as soon as he tries to use it. After he leaves frustrated, we will use both encryption codes to unlock the programs. The dandelion represents all the

programs we will need to fight back. The enemy will never get my key so they will be locked out forever."

No one ever saw a GA get excited before, but Max was swaying back and forth and declared, "It will work!" Min added that Feeniks agrees and is eager to get started. The people in the room were all smiling and discussing the plan. Ruby was just admiring her husband as she thought, "How did he ever figure that out?" She got up, walked over to Seymour, put her arms around him, pulled him close, and whispered into his ear, "How in the world did you ever interpret that dream?" He answered, "I didn't. You did." With a puzzled look on her face, she drew back and stared into his eyes. He continued, "When I woke up, I figured the dream was crazy and dismissed it instantly. Then you told me you had a talk with Glen through Moses, and he said 'dream'. That word triggered something in the gift from Glen inside me and everything became clear. Like many faithful wives, you may never get the credit, but you did all the work!"

Paul apologetically interrupted, "Was there anything in the dream about the virus or a cure?" Min interjected, "Feeniks wants to know what he should do now." Others were waving their hands with questions, so Seymour raised both hands in the air to get attention. The chatter subsided and then he continued, "This is only step one of a three step plan. We need to take control of the global network set up by the Herrenvolk groups. We can use their rovers and Police to put everyone infected into hospitals, hotels, and other large buildings with beds. They will try and stop the robotic revolution, but we know who they are now and if we get control, we can use their own network of Police against them." The room was quiet now as Seymour further explained, "Step two will be how to bring everyone out of suspended

animation slowly or there will be worldwide confusion and mass hysteria." Paul interjected, "We must also eradicate the virus, or they will just slip back into a coma again." Seymour continued, "That is also part of step two. Then step three is what to do with the people that created this mess. Final part of step three will be how do we prevent the Creature from getting this kind of control over others again. Right now let's see if we can get through step one."

It was getting late, so the people started leaving and the GA group prepared to work through the night and have everything ready in the morning. When Ruby checked the children she noticed that Devyn was sleeping on the floor at the foot of Stacey's bed. Bending over she petted her gently then picked her up and placed her on the bed at Stacey's feet. Ruby whispered, "Getting hard to make that jump, old gal?" Devyn softly purred her appreciation, flicked her tail once, and went back to sleep.

The next morning the whole palace was as busy as a tribe of termites. People had found faith and something to believe in again. Seymour had formed a focus group for Phase 1 of the three-step plan, and they were all gathered in the lab. Paul, Ester, and Jimmy were calling themselves the "Cure Hunters" and were on the far side of the lab gathering data to look for once the enemy's programs were available. Robyn and Ruby were heading up a group to keep the people informed and all the children busy with home schooling. Stacey was in the garden helping with the planting and picking. She especially liked to make flower arrangements to place in the palace and brighten the rooms and hallways. The twins were in the playroom with Martin making something new out of E-Blox bricks. Like many twins, they enjoyed working together more than anything else.

They would giggle and laugh as they decided the new project would burp or make a farting sound. Martin had exceptional electronic skills and added, "We can also make a beautiful glowing cloud around it." Devyn, however, never got out of bed and did not eat her breakfast.

Feeniks reported through telepathy to Min that he had moved the rover to a building far away during the night. He suggested that Seymour make a program that can copy the 'pinecone' and store it in the rover's memory in a way that will keep the 'rat' from knowing. After the 'rat' leaves we can try and retrieve the 'pinecone'. He used the code words just in case the enemy was listening somehow. He was moving into the high security mode because he knew the evil demons helping the enemy people also had telepathy power. He did not think they could tap into his mental communications without his approval, but he was taking no chances. Feeniks concluded his telepathy to Min with, "After the 'water is muddy' I will go home and wait for a 'telegram'." The new code word 'telegram' told Seymour that he also needed to put a hidden program in the rover that would let Feeniks know the encryption code, pinecone, had been stored in memory and the enemy, rat, in the area had left. They did not know if any robot or person would actually come because all the rovers were linked by radio frequency transmissions through their antennas, but they were now in the high security mode. It would be better to lose the rover than to lose Feeniks!

Seymour put on his brain hat and through his link to Feeniks mentally said, "Grab the antenna and hold on." A few short seconds later he added, "OK I'm in. Don't let go." Feeniks knew that it only took Seymour 8 minutes and 33 seconds to install the software, but to the people in the room waiting, it seemed like an hour. After

removing the brain hat Seymour told everyone, "OK. All we can do now is wait and pray. Feeniks will let Min know if it looks like it is working as planned. I need a drink of something cold." Max held out a glass of cool water and said, "I anticipated that."

Meanwhile, back in the playroom, the twins and Martin heard Moses say, "Now!" His voice was stern and much louder than before. Andy questioned what it meant, and Joey replied, "Let's take a look at him. He might be in trouble!" Andy took the answer machine down from the shelf and placed it on floor. They sat in front of the machine and Joey held the base while Andy started to carefully remove the top to look into the room that housed Moses. Martin suggested, "Perhaps you should wait for..." Too late. Instantly the white moth flew straight to the door and out of the room. The twins both jumped back to watch it fly out the door and into the hall. They got up and went to look but it was gone. Joey said, "Oh No!" and Andy added, "Now we did it!"

Although they expected punishment, they had integrity. Martin said, "I think you should go tell your dad." Andy mumbled, "Let's go tell mom. I don't want to tell dad." Joey agreed so they slowly shuffled down the hall, side by side, with sorrowful looks on their faces to find their mother. Martin went to the lab to see how everyone was doing and prepare for a coming third degree on Moses.

Ruby was in the kitchen when suddenly something fluttered past her and went into Stacey's room. Immediately her attention changed from planning dinner to investigating the thing that just flew through. When she entered the room she noticed that Devyn was still on the bed in the same spot she had placed her the night before. There was a large white moth with wings spread

out on the cat’s shoulder. It almost looked like the bug was whispering in Devyn's ear. Ruby slowly approached to get a better look. She could see that Devyn was not breathing and the bug was a beautiful white moth. Suddenly the moth flew up toward the sunlight coming through the window with a white fuzzy comet like tail following. The window was closed but when it was just about to crash into the glass the light got so bright Ruby had to close her eyes and turn her head away for a second. When she looked back the moth was gone, the room was normal except there was a sweet vanilla smell in the air in the room. Her women's intuition told her Glen had just taken Devyn to be with him in Xanadu. She knew now this was the real reason he had come and whispered softly, "Thanks for coming early and helping us too." She would have sworn in court that something just licked her face and said, "Your welcome." When she touched her cheek, it was wet! Then she heard the twins in the kitchen, "Mom! Mom!"

In the lab everything went better than planned. Not only did Seymour get control of the rovers but also the military robots. He had taken everything away from the enemy and was using this global power to protect all the people in the suspended animation coma. Feeniks was using this new global police force to monitor all the recorded Herrenvolk groups just in case they have space suits that protected them from the virus. Dr. Paul was now helping Seymour look through the programs that were transferred into the labs computer to see if they could find a cure. Step one was done and they were now working on step two. The adrenaline was high, and everyone was as busy as a woodpecker in a furniture factory.

The twins were back in the playroom joyfully working on their new project. Mom had told them they

did the right thing and Moses had a job to do. Having expected a punishment and getting praise was a big turnaround. Ruby was at peace in the kitchen planning dinner again. She knew the family would have to be told about Devyn and Moses. She was mentally preparing to make this news less shocking. Telling them all about Glen in the form of Moses would help. Telling them about the bright light being Xanadu would also help. Making the children milk shakes with a little extra vanilla for sweetness might also help. Somehow, she knew everything was going to be all right. Most of all she knew that in her final moments someone she loved would come and help her. This epiphany also instilled in her the belief that all of her family would not leave this world alone. She knew that a loved one would be there with each of them when their time came. She was so much at peace she glowed. One might even say she had a halo.

Chapter 15

The Code

Dinner started out as usual with the family prayer by Seymour, but Ruby did not ask her usual question. Instead, she told them that Devyn took a journey with Glen today. She filled in all the details and the original sadness turned to a melancholy mood around the table. Finally, she said, "Let's eat before it gets cold." and the sad supper began. Eventually, after a respectable pause from Ruby's announcement, Seymour took a sip from his shake. He wiped his mouth with his napkin and said calmly, "We made great progress in the lab today. All the rovers and global police robots are now working for us." He had wanted to be more robust in this announcement but to show respect for Devyn he restrained himself. Of course, Ruby knew how he felt so she immediately added, "How wonderful! That's great news!" With even more enthusiasm Jimmy added, "I have been working with Dr. Paul and he is really smart! He thinks the cure for the virus is in the DNA of the virus itself." The twins wanted to get into the good news part of the discussion, so Andy butted in with, "We are making a new machine!" Joey added, "Martin is helping and he said he could make it fart too!" At that everyone had a good laugh. Laughter slowly subsided and Stacey brought the family back to a somber mood by saying, "We need to have a little service for Devyn tomorrow. I would like to put her next to Glen on the farm in Indiana." Seymour sadly told her that was not possible right now. He also told her that she could keep Devyn's ashes in an urn and bring them to Indiana later. Everyone calmly agreed and the dinner finished with quiet conversation.

Morning of LD25 found Stacey and mom at the kitchen table. They were discussing Devyn's service and making notes for the arrangements. Suddenly Stacey said, "I think I need to recite one of Papa's poems during the service, but it is a sad poem and really does not seem right." Ruby asked, "What's the poem about?" Stacey replied, "An old man that likes living in the dark because he lost the one he loved in daylight. I really did not pick it, Sally did. Last night she kept flipping Papa's poem book open and pecking on that poem's title. Then she would bob her head up and down as if to say 'Yes! Yes!' I was just asking her what I should say at the service and that was her answer. I tried to pick another poem, but she would not let me." Ruby took her daughter's left hand and gently held it between both of her hands as she responded, "One thing I've learned recently is to listen to the birds and bugs. You make the decision. I know whatever you do will be what Devyn wants." They finished making a chart of everything they would need for the service and then started spreading the word to be in the great hall at three in the afternoon if you wanted to attend.

In the lab Paul and Seymour were looking at the virus that caused the coma under a microscope. It was sealed between two glass slides to prevent it from spreading. They both agreed it was fuzzy. It was like looking at it through some kind of a screen. Paul sadly proclaimed, "I've tried polarized light, infrared light, black light, bright light, different angles and it's always fuzzy."

Jimmy was working on the lab computer. He was looking at all notes and file names in the file directory from the rover. He had made a list of names and was checking them out with the universal language translator. He found one program named DCLXVI that translated

into the Roman numeral for 666. DCLXVI has exactly one occurrence of all symbols whose value is less than 1000 in decreasing order (D = 500, C = 100, L = 50, X = 10, V = 5, I = 1). Adding these up gives the number 666. Further investigating revealed this to be a satanic number so he brought all this information to his dad and asked if it might be important. Seymour complimented him with, "Great job Jimmy! Let me look at that program right now to see what it does." Decoding the software revealed it was a link to the gamma ray transmitters on the satellites that surrounded the earth.

When Paul heard this he got all excited and started looking for something that produced gamma rays. He gobbled down a cheese sandwich for lunch and went right back to bombarding the virus with gamma rays. He even tried radiating the virus for time periods related to the number 666. Results were less than disappointing, and Paul was getting frustrated. When Ester came up to him and told him it was time to go to the great hall for Devyn's service, he snapped back with, "She was just a cat! I don't have time for this!" Everyone would tell you that Ester could really control her body language. This was not one of those times. The look she gave Paul would have stopped a charging bull in its tracks. Paul picked up his notebook, put his head down and headed for the great hall.

There was an elevated platform with a microphone stand at one end of the hall with folding chairs in front for everyone to sit. The room was very large and the other end had tables with snacks and drinks ready for later. Paul sat with Ester in the last row because he wanted to look at his notes and did not want to be noticed. The normal crowd noise of people chatting did not bother Paul as he sat and reviewed his notes. Ruby tapped on the microphone and the chatter slowly

diminished into silence. She began with, "We are here to pay our respects to Devyn, our loving friend. If anyone has a story or wants to say a few words, please come up here now." One by one people went to the platform and described how Devyn had influenced them or just told pleasant anecdotes that sometimes made people laugh. Paul, however, was oblivious to the whole affair as he underlined passages in his notes and added notes for things he could try next. Stacey finally took her turn to speak. She went up to the microphone with Sally on her shoulder and said, "Sally wants me to recite a poem written by my grandfather. I don't know why but she is insisting on this one. It's called 'A Door in the Dark'. So here goes." Before she could start, Sally shouted, "Paul!" Now some people say she only shouted Caw, but if you were in the room you would know it was a very loud "Paul!" Paul stopped writing and looked up at the platform. Sally was staring at him and shaking her head back and forth as if to say, "Stop what you are doing and listen." Paul closed his notebook as

Stacey started;

"A Door In the Dark;"
"Back in the forest where the thicket can't grow,
Where trees block the light from creatures below
Lives an old, wrinkled man with a beard snowy white,
Only he knows the reason he prefers constant night.

It is rumored he was cursed by a young witch,
When he was in his youth and lived with the rich.
The curse, it is said, would cause him to die,
If the light of the day should be seen by his eye.

If time could be turned to view the decades now past
We would see that he lived on an estate very vast,

With servants and maidens too numerous to count.
Yes, he was heir to a fortune of the largest amount.

But his thoughts seldom ventured beyond his estate.
He was taught that the poor were just people to hate.
So, he pushed whispers of conscience far to the side.
In his comfort and pleasure he was content to abide.

Then the day came when fate would thrust open a door,
To a place the young man had not ventured before
As a young girl with a face that glowed in the night
Seeking drink from a stream passed into his sight.

He was struck by her beauty that flowed from within
To the tips of her hair, to her eyes, and her skin.
He thought, ‘This creature of beauty so wild and free
Must be caught and be taught that she belongs to me.'

Tying his great stallion to an old tree by the brook
He followed the girl through the hills to the nook,
Where many fires burned to warm the beggars and poor
A sight the young man had seen only one time before.

He remembered the raid he had made on this camp,
How they ran screaming into the night cold and damp
As his soldiers’ horses trampled all in their path
Driving these wretches from his land with great wrath.

He had just turned sixteen at the time he recalled,
And his first smell of death left him slightly appalled,
But his father had praised him with shouts of great pride,
Giving him the black stallion, and the sword by his side.

In the darkness he crouched and watched the young beauty
Tending both needy and sick as though it were her duty,

While the firelight revealed as it caressed her face
She was a creature of peace filled with heavenly grace.

He was thrown into remorse for his sins of the past,
As they dwelled in his mind his soul grew more aghast
Until there in the darkness he conceived his great vow
To make this wondrous wench want to love him somehow.

There was an immediate change in his manner and way,
As he gave food, meat, and coin to the poor the next day,
Returning each night in the dark to hide by a tree,
Watching the young maiden his soul learned to be free.

The news of his great change soon spread through the land,
The poor came in great numbers to take gifts from his hand,
And he hoped and prayed she would come soon to his door,
Each night returning to watch her and yearn all the more.

His father grew dismayed by this new life of his son.
At the change of the moon, he decided what must be done.
Gathering his army, they rode out one cold winters day
To trample and kill every poor wretch in their way.

When the son finally woke and heard of this plan
He raced through the hills, and he thought as he ran,
" Please God keep her safe! ", but he found there instead,
Her lifeless broken body amongst the numerous dead.

He carried her dead bloody corpse deep into the forest,
Where the sun cannot reach is where he laid her to rest
For it was in the dark night all good he had learned
Thus, he stayed to live by her grave, and never returned.

Back in the forest where the thicket can't grow,
Where trees block the light from creatures below

Lives an old, wrinkled man with a beard snowy white
Only he knows the reason he prefers constant night."

When she finished Stacey just stood there for a minute with tears running down her face. She really did not want to recite this poem because it always made her cry. Sally never took her eyes off Paul. While Stacey cried, Sally stared at Paul and bobbed her head up and down as if to say, "Yes! Yes!" The hair on Paul's arm stood straight up and exposed the goose bumps underneath. Suddenly he knew what to do. He started to get up as he said to Ester, "I have to go to the lab." Ester grabbed his arm right above the elbow and pulled him back into the chair. Glaring into his eyes she growled, "Not now! Sit down!" Not wanting to invoke her ire again, he sat down. He could hardly wait for the service to end. He looked like a man with a red ant in his underpants. He kept fidgeting until Ruby finally announced, "There is food at the back if anyone is hungry." Paul turned to Ester and humbly asked, "Can I go Now?" She nodded and he jumped out of his chair and headed for the door. He almost ran out of the room. People just thought he was a senior on his way to the bathroom.

Paul's thoughts on his way back to the lab were mostly about Sally. He thought about what he would say if this idea worked, and someone asked him how he knew what to do. He guessed he could always say, "A big white bird told me." When he reached the lab, he unplugged the microscope with the virus slide and took it into the storage room. He placed it on an empty shelf and let the plug hang down. He closed the door and turned off the light. It took about a minute for his eyes to adjust to the darkness. A small amount of light seemed to sneak under the door but not enough to matter. Feeling his way over to the shelf, he found the microscope, put on his glasses,

and stared into the lenses. At first there was nothing. He waited. Eventually the fuzzy DNA started to come into focus. The fuzzy spots became very clear as the molecules of the virus faded into the background. There it was! A binary code chemically etched into the molecules. He verbally stored it into his tiny handheld recorder by saying, "00000110 space 00000110 space 00000110 triple space then repeat." He clicked the recorder off, fumbled his way to the door and opened it. The room light was blinding for a few seconds then he saw Ester had come searching for him. She came over and took his hand while she asked, "Are you alright?" "Oh yes!" he answered, "Better than alright. I have a big piece of the puzzle. I just need to see how it all fits together." He went to a table and sat down.

Ester took a lab coat and rolling it up to make a pillow she said, "Put your head down on this for a few minutes. You need a short nap right now." He knew she was right, so he wrapped his arms around the lab coat pillow and instantly fell into a deep sleep.

Two hours later Ester gently rubbed Paul's shoulder to wake him up. Max and Seymour were standing behind him. The microscope with the virus slide was in front of him. There was a small computer attached to the gamma ray gun aimed at the slide. Seymour said, "We built this from your notes and the recording that Ester gave us, but we wanted you to be the one to try it." Ester lovingly smiled at Paul as she told him to look in the microscope and they would start transmitting the binary gamma ray code. Still a little groggy he wiped his eyes with the knuckles of his hands, put on his glasses, bent over the microscope, and said, "OK. I can see the fuzzy virus." Max flipped a switch and there was the low buzz that power supplies make when they are under a load. Ten seconds later Paul sat back, took off his glasses

and said quite calmly, "We did it." He slid his chair out of the way and said, "Take a look." Max looked first, and then Seymour followed by Ester. They all said, "There is nothing there?" Paul answered, "Yes! The virus destroyed itself when the code hit it!" they all laughed and gave each other high five hand slaps. "Victory!" was the celebration cry when their hands clapped.

Chapter 16

The Coma Ends

The news of the cure spread rapidly to all the people. Many wanted to know if they could go back to their homes on the outside. A meeting was called to tell everyone that it would still be awhile before the cave could be opened again. Some people were already packing up to go outside when Seymour called a meeting and announced, "It will take some time before we can open the cave. When we wake up the world, we do not know how they will react. We do have a large robotic police force to help control them and many delivery rovers to bring them food. Unfortunately, the crops are dormant in the fields and farmers need help getting the food distribution back to normal. Food may be a big problem. Please do not get too excited yet." Then Max addressed the people, "There are many other problems to be solved. I will be coming around to ask for your help. Think about what you could do." Even though his voice was identical to Seymour's, his robotic preciseness toned down the crowd's attitude.

On LD35 a new problem was revealed. The satellite program that emitted the coded gamma rays would wake up everyone at the same time. Special steps had to be taken to minimize panic. It took two weeks to get a few of the radio stations transmitting to the world the truth about the months they lost due to the coma. Portions of the global police were going to keep the Herrenvolk groups locked up and under close surveillance. The rovers were loaded with food and necessities to be sent to anyone that called for help. Feeniks was back at REED headquarters ready to get everyone informed and working again. On LD50 the

time had come for the awakening. Seymour said a small prayer to the group, "Great Source of agape keep your people safe and protect us all from the evil one." He leaned over the keyboard in front of him and pressed the return key. The computer sent a command to the satellites, and everyone held their breath. People everywhere started to wake up and the virus was gone.

It took three days to turn the chaos into regimented confusion. A week later people outside of the cave turned on more radio stations. Cell phones on the outside were starting to come back. Radio stations were reporting mostly good news. There were a few reports of looters and thieves but for the most part the people were helping each other in a kind and loving manner. The leaders in the cave decided to open a small secret door to the outside world on LD65. A select group would spend a few days making sure it was safe and then the people in the cave could return to their homes and use cell phones again. Everything seemed to be too good to be true. Ruby was worried.

The night before opening the secrete door for the scouting group Ruby said to Seymour, "I checked and there were no names of rich and powerful people in the Herrenvolk groups. There were no powerful politicians from any country listed in those groups. I know the creature uses these people to do his evil work and make wars between countries. I know they are out there doing something sinister." Seymour trying to calm her replied, "That's why we are sending out the scouting group tomorrow. They will find out if it is safe."

The next morning before they could open the cave Feeniks sent a telepathic message to Min. He said, "Many ships surround island. Nothing electronic on them. Very hard to detect their purpose. Visual sighting

only." Remembering what Ruby said the night before and hearing Min relay the message made Seymour say, "Wait! Don't open the cave yet. Feeniks has detected a possible threat. A day or two more won't make much of a difference. and it could save our scouting team." So, with heavy hearts the first scouting mission was cancelled. Feeniks sent people to high points on the island to use telescopes to investigate the ships.

Hours passed and finally Min said Feeniks is reporting on the ships around the island. He says they are full of soldiers, but they have unusual battle equipment. First of all, there are no robot soldiers, everyone is human. Their weapons are ancient. The most sophisticated weapons are old laser guns with no computer-aided guidance. Communication between ships is with flags and blinking lights. Scouts also reported they are using weapons that shoot projectiles with explosive powder. He believes they are called rifles. Then Min said, "Feeniks wants to know if anyone knows what is going on?"

Seymour told her to tell Feeniks, "It's the Creature. He's back. He lost our first encounter because of Glen's gift to me and now he is making sure we cannot use that to fight him again." Feeniks recalled Seymour's telepathic memory of the trial and answered with, "Now I understand." Seymour was worried about the old fashion laser guns. They could be more powerful than computer controlled laser weapons, especially in the hands of a skilled soldier. The Creature's first target was obviously REED because he wanted the island back. This was not at all what Seymour expected. He suddenly realized that the virus was just a distraction so we would not be able to see his real plan. A meeting was scheduled for all the leaders in the cave to discuss this new attack.

Everyone was working on something during the meeting of the leaders. Stacey was helping Ruby and Robyn make dinner. She would go into the garden with Sally and pick fresh vegetables for the salad. Sally always knew where the sweetest ones were as she helped in this task. Jimmy was with Dr. Paul and Ester plotting the DNA of the virus. They felt there was still a great deal to learn about the coma trigger and the self-destruct mechanism. Andy, Joey, and Martin were in the playroom working on their next invention. Martin had an innate understanding of physics and seemed to know how everything worked. Joey wanted to make the machine produce a really long farting sound. Andy wanted to use laser pointers and have beams of light shoot out whenever it made a sound. Martin got them to agree on LED beams that would break up into multicolored snowflakes when the machine farted or burped. He had an idea how to do this, and he loved a challenge. Max was in a different section of the lab working on a way to expand his force field to protect humans from bullets fired from old fashion rifles. Everyone was busy, even Martin's grandmother who was in the chapel praying.

It was taking days to decide on what must be done to protect REED headquarters. Feeniks had the people and robots to defend the island. He had mountain top laser cannons that could set most of the ships on fire and sink them. They were put there when the Creature had control of the island. Many human lives would be lost, but they would be the Creature’s soldiers not REED people. Feeniks was not in favor of killing so many humans to save REED headquarters and asked for a better plan. Heated arguments were common, and nothing was agreed upon. One night, Ruby took her husband’s hand as they sat discussing the problem in

their living room, and said, "Let the people decide. They are good people. Tell them everything and let them offer suggestions. Who knows, maybe somebody's prayer will be answered." Seymour knew the wisdom in her words and hoped it would be his prayer that would get answered. He slept better that night than he had all week.

On LD77 the people were all asked to gather in the square in front of the palace at three in the afternoon. There was a platform in the middle of the square so anyone speaking could be seen and heard. Chairs and benches were set up all around the platform for people to sit. For some unknown reason to Martin, his grandmother made him come early and sit next to her in a chair near the front. The meeting started promptly at three. Seymour spent two hours explaining the creature, the old war with the creature, and the new attack by the creature. He told them that Feeniks was against killing humans to hold the island. Then he asked for advice from the people. Opinions varied from kill them all they are working for the Creature, to forgive them all and let them have the island. It seemed like there would be no answer from this group. Martin's grandmother took Martin's hand, smiled lovely and said, "Go tell them what they need to hear." He said, "I'm just a child. They won't listen to me!" She answered, "Your much more than you know. Go tell them what they need to hear." Martin pleaded again, "I don't know what to say?" His grandmother answered, "You will know because it's in you. Just let it come out. Now go, child!"

Seymour noticed Martin making his way to speak so he raised his hands and shouted, "Quiet please!" The arguing and loud discussions in the crowd dimmed and were gone when Martin reached the center of the platform. He felt a wave of confidence flow through his body. A strength that seemed to come from nowhere and

everywhere. He stood tall, glanced at the entire crowd, and strongly proclaimed, "Fighting for peace is like shouting to cure deafness! You will only make others deaf, and you will only make others want to fight you." Seymour, Ruby, and everyone that heard his words suddenly woke up! They all realized they were in a coma all their life and these words just woke them up. Martin continued, "Evil is not something you can put into a box and take into a room. What the creature did is he took the love from the hearts of his soldiers and that made them appear to be evil. Our only weapon is to put that love back." He turned and walked back to his grandmother sitting in her chair covered with the blanket of pride and joy only grandmothers can receive. She thanked the Great Source of agape for answering her request. Everyone that heard Martin's words woke up that day. Yes, this truly was the end of everyone's coma!

Martin's life also changed that day. He still tried to be a child and play with Andy and Joey in the playroom. People seemed to expect more from him now. Adults wanted his attention more than the children in the village. There was sadness in his eyes. The sadness we all seem to get the day we realize our childhood is gone. His grandmother, however, always brought him great comfort. Her love for him was now the greatest source of his peace.

Chapter 17

Step 3

After the great awakening everyone agreed that Feeniks should not let the creature have the island. They should use the island and REED to perform occupational rehabilitation on the enemy soldiers. No one should be killed. A plan was forming, and it started with the 'cure hunters', Paul, Ester, and Jimmy. They sent a memo to the planning group working on the final step of the three-step plan. It stated that a modified form of the virus could safely be used to put the enemy soldiers back into a sleeping state. They could then be stripped of their weapons and brought to the island. After waking they could be shown how the Creature was sending them to their death just to further his cause. This must be done with love and without force or chains. They should start with one small ship and modify the procedure as they learn how to fill the enemy's hearts of stone with the warmth of love.

Max found a way to extend the force field around Feeniks to cover a small group of people and protect them from rifle bullets, arrows, spears, and other solid projectiles. The only downside was it would not shield them from the laser guns. They needed something to stop the lasers, but nobody knew how. Paul and Ester decided to ask Martin because the last time they were stumped he had the answer. When they got to his house, Martin wasn't home, but his grandmother invited them in for a cup of hot chocolate. She said she had just heated the water and there was enough for all to have a cup. Paul did not want to stay but one glance from Ester told him otherwise. The kitchen had a small table with four chairs and placemats on the table for each chair. The walls of

the small cottage were filled with pictures of family and memories. There were a few awards that Martin had received in science fairs in frames on the wall behind a shelf with trophies from sports. As they walked slowly to sit at the table Ester said, "My name is Ester, and this is my husband, Paul. We are working on trying to get a solution to the problem you heard about a few days ago. Martin's talk inspired many to pursue a peaceful and loving solution to this situation." The old lady came out of the kitchen area with three cups on a tray. The cups were very old in design and Ester was sure they also added to the nostalgic ambiance of the room. The smell of hot chocolate covered with whipped cream made even Paul's mouth start to water. She placed a cup in front of Ester and replied sweetly, "I know who you are, dear. My name is Yolanda. I was named after my great grandmother." She then placed a cup in front of Paul and told him, "You need to loosen up, honey. Drink this and try and relax for a few minutes. I won't keep you long." Paul never realized how much his body language displayed the pressure he was under. Suddenly, her words brought a blanket of peace over his shoulders, and he sat back and tried to smile. Yolanda took her cup and sat facing Ester. She continued, "Now let's all take a little sip of this before we talk." Quietly they all took a sip.

Leaning a little to her left side and with a little smile on her face, Yolanda fixed her eyes on Ester and said, "Girl, you got a big job coming. Putting love back into hearts of stone is not going to be easy. When you go back to that island and feel like you can't get it done, remember there are people here that love you and will help." Ester was surprised to hear that she was going back to REED. She had not discussed this or even thought about it until now. Yolanda smiled at her with that "I know something you don't" smile.

She continued to tell them how the Creature had filled people with prejudice and hate. She talked about how Martin lost his parents to some of these people but learned to fight the Creature and not seek revenge on the infected people. Paul had just taken his last sip of chocolate when Yolanda said "Go now to the playroom. You will find Martin there with those two little rascals. Paul, I think you will find something they made very interesting." As they stood up Ester started to pick up her cup and Yolanda added, "Leave the dishes, that's my job." She followed them to the door and smiled lovingly as they left.

On their way back to the palace Paul turned to his wife and said, "I have not felt this relaxed in weeks! What is it about that woman that put me so at peace? She's better than any psychiatrist I've ever seen." Ester agreed and quickly changed the subject by asking, "Do you think I will need to go back to the island to help Feeniks?" Paul not knowing what to say just looked at her and said, "Maybe? I guess."

Arriving at the playroom they heard Seymour telling a small crowd "You are about to see the first demonstration of a machine invented by AJ and Martin called 'The Big Burp'." In the middle of the room elevated on a table sat an E-Blox construction that looked like a person’s face with a round hat on top. Seymour said, "OK boys, turn it on!" The twins just stood there with their arms folded across their chest and a scowl on both their faces. They wanted to call their invention the 'Fantastic Fart Machine' but Martin insisted ladies might be in the room and gave it the new name. Martin knew they would not cooperate, so he reached over and flipped a switch. Laser beams shot out in all directions for a few seconds from the round hat on top and then the machine

made a loud 'BURP'. Instantly the beams turned into a beautiful multicolored cloud.

Paul almost jumped over people as he made his way through the small group to get a closer look. When he got to the table he noticed Seymour was just standing there with wide eyes and his mouth open. He grabbed him by both arms and shouted, "I know! I know! It's exactly what we needed!" Turning back to the table he noticed the cloud was gone and the beams from the laser pointers were back. Glancing at Martin he said excitedly, "Make it do that again!" Joey butted in with, "You have to feed it." and Andy added "Just put one of those E-Blox bricks in its mouth." Paul quickly reached over, took a brick and put it into the hole that looked like the machines mouth. A few seconds later it happened again.

By the time the colorful cloud faded away and Paul turned around, Ester was standing directly in front of him. She took both of his hands and said softly, "I think you need another cup of that hot chocolate right now." Paul looked up and noticed everyone in the room staring at him. Only Seymour had a big smile on his face because he knew why Paul was so excited. The room was so quiet that Paul could hear his heart beating. Then Joey said, "I still think it should fart and not burp!" Laughter filled the room for a moment or two, and then things returned to normal.

Many questions came flowing out after that demonstration, but all the people agreed to go home, organize their thoughts, and meet tomorrow. Then Martin could explain how the laser disrupter worked. Martin finally said to the crowd "It was just an old science project I did a couple of years ago and really quite simple. I merely added a high frequency light wave to modulate the sound wave of the burp that makes the

photons in the laser beam lose phase relationship and disperse." Everyone said "Uh, huh?" and agreed to wait for the meeting in the morning with more of the technical people present. The people in the small crowd all headed for home.

On their way home Paul mumbled to Ester, "I can't believe the biggest crisis in the world is being solved by children, birds, and grandma's" Ester smile covered her face as she replied, "Hey! Even Newton had to get hit in the head by an apple! Be grateful the Source of agape is not throwing fruit at you." Paul smiled and made a profound statement, "Perhaps too much formal education can smother basic understanding and wisdom." Ester thought to herself, "Now there's some basic wisdom right there!" She lovingly took Paul's hand as they finished their journey home.

The morning meeting was very organized because the GA's spent the night setting up the agenda and groups. The basic outline of the plan showed how each ship could be put to sleep and the passengers could be safely removed. Feeniks would have to be in the extraction group to use his modified shield and keep the laser disrupter running. A virus ring around the island would put anyone trying to sneak in to sleep until the group could get to them. The virus free waking buildings would have medical people and psychologist. Paul was convinced that the soldiers would be on some form of an addictive drug used to keep them doing what they were told. There would need to be a detoxification program in place. Paul staring at a vase full of marijuana weeds given him earlier by Stacey and Sally said, "I think I know what will help in the detox." Everyone agreed the person to run all this had to be Ester.

There was only one small detail where there was no agreement. The laser disrupter needed a song playing to keep it constantly working. They all agreed it should be a song about love, but everyone had a different song. The song had to be their theme song. It had to convey what they were all about. Discussions were starting to get heated as they argued why one song was better than another.

At noon Robyn, Ruby, and Stacey entered with boxes of sandwiches and drinks. Stacey announced, "It's lunch time!" The bickering paused while the food and drink was being served. The room was fairly quiet when Stacey asked her brother, "What is the problem?" Jimmy replied, "They can't decide on the proper love song to be their theme song." Then leaning over and cupping her hand around Jimmy's ear she whispered something that no one else could hear. Jimmy nodded, put his sandwich down and grouped his mother, Robyn, Stacey, and himself in the center of the room. He put his hands up and shouted, "We have arranged a little entertainment for you while you're eating." Robyn strummed a box to get the song started and the quartet sang the song called Skidamarink.

{To hear song click here.}

Skidamarink a dink a dink,
skidamarink a doo.
I love you!

Skidamarink a dink a dink,
skidamarink a doo.
I love you!

I love you in the morning,
and in the afternoon.

I love you in the evening,
and underneath the moon.

Oh, skidamarink a dink a dink a dink,
skidamarink a doo.
I love you!

The performance was followed by a very loud standing ovation. After lunch there were no more arguments about the theme song. The only comment made by one person was that it was a silly song. Someone replied, "Perhaps that's what we need! The only way to fight a serious situation is with a little meaningful silliness." Everyone half-heartily agreed and it was settled for the moment.

Now the only problem was to get Ester and other helpers to the island. They would also have to bring some medicine and equipment. Min finally said, "I will ask Feeniks. He may have a way." After a telepathic communication Min informed the group that on LD90 the black-hole tunnel to the island would be open for one hour at noon. No one knew how Feeniks got this knowledge, and no one asked. Trust ran high in the group and if Feeniks said it, they believed it. There were only a few days to get ready. They all started working on their task to make the plan work. It was like a beehive, where every bee knew it's job, and did it.

On LD90 just as Feeniks had predicted the black hole tunnel opened and a clattering group pushed their equipment into and through the black hole to the island. On the other side they emerged near the center of the island and made their way across the dried lakebed to

REED headquarters. Feeniks had people waiting at the cave to help the small group of crusaders through the dry lake and up the bumpy paths. Many from the island were thrilled to see Ester even though it seemed like they were just with her last week. Being asleep for two months helped as they all got acquainted and paired off to go to work. That night sleep was difficult but the most tired managed to find their way into deep slumber.

Ester was looking up at the stars from her sleeping chamber window and thought about Paul. At the same time Paul was looking at the stars thinking about Ester. They were far apart, but also they were very close. Finally, Ester slipped into a deep sleep, but Paul had too many questions rolling through his mind. He laid in bed thinking, "How did Feeniks know when the tunnel would be open? Where did these Guardian Angels come from? Why do they have telepathic powers? How can an albino crow know so much? Talking moths? How can Seymour read and change software with his mind?" It took a long time for Paul to finally find sleep. The questions would still be there in the morning, but more important task must be performed first.

Chapter 18

Agape

The first month in the battle on the island proved that the Creature and his soldiers could be beaten. After the addictive drugs were removed from the enemy soldier's bodies, over 90% were converted and turned to love over hate. Some, however, did not want this change. Especially the higher-ranking people that did not want to give up being in command. Many of them were not even on drugs. Their addiction was the power they had over others. They were 'control freaks'. Ester knew they would have to be kept in an environment that prevented them from hurting others both physically and mentally. She also knew it would take longer to find a place for each of them in society.

In the palace the leaders were preparing to send out the scouting party to the nearby town called 'Hidden Valley Village'. LD120 was the day they would open a small door for six people to sneak out and investigate. Max would lead the group and protect them with his modified force field. They also had a small laser disrupter just in case. It played the same melody as the theme song, but the words were changed to appease people that thought Skidamarink was a silly name. They replaced that word with 'Agape for you' and 'Agape we do' throughout the song. Since Agape was the Greek word for the highest form of love, it felt better. As one member said, "Love for you, Love we do is much better than that skida..what..ever?" Feeniks told Min that he could feel the creature trying to listen to their telepathic conversations. He was afraid he could not block them completely and suggested they do not use names of places or anything that could expose their location. He

also told her the enemy is using breathing mask and rubber gloves to get past the virus field that surrounded the island. Paul answered through Min and told him to make a spray of the virus. Make it similar to a misty cloud. It will go through clothing and contact to the skin will put them to sleep. She added, "Only a space suit could completely protect them from the spray."

Jimmy and Martin started meeting to discuss the possibility of make a device to detect a hating heart in a person. They asked the twins if they wanted to help and Andy angrily answered, "Only if it can fart!" then Joey added, "And it will need to make a stink too!" Martin replied, "We'll see what we can do." and he left with Jimmy to work on the project without the twins. Andy and Joey decided to make their own machine and make it the way they wanted. They went back to the playroom discussing how it should work. In their conversation you could hear, "It has to have a really long bathroom fart!" and "It has to smell like rotten eggs too!"

After the passing of Devyn, Stacey and Sally grew very close. Stacey made a nest for Sally with an old basket filled with rags and paper. The nest was attached to the outside windowsill in Stacey's bedroom. The window was never closed so the bird could come in any time and be with her best friend. Sally's crows-nest fit the purpose of the lookout platform of the same name on old sailing ships. Every evening before going to bed, Stacey would go over and pet Sally like she did with Devyn and say, "Good night." The bird did not seem to mind, as she would fluff up her feathers and settle into the nest and be Stacey's lookout for the night.

LD120 came and the door was opened. Max and five others carefully left the cave in a hidden area away from the path to the village. They carefully made their

way to the path checking the sky for vultures and the surrounding area for snakes or any other spying type of rodent that might expose them to the creature. Once on the path they all stayed under Max's protective shield and made their way to 'Hidden Valley Village'. The people of the village and surrounding farms had recovered from the virus coma and were almost back to normal. They had listened to the radio broadcast and understood what put them to sleep. The churches organized groups to restore order and help those that needed assistance. The mayor of the town, however, used the catastrophe to increase his police force and greatly increase taxes for the coming year. The little village was a perfect model of the problems the world now faced. Every country would have control freaks that desired power and wealth more than anything else. These people were the Creature's easiest targets so the Creature and his demons were busy using them to make divisions of hate in the world.

The mayor and his staff controlled all the radio, video, and newspapers. The only information the town people received from the local media was what the mayor wanted them to know. One person in the scouting group decided to put together enough money to buy the smaller newspaper that was on the verge of bankruptcy. He would move back into town and with help from old friends start getting all the news to the people in Hidden Valley. First, they would change the name from "The Herald" to "Agape News". Then get honest reporters and investigators to seek out the truth in every article. In a little while they would have to set up radio and a video station that could get the public informed quickly on serious events. All this would take time and many volunteers with the same loving mission. On LD125 Max and two other scouts returned to the cave. Three of the team stayed in town and started work on the purchase of

the newspaper. The only real danger in the area seemed to be from the mayor and his very well-paid police force called 'Hidden Valley Police'.

Paul missed Ester and could not talk to her since communications with the outside world were still shut down. He found himself visiting Yolanda frequently for a cup of her delicious hot chocolate and comforting conversation. In just a few short days everyone noticed how Paul had changed. The nervous anxiety was gone and being replaced with a new confidence and peacefulness. On the day Max came back he asked Paul, "What happened?" Paul said, "What do you mean? Why are you asking me that?" and Max replied, "You are constantly smiling. You are not nervous all the time. Your demeanor is very different. What happened?" Paul smiled at Max and said, "Agape." There was a short pause while Max connected the answer with the question then he replied, "Wonderful."

Robyn, Ruby, Stacey, and Sally became a team known as "The Four Females". Over the months they seemed to do everything together to keep the children's lives near normal in the cave. Families would often ask their advice on many subjects from repairing an appliance to pet problems. The Four Females were able to give advice that helped because of the diversity of their group. In many cases Sally would simply fly over to a spot and peck on something to show them where they needed to focus. It was a loving group that everyone trusted and wanted to be with.

Everywhere on Earth the creature was being defeated. Everywhere, except in the political powers that ran countries with wealthy backers controlling them. They still had control over many national organizations and worked hard to make wars so humans could kill

humans. The Creaturte's master plan for worldwide genocide had failed and he was back to his basic methods for destruction of the human race. REED had converted almost all the soldiers and sent them back to their homelands to spread love. All the ships around the island were gone. Not one human life was destroyed and this most of all angered the demons and their master. Ester returned to the palace and was amazed at how Paul had changed. They spent more time together and many commented they acted like newlyweds. The cave was totally opened, and the Tri-blade helicopter and Mimi Submarine were busy moving people to places when they were needed.

Ten months after the Lockdown, on LD300, Stacey with a sad face asked her mother, "I know I never knew Glen but I was told that Devyn was his best friend. Can we take Devyn to the farm and put her next to Glen?" Ruby looked into her watery eyes that were pleading for help and replied, "If Tri-Blade is not too busy I suppose we could do that." Robyn in the room anticipating the conversation commented, "He will be here in 30 minutes and you can be back by suppertime." Knowing Robyn and trusting her words Ruby's only comment was, "OK, Stacey get the urn and whatever else you think we may need." Robyn added, "Take Sally with." Although Ruby thought that was a strange thing to say, she knew Robyn was aware of what would be needed and answered, "OK."

The large door at the top of the cave opened and the Tri-Blade gently landed in a small field near the palace. Robyn had the passengers ready to board near the field so no time would be wasted. No one knew how to fly the helicopter but that did not matter because the Tri-Blade knew where it was going and how to get there. It was a two-hour flight and on the way Ruby told Stacey

stories of past adventures with Glen and Devyn. Stacey had heard the stories before, but on this trip they seemed to be special and more important. They landed in a field near the old farmhouse. When Stacey stepped down from the helicopter, Sally took off and flew out of sight. Ruby told her, "Don't worry, she will come back." The couple that bought the farm when Seymour's parents moved to the palace greeted them. The man said, "Hello, I'm Henry and this is my wife, Daisy." Ruby was surprised to find that the couple were expecting them and had prepared a lunch for after the service. Henry said, "That phone in the house was quiet ever since the big sleep. Then this morning around six it rang and when I answered I heard your voice say you would be out here before lunch to bury a cat next to the dog by the big old tree." Looking at Ruby he added, "It sure sounded like you. Was it someone else?" Ruby answered, "It was Robyn. We have similar voices." Then Stacey confirmed, "They sound the same."

Henry replied, "OK. Follow me." He took his wife's hand and led the small procession up a path behind the house to a large old tree on a hill. Stacey carried the urn in one hand and held her mother's hand with the other. Under the tree was a small flat marker in the ground with the words "Glen, My Best Friend". Placed in the ground next to Glen's marker was another newer stone with the words "Devyn, Glen's Best Friend". Below that Henry had dug another small grave just big enough for the urn. Pointing at Devyn's stone Ruby asked, "Where did that come from?" Henry replied, "I have no idea. It was just there when I got here so I knew where to dig." Stacey placed the urn in the little grave and stood up next to her mother with tears swelling in her eyes. Ruby took her hand, smiled gently at her and turned to start a little prayer.

Before Ruby could speak the flapping of wings got everyone's attention. Looking up they saw Sally on a branch of the giant old tree. Next to her was a very black crow just a little bigger than Sally. Daisy pointed up at the two birds and said, "Look Henry! Sammy has found a girlfriend. And she's pretty too." Ruby turned back to the little grave and said, "We are all gathered here to put these friends together in their earthly resting place. We know they are together in spirit now and enjoying the peace that comes from Agape. Amen." Everyone else added, "Amen." While they watched, Henry took a shovel that was leaning on the tree and started to cover the urn. He put some green sod over the grave to make it match glen's grave. During the final burial, Sally flew down and landed on Stacey's shoulder. She rubbed the top of her head on Stacey's neck right behind her ear and made a garbled crow call that sounded like, "Agape." She flew back to the branch, kissed Sammy, and the two birds flew off together.

During lunch Daisy explained how Sammy started coming by the farmhouse and dancing on the front lawn until Henry threw some kernels of cow corn out to reward him. They named him Sammy after another black dancer that lived long ago. He started his dancing about two months ago and came at least twice a week. Stacey felt better knowing that Sally would be watched over by Daisy and Henry but her heart was hurting from the loss of another friend. Ruby knew her little girl had just made the leap out of childhood.

Chapter 19

Questions

After lunch they went back to the helicopter to start the flight back home. Henry asked, "Are you a pilot?" and Ruby replied, "No. It is all automatic." Daisy then shook her head saying, "The things they can do these days." The couple backed up to get out of the wind as the Tri-Blade took off. On their way back to the farmhouse Daisy commented, "Somehow I think there is more than just a dog and cat under that big tree. I'm going to put some flowers up there tomorrow." Henry replied, "I've got to take care of the lower 40 tomorrow. We can get an early start."

On the flight back home Ruby and Stacey had one of those Mother-Daughter talks that men could never comprehend. The words meant very little, but the transfer of emotions was enormous. Before they reached the cave, Stacey understood many things only women seem to understand. Of course, there were many questions that never got answered, but she knew that was all part of being a woman. The last twenty minutes of the trip they sat in silence. Ruby was wondering how Robyn could know the future in such detail. She said to herself, "How did she get this ability? Where did she come from? How do all the dolphins, bugs, birds, cats, and dogs get involved in solving all these problems the creature makes? How can a helicopter blade know what to do? How do those antigravity bricks work and where did they come from? Should I ask Robyn? Should I ask Max? And what's with this identical voice thing?" The mental questions ended when the helicopter landed in a field by the palace with Robyn waiting to welcome them back. The questions would have to wait because it was time to

get Stacey to accept the loss of Sally and keep her busy making dinner.

Later that week Andy and Joey wanted to demonstrate their latest invention. They were very proud of what they made without anyone's help. The playroom was small so only a few people got an invitation to see the demonstration. They would show this great invention on Saturday at three in the afternoon. Martin felt bad because he did not get invited, but Jimmy did. Yolanda told him to be humble and ask the twins if he could also come to the demonstration. Martin knew that his grandmother was very wise and went to the playroom to be humble. When Joey saw him enter the room he asked, "Martin, are you coming to the demonstration today?" Martin replied, "I did not get an invitation, is it all right if I come?" Andy said, "Don't be silly. You don't need any invitation. You're one of the Master Builders." Again, the wisdom of his grandmother showed that humility could often bring praise. Martin smiled and replied, "Thank you."

Stacey making an announcement started the demonstration. "Andy and Joey wanted me to recite an old limerick from our family that explains their invention." She then dramatically proclaimed,

"A burp is but a breath of air,

That cometh from the heart.

But when it takes the downward path

It becomes just a smelly fart."

Even those that had heard the limerick before could not help but laugh. Martin, however, did not laugh. There was something in that limerick that answered the

main question in the project he was working on with Jimmy. He thought, "Now I know how Paul felt when he saw our first demonstration." Stacey concluded her introduction with, "And now here is the Fantastic Fart Machine". Joey reached over and pressed a button and the machine lit up like a Christmas tree. A few seconds later, it made a loud Burp. After another short pause it made a very long bathroom type fart. When the laughter stopped Andy pressed another button on the machine and it said, "Phew!" Even Martin was laughing now, but he could hardly wait to tell Jimmy the answer to their biggest question.

Back in the lab, Martin turned to Jimmy and said, "James, what is the basic premise of our project?" Jimmy knew this was a serious question because Martin rarely called him James. "What do you mean?" he replied. Martin continued, "We are trying to make a device to determine if a person has a good heart, or a heart of stone. Right?" A short pause then Jimmy answered, "Right." Martin went on, "Well if a person decides to do good things for others in the world it is the upward path. It is a breath of fresh air, the burp. But if a person decides to take a downward path and do bad things to others and the world then it is the fart. It all depends on the decision people make and that determines how his or her heart appears to others. People do not have a predetermined heart. They have freewill and must decide on the path they will take. We cannot make a device that will decide what path a person will take. All we can do is show people what is a good path and what is a bad path. Like the machine Andy and Joey made and the limerick." Jimmy looked at Martin's smiling face and stared into his beautiful brown eyes. He replied, "Wow! I've heard that little poem many times and never got that message. You are really something!" That day their project ended, but

the bond between Martin and Jimmy would last a lifetime.

The world was slowly changing and people were choosing different paths for their lives. The LD calendar was dismissed, and the world was back on the same timetable. The people from the palace and mountaintop cave were relaxed. A small group, however, wanted some questions answered. They got together and made a list of questions. A meeting was called to discuss the list and hopefully get some answers. Present in the meeting were Seymour, Ruby, Paul, Ester, Robyn, Max, Min, and Feeniks. Seymour handed out the list and opened the meeting with a short prayer. "Creator of all, please guide us in truth and onto your path. Give us wisdom and understanding. Amen." The top questions on the list were;

1. What do the letters GA mean?
2. Where do you robots come from?
3. Why are you here?
4. Why do you have telepathic power?
5. Are there more GA robots in the world?

The rest of the list was about the Tri-blade, anti-gravity bricks, black hole tunnels, Glen, Moses, the Creature, and the future. The GA robots in the room all scanned the list quickly and telepathically elected Robyn to speak for them. She said, "I have been elected to try and answer your questions. We knew this day would come and I will do my best to explain everything. You must be patient because before I can answer your questions you will need to understand the different forms of existence. I will start with your world because it might be easier to describe."

Seymour thought to himself, "I think we are about to get a lecture in 'Existence 101'. It has been a long time since my school days. I hope I'm up for this." Robyn moved to a position so all the humans could see her and started.

"More than 5000 years ago the Egyptian priests discovered a force we now know as electricity. Many of you understand this force today and know it is due to the movement of what future investigators have called the electron. Everything that exists in your world has electrons and all the other electrons can feel the movement of one electron." To make it easier to understand she offered an analogy. "Think of a beach and replace all the sand with marbles. If you reached down and pulled one marble out of the beach, all the close marbles would move to fill the hole. Then other marbles would move a little less to fill the space made by the movement of those marbles. This action would continue as the movement diminished the further away from the original hole you looked."

Robyn asked if they could all picture this in their mind. They all nodded and said, "Yes." She continued.

"Now imagine that each marble had a plan built into it that would allow it to configure itself into a blade of grass, or a fish if placed under water. Continue this process to imagine all the living things on the earth and even the earth itself. Keep in mind that movement of one marble can still feel the movement of all the other marbles that exist in this chaotic universe of motion. Can you imagine an existence like this?"

Paul answered, "Yes, but what a mess of sensations and movements there would be." The others agreed with Paul and Robyn proceeded.

"This is what is known as the 'Physical World' of existence. Even the light from stars very far away brings marbles to us and connects us to that star in this existence." Ruby starred at Robyn and said, "How beautiful!" All of the robots' eyes turned a sky blue as they glanced back at Ruby. After all these years, Seymour suddenly realized this was the way they smiled at someone. So, he looked at them and smiled back. Paul was anxious to hear more so he said eagerly, "Go on! Are there other existences or worlds of some kind?" Ester took his hand to get his attention and gently asked, "Do you need a cup of Yolanda's hot chocolate dear?" Paul got the message and replied, "I'm sorry. Please continue when you are ready."

Robyn continued. "When you all said you could picture a beach made up of marbles in your mind, that picture had no marbles. That picture did exist in each of your minds, but it had no existence in the physical world. This type of existence is in what is called the 'Metaphysical World'. Dreams are part of this world. Thoughts and mental visions that exist in our minds, but do not exist in the physical world, belong to this Meta-World. Universal concepts like infinity in mathematics come from this world. There are also beings that live in this world. Humans have given these beings names like spirits, angels, devils, and demons. What you call the Creature lives in this world. These beings do have existence but not in the physical world. Can you understand this explanation of existence?" Paul was getting nervous again. Now he had many more questions so he started with one of his biggest questions, "Do these beings travel from place to place?" All the robots' eyes turned blue as they faced Paul and Robyn answered, "There are no places in the Meta-World. The only thing common to both of these worlds is time. They were there in the same

past we were in. They are here in the same present we are in. They will be in the same future that we will be in. Everything else is separated by the Creator of these two worlds, but the Meta-World is part of earth too." Then Robyn scanned all the people with her sky-blue eyes and stated emphatically, "Yes! Like Seymour said in his opening prayer, there is just one Creator of every form of existence."

Robyn patiently added, "There is still another form of existence that we are aware of but know less about. The Creator made this existence to reward all the beings that use the freewill they are given to find their way back to live with the Creator. You often refer to this form of existence as 'Xanadu'. We also know this existence is real, but I am afraid we know very little about it. All we know is the Creator's plan is that we help everyone get there. We believe the Creator will personally great us if we can get into this form of existence. Time, as we know it, is not present in this form of existence."

Seymour and Ruby just held hands and smiled back at Robyn. Ester took Paul's hand and said, "What a wonderful explanation of everything." All the robots' eyes returned to their normal colors as Robyn finished with, "All the questions on your list will be answered. For now, think about what you just heard and we will meet again later." The meeting ended and the robots all left the room. Ruby and Seymour just smiled at each other until Ruby finally said, "Let's go check on the children." Paul nervously blurted out, "But they did not answer any of our questions!" Then Seymour smiled at Paul and said, "I think they answered them all. They will give us the detailed answers someday." Ester added, "Let's go get a cup of that hot chocolate now." Then they all left the room. "All the questions were answered in great detail....."

"But that's another story."

BOOK 3

The Path To Xanadu

Poems in Story: Her Kids, The Cold Within, Wisdom, Perfect People

"The cosmos is within us. We are made of star-stuff. We are a way for the universe to know itself."

Carl Sagan

Every now and then, a person's mind is stretched by a new idea or sensation and never shrinks back to its former dimensions.

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.

Chapter 20

PORTAL PLACE

A few more years had fallen off the calendar in the palace where the Blox family lived. The great lockdown had become more of a memory than an experience, but the world was still fighting the forces that pulled love from the human heart. It was the old world, and it was a new world. The greedy power seekers still pursued control in an unloving manner, but now the Earth had a global robotic police force to try and govern malicious humans. Poor, starving, and sick people were still struggling to survive, but now there was a global force of robotic rovers that brought food, medicine, and job contacts to those in need. There were still groups trying to destroy the Earth for personal profit, but they were held in check by the agency, or "REED" that changed its

name from “Regulators Ending Environmental Destruction” to stand for “Robots Encouraging Environment Development.” Weapons to kill humans were still being designed by materialistic and misled people, but protective force field jackets were also being designed to save human lives. Technology was the catalyst that accelerated change, and the human heart was the steering mechanism that guided its direction.

Seymour and Ruby sat in their favorite love seat glider on the balcony of the palace, sipping their early morning herbal tea. The dwellings below were almost all empty since most of the people had moved to the Hidden Valley Village. Seymour sadly remarked, “It‘s amazing how fast things can change.” After the glider slowly made a couple of cycles forward and backward, Ruby replied, “I miss Jimmy. At least he has Martin with him at college, so he is not alone.” Jimmy was their oldest son. He became close to a boy named Martin during the lockdown caused by the pandemic that put everyone in a coma. They had become great friends and were in college together now. Seymour took another sip of tea and then carefully placed his cup on the table on his side of the love seat as the glider paused to reverse direction. He carefully moved a few inches closer and put his arm around Ruby’s neck to gently pull her toward him. She grabbed her cup with both hands and said, “Watch it, fella! I want to drink this tea, not wear it!” Pulling her very close, he looked into her beautiful green eyes and whispered, “It would look awesome on you like everything else you wear.” She stopped the glider from moving, put her cup down on the table next to her, turned and put both of her hands on each side of his face, and kissed him. Then she pulled away and queried, “What are you after? I know that look; you want something. What is it?” Seymour just sat back and declared, “The world

seems to be doing OK without us, so I thought we could take a little vacation. Maybe we could go somewhere with the kids for a couple of weeks. What do you think?" Ruby stared at her husband and asked, "What did you have in mind?" Now, he knew that when women ask a question, to pay no attention to the question, but to look for the meaning behind the question. He knew if Ruby asked him if he wanted a stick of refreshing spearmint gum to chew on, she was telling him he had bad breath and needed to freshen it with the gum. If a man asked him, "Where did you buy this cake?" he could answer, "At the Hidden Valley Bakery." but Ruby would answer, "What is wrong with it?" So the question "What did you have in mind?" really meant, do we need to get the family away from here? Seymour carefully answered her with, "I just thought you might like a change for a while. There is no reason we have to leave."

Robyn entered the room holding a tray with a teapot on it before Ruby could respond and asked, "Would you like some more tea?" Robyn was the only GA robot in the palace now. Feeniks was running REED. Min was in India working with a medical research group, and Max was somewhere in Asia helping the global police force. They both answered Robyn by saying, "No, thank you." While Robyn proceeded to pick up the teacups and put them on her tray, she amazed them both with, "No need to plan a vacation right now. We have a great adventure planned for your family. Paul, Esther, and Martin will be joining in this escapade if it is OK with you." Seymour knew Robyn was always three steps ahead of everything, so he nonchalantly asked, "And where will we be going this time?" As she left the room Robyn replied, "Physically, nowhere. Metaphysically, to places you've never thought possible!" Ruby smiled at her husband as she sighed, "If it was anyone but Robyn,

this would frighten me." Seymour commented, "This could be a great vacation, and it sounds like we won't even have to pack our bags." He stood up and, using both hands, pulled Ruby from the glider to hold her close and whispered, "I love you." This time Ruby did not answer with "You better" but instead replied, "Ditto."

Seymour knew it was the answer from an old movie that used both the physical and spiritual worlds. "So, you are already into it, I see. I was hoping for a simple old rustic castle in the sky with a big moon and days of family time together doing nothing." She laughed, then exclaimed, "Yea, right!"

Paul and Esther joined Seymour, Ruby, Stacey, and the twins for dinner later that night. It was a wonderful meal that Robyn had prepared for everyone with Gyro meat and fish. The meat was very tender with a spicy flavor, and the fish was a Paleo Greek Braised Fish. Paul knew the meal was centered on Greek cuisine, so he asked Robyn what was the reason for her choice. Robyn explained, "In two days, we will be going on a great adventure. We will be traveling in the Meta-World, so you do not need to pack anything. Our first stop will be Athens, Greece, in the year 400 BC. We will leave as soon as Jimmy and Martin get home on their spring break from college." She knew that a million questions were coming, so she continued. "Do you remember the list of questions you wanted to be answered a few years ago?" The children said no, but the adults all nodded yes. "This trip will give you detailed answers to many of those questions and much more." Turning to face Seymour and Ruby, she added, "When the boys get home, you must explain to all the children the three forms of existence as I did years ago." Then turning to face Paul, she proclaimed, "Yes, Paul! This is what you have been waiting for. Be patient, just a few more days. We had to

wait until the twins were old enough to understand this mission." Her eyes turned a sky blue to give Paul a robotic smile and then back to their normal blue.

Robyn proceeded to clean up some of the dishes and serve a rich, sweet dessert pastry called Baklava. It was made of layers of filo filled with chopped nuts and sweetened and held together with honey. Finally, Stacey asked, "Can we bring my friend Glenna?" Glenna was a female Wicklow Terrier and a direct descendent of the famous Glen. "Yes and no," Robyn replied. "She will be taken care of during the day and sleep by your side every night. She can also be with you when you eat lunch and dinner." This put Stacey's mind at rest, and she sighed, "OK." Nobody knew, not even Robyn, how important the bond between Stacey and Glenna would be in the years to come.

Lying in bed that night with his left arm under her pillow and his right arm holding her close, Seymour started their last discussion before sleep with, "When I was very young and discovered the Tri-Blade, I often wondered where it came from and how it could do all those things. It seemed to have intelligence and yet was just a propeller. Maybe now I will get the answer." Ruby quickly changed the conversation to a mother's concern and said, "Robyn said she waited until the boys were old enough. Do you think she will tell us what the children will be doing with their lives? I hope we can explain the three forms of existence, so the children understand." She was focused on the children, and he felt a little guilty because he was thinking about unimportant matters. He pulled her close, kissed her cheek, and whispered, "Your right. This adventure may reveal many wonderful things about the future and our children. That is why she waited. Good night, dear." He pulled his arm out from under her pillow and rolled over onto his pillow as she replied,

“Good night, my love.” Sleep did not come quickly for Seymour. He remembered a poem called ‘Her Kids’ that his father had written, and it kept running through his head.

Her Kids

I was so glad when I first had a son
I could teach him the sports
How to catch and to run.
The less important things in his life
Like talking, and washing
I left for my wife.

My next child was a beautiful daughter
I could bounce on my knee
And swim with, in the water.
Other things that she would have to do
Like manners and dressing
Were my wife‘s job too.

Now my next child again was a boy
More sports and more fun
Oh, what a joy.
Eating and using a fork and a knife
And other little lessons
Would be taught by my wife.

Now the funs over, the children are grown
And it does me no good
To sit back and moan.
But as I look back on each kid’s life
I realize they turned out

Just like my wife.

Note: *You may sit back and grin, but you'll only get back what you put in.*

It was the note at the end of the poem that kept Seymour awake. He wondered just how much was he putting into the children? But then, if the children turned out like Ruby, that would be great. Sleep finally came.

Robyn was busy all night setting up a room in the palace she called "Portal Place." One end of the room had a large round table with ten very comfortable chairs. For the next few days, most of the meals would take place at this table. This area was also covered with a holographic shell that could make the table appear in different surroundings when activated. On the other side of the room were beds that could be arranged into many different styles, also covered by a holographic shell. The center of the room was a very large open area that could also create the appearance of many outdoor and indoor scenes. Portal Place truly was a space that could create the illusion of travelling to faraway places. Hours after everyone in the palace was asleep, Robyn stood in a far corner of Portal Place that was lit by a flickering electronic candle. A small moth was flying around the candle and finally landed on the rim near the light source. Robyn whispered, "Thank the Creator for allowing me and the others to enter His world although we are not worthy." The tiny little moth flew around the candle and left the room. Robyn's light sensors were very accurate, and she noticed a momentary increase in the brightness of the candle. She knew her message had been received.

Chapter 21

MOTHER

Shortly after breakfast, Seymour called a meeting with Paul, Esther, and Ruby in the now rarely used conference room of the palace. They recalled how Robyn had explained the three forms of existence and tried to repeat them so the younger twins would understand. They felt marbles to replacing electrons was a good idea, and dreams for the Meta-World would be easy to grasp, but the concept of time in the third form of existence was still a mystery to them. Ruby finally said, "Let's do the best to repeat what Robyn told us and let the questions come. We can do our best to answer them. Remember, 'I don't know' is an honest answer." They all agreed and went out to the courtyard to greet the college boys that would soon arrive.

The large mountaintop door above the palace was left open most of the time to let fresh air and sunshine into the small village during the day and permit the people inside to see the moon and stars at night. When severe storms were predicted, they would close the access to protect the dwellings and palace, but today was a beautiful spring day, and the small group gathered in the palace courtyard in the sunshine and fresh air. There was a grassy field speckled with bright yellow dandelions nearby where the Tri-Blade helicopter would soon be landing.

Robyn and Martin's grandmother, Yolanda, joined the group and brought some little sandwiches with a pitcher of lemonade and some plastic cups. Robyn told everyone to have a seat and take a snack because it would be a little while before the boys would arrive. Although the creek that ran through the cave was out of sight, you

could still faintly hear the music the water made as it danced around the rocks and stones on its journey. The small talk from the waiting group was mostly about nostalgic memories of the past and the beauty of the Earth they had encountered on their journeys. Robyn's eyes slowly shifted from deep blue to a soft sky blue as she smiled at the group and telepathically sent their conversations to Max, Min, and Feeniks. They all agreed this was the right group for the passage and thanked her without using words for the transmission. Seymour noticed Robyn's smile and put his glass of lemonade on the bench, stood up, and walked to her side. He meekly asked, "Robyn, I think you can best explain the three levels of existence to the children. It would be better if you explained it to them like you did for us in the past." Robyn smiled her sky-blue-eyed robotic smile at Seymour and responded, "I know you will be surprised at what they show you." Suddenly, Seymour realized this meeting was going to be a two-way street, and he was about to learn something from the children. He thanked Robyn and went back to sit with Ruby and his lemonade.

Because TB, the name Seymour gave to the tri-blade helicopter, was flying in silent mode, nobody heard it enter the cave and hover over the field. The blast of air from the helicopter's blades made everyone jump to their feet as they realized the boys were home and the waiting was over. Stacey and the twins joined the group while everyone displayed the excitement of a loving family reunion. When the hugging and kissing finally stopped, and the chatter subsided, Robyn announced, "Let us give the boys a chance to put their things away and then meet in the dining room for dinner in about two hours." Everybody paired off and started heading in different directions except for Seymour. He stood at the edge of the field with his arms folded across his chest and

watched TB silently leave the cave. He mentally said, “Thank you, old and faithful friend.” Perhaps it was that his telepathic powers were getting stronger from using that crazy frying pan hat to telepathically communicate with Feeniks, but he clearly heard a loving motherly voice say, “You’re welcome.” He had often felt TB saying things to him in the past but never heard a voice speak. He had often thought of TB as a brother and now he just realized SHE was more of a loving mother. She was always there, protecting and guiding him without many thanks. Like all loving mothers, she took care of him, expecting nothing in return. He made his way back to the bench as his eyes filled with tears and sat down.

Ruby had noticed that her husband did not go back into the palace and returned to the courtyard to see what he was doing. One look, and she knew there was something wrong. She pulled a napkin from her pocket and gave it to him to dry his eyes, and, saying nothing, sat next to him and waited. He finally looked at her worried face and sorrowfully mumbled, “Did you know you married the dumbest fool on the planet?” Her worried look did not change as she replied, “If you say so.” “Oh, now you agree!” He responded with a forced laugh and added, “Let’s go join the others.” He took her hand as they both rose and headed for the palace. She never questioned her husband because she knew there was an enormous emotion struggling to find a place in his soul, and he would tell her what it was when the time was right.

The dinner was again prepared by Robyn and was centered on Greek meals from the past. When Seymour first saw Robyn standing at the table, she looked at him with smiling eyes and telepathically sent the statement, “So, you talked to Mother. She told us that you will be able to communicate without the silly hat from now on and

wanted us to help you adjust to this major change." Then he heard Max and Min add, "Welcome to the group." while Feeniks added, "And you will not get headaches as you did with that hat." He could hear all their voices in his head better than the sounds in the room. He felt a little dizzy, so he opened his mouth to get a better breath and grabbed the back of a chair near the table to get steady. Finally, he telepathically answered them with, "Thank you. I hope I am worthy of this great honor." He slowly sat down in the chair even before Robyn declared so everyone could hear, "Sit down now. Dinner is ready." Ruby never took her eyes off her husband and tried to hide the worry from her face. She knew something very serious was happening but had no idea what it was or what to do. She had a hard time focusing on the table talk while eating and watching Seymour nibble in silence. Dessert, coffee, and hot chocolate followed the meal with a mint-flavored candy for those that wanted one. Seymour heard Robyn telepathically transmit, "Time for your meeting." And then announced verbally, "Everyone, please go to the small conference room now for a meeting. Seymour will explain when you get there." Yolanda put her hand on Martin's shoulder and said, "I will stay here and help Robyn with the cleaning. You need to go with the group." Martin just answered, "OK," and dinner ended.

Ruby took Seymour's hand on the way to the conference room and gave it a little extra squeeze to make sure he knew she was with him, both physically and emotionally. He knew she was worried, so he smiled at her and assured her everything was all right with, "I'm fine. You don't need to worry. I will try and explain later." It did not stop the worry, but she felt a little better as they entered the conference room and sat around the large round table. Seymour opened the meeting with a

prayer by saying, “Heavenly Creator help us to understand your plan for us and lead us to your kingdom.” Everyone answered, “Amen.” He continued, “Years ago, the GA’s tried to explain to us that there were three levels of existence. There is the physical world, the metaphysical world or Meta-World, and the Creator’s world. My memory is not as good as Paul’s, so I would like him to tell you what she told us back then.”

Paul took out an old notebook as all the children turned to face him with totally expressionless faces. He read about the sand being marbles with built-in DNA to describe the physical world we lived in. He read about thoughts and dreams to describe the meta-physical world the spirits lived in. He concluded with the third form of existence being the Creator’s world and that it was very difficult to understand. The children’s faces remained blank as they listened to Paul talk, and no one stopped him to ask even one question. Finally, Paul looked at them and said, “Do you get any of this?”

The children looked at each other for a few seconds, and finally, Andy shouted, “Three X Pro!” and they all laughed and gave each other high five hand slaps. Paul sat back in his chair with his mouth open. After he composed himself, he asked, “What is Three X Pro?” Jimmy was the first to realize this was not a quiz and all the adults in the room were totally confused. He explained, “Three X Pro is a very popular game that started a few years ago. You buy a starter box that comes with instructions on how to build real-world things with blocks, bricks, motors, lights, and other real-world parts. After you build something you go to a website, which is called the second level and enter the name and parts used to make your creation. If you did everything correctly, you are given letters and pictures that can only be used in the second level to try and figure out a location or

name of something that holds the answer to the creator of the puzzle." All the adults in the room were overwhelmed at what they just heard and sat silently, staring at Jimmy. Joey exclaimed, "It's really pretty hard. We have made it to level two a few times and even with Martin's help never found the creator of the puzzle." Martin added, "Even the teachers and professors play the game, but no one has ever made it past level two as far as I know." For the next hour, the adults asked questions, and the children explained how the game worked when they could. Seymour realized what Robyn meant when she said she knew the children had something to show them. He sat back in his chair, and for the first time since TB had arrived, he had a smile on his face. Ruby noticed the smile, and the knot around her heart started to loosen and let some of the worry escape.

The meeting ended when Robyn entered the room, pushing a cart stacked with a pile of clothing. Yolanda was behind her with scissors, thread, and a box of fasteners. Robyn announced, "Chitons for everyone." She explained the chiton was a simple tunic garment that was worn in Greece by both sexes and all ages. It consisted of a wide, rectangular tube of material secured along the shoulders and lower arms by a series of fasteners. Typically, they fell to the ankles of the wearer, but athletes, warriors, or slaves sometimes wore shorter versions during vigorous activities. Everybody would be wearing ankle-length chitons on their first adventure tomorrow. They used the restrooms as changing rooms while everyone got their tailor-made outfit. Robyn told them all to get a good night's sleep and come here dressed for the trip by nine and that breakfast would be prepared.

That night, when Seymour was lying in bed next to Ruby with his hands behind his head and staring at the

ceiling, he sorrowfully proclaimed, “All my life, I thought TB was like a brother or at least a very good friend. Today I found out he is not a he at all, but she is really like a mother that has been watching over me.” Ruby rolled over to face him and softly whispered, “Is that why you said you were the world’s greatest fool in the courtyard today?” “Yes.” was his only reply. She continued, “We are all fools when you really think about it, but you are MY greatest fool and don’t you forget it!” Then he added, “One more thing. She gave me a gift before she left. I can now telepathically communicate with all the GA’s without using the pan hat.” There was a long pause before Ruby spoke again. Her worries were all gone, but she knew the love of her life was being positioned to do something big with a gift like that. She finally asked, “Will this new gift keep you awake at night?” “I don‘t think so,” he assured her. “Then tell them all good night, and let’s get some sleep. We have a big day tomorrow.” Ruby gently kissed him and rolled over to get her sleep. A minute passed, and Seymour finally whispered, “They all said good night.” Somehow she knew he was going to be OK, and sleep followed quickly. Seymour kept trying to mentally contact TB or Mother as the GA’s called her, but there was no reply. He finally closed his eyes, and fatigue pushed him into dreamland.

Although the windows were all closed, a gentle breeze brushed the hair from his eyes like a mother does as she watches her child sleep. There was no one awake to hear it but, “Good night, my children,” was a whisper that broke the silence in the room.

Chapter 22

THE TOUR

The group had gathered at nine, and by quarter after, everyone was seated at the round table in Portal Place. The holographic shell over the table was activated and made the table appear to be in a stone cafe in ancient Greece. For breakfast, Robyn had prepared pancakes called “tagenities;” a word derived from the Greek word for “frying pan.” Tagenites were made with wheat flour, olive oil, honey, and curdled milk. Some of the pancakes were topped with honey, sesame, and cheese. Glenna was lying by Stacey’s chair with her face between her paws while her tail swept the stone floor like a slow-moving brush. Glenna never begged for food but was always ready for anything that was offered to her. Robyn telepathically sent Seymour a Greek orthodox morning prayer to start the meal. He raised his hands for silence and repeated it verbally, “Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present everywhere, filling all things, Treasury of good things and Giver of life, come and dwell in us. Cleanse us of every stain, and save our souls, gracious Lord, Amen.” Everyone repeated, “Amen,” and the meal began.

After breakfast, Robyn instructed everyone to remain seated with their eyes closed and to concentrate on her voice. She started by saying, “We are ready to enter, dear Mother; please open our minds and hearts to the Meta-World.” Only Robyn and Seymour heard the reply, “Welcome.” Seymour knew the voice was the same one that spoke to him the day before and quickly opened his eyes to see if Mother was in the room. The room was gone, and he was sitting in an ancient Greek cafe with pillars and stone walls. Robyn had been

transformed into a beautiful lady with long flowing hair. She was holding something that looked like a feather duster but was made with stalks of wheat. She said, “Open your eyes now. We are in Athens in the year 400 BC.” The children were all amazed at the surroundings and Robyn’s transformation. The twins just shouted, “Infinite!” which was slang for really great. Paul proclaimed, “Awesome!” and Ruby told Robyn how beautiful she was. Seymour stood up and glanced around the room to see if Mother was present. Robyn, knowing why he searched, mentally told him, “We have never seen her either.” Everyone sat around a large oval-shaped table, and servers came to take orders and serve the meals. When all had eaten, they started standing and checking out their surroundings.

A soldier walked in between two pillars behind Robyn. He had a helmet and sword and wore the colors of a Strategos, or a general in today’s military. When Robyn turned to face him, he stopped, fell to one knee, and placed his right fist over his heart. Staring at the floor, he humbly proclaimed, “Persephone, daughter of Zeus, I bow before thee.” In Greek mythology, Persephone, pronounced pər-SEF-ə-nee; Greek: Περσεφόνη, was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. Persephone was invariably portrayed as robed, often carrying a sheaf of grain. She was commonly worshipped as the goddess of vegetation and the underworld. Robyn quickly replied, “Kneel not, brave warrior. I am not Persephone. I am the lady Petritis, in Greek πετρίτης; meaning redbreast or robin, visiting Athens with my friends.”

The soldier stood, and Robyn asked for his name. He answered, “Gorgidas,” and Robyn knew from her memory banks that he was the first known Theban military leader of the Sacred Band of Thebes. Gorgidas

had created the Sacred Band, which he dispersed throughout the front ranks of the regular infantry, with the idea that they would inspire valor. She could see that he was still fascinated by her beauty, so she asked him if he would give them a brief tour of the city after he had his meal. She quickly turned to a server that had come to the table to remove the plates and requested he hold out his hand. She placed a gold coin with her image in the palm of his hand and with great authority in her voice, instructed him to give the General anything he wanted. The server knew the value of the coin was worth much more than what she requested, so with an expression of great surprise, he showed it to Gorgidas. He then faced Robyn again and, bowing very low, replied, "With great honor, my lady, I will do as you command." Realizing this lady and her friends were people of great wealth, Gorgidas told the server he would return later for the meal and then told Robyn, "Follow me and I will show you the great city of Athens."

Gorgidas started his tour by describing the area where they were located. It was called the Acropolis of Athens and was a citadel located on a rocky outcrop above the city. This area contained the most famous Parthenon. He told them that 100 years had passed since the Athenians decided to stop the construction of the Olympian temple, which was the work of the tyrant Peisistratus, and his sons. Instead, they used the limestone prepared for the older part of a temple called the Parthenon. Then the south part of the summit was cleared, made level by adding some 8,000 blocks of limestone, and the rest was filled with soil kept in place by the retaining wall. Gorgidas proudly stated, "After the victorious Battle of Marathon, marble was used instead. The older part of the Parthenon was still under construction when the Persians invaded and sacked the

city. The temple was burned and looted, but after the Persians were removed, we used many parts of the ruins and built the northern curtain wall on this high spot, which serves as a memorial and can be seen from the lower city. Most of the major temples, including the Parthenon, were rebuilt by order of Pericles."

While walking past the Parthenon, Gorgidas added, "Only a few years ago, after the Peloponnesian War, the temple was finished." The group followed Gorgidas down some stairs to the other structures. He continued, "The construction of the elegant temple of Erechtheion was built on extremely uneven ground, and several shrines in this area were finished around the same time. Also, the temples of Athena Polias, Poseidon, Erechtheus, Cecrops, Herse, Pandrosos, and Aglauros have all been completed." He stopped to let the group admire a 30-foot bronze statue of Athena Promachos. Being a soldier, he had to inform the group, "This is Athena who fights on the front line." Other monuments they passed were the Chalkotheke, the Pandroseion, Pandion's sanctuary, Athena's altar, and Zeus Polieus's sanctuary.

Take Tour of Athens

Finally, Joey commented, "You seem to have many different gods and temples." Andy added, "And many wars were fought over them." Seymour apologetically interrupted the twins with, "Please excuse my children; they have a bad habit of speaking their minds without being asked." Gorgidas laughed and commented, "They will be leaders someday and great warriors! I was accused of the same bad manners when I was their age." Turning to face the twins, he continued, "There is a man being watched right now for believing in only one God. He was a great warrior, and now he is

considered one of the wisest men in Athens." Gorgidas turned and pointed to a hill just outside of the city and said, "He will be talking to many from the city tonight on that hill. His name is Socrates, and there are rumors he will be arrested for corrupting the youth with his one-God teachings. If he will not worship all the gods, they will condemn him to death." This statement made all but Robyn stare at him in silence as they realized the importance of the gods in Athens at this period in the past. Robyn walked over to Gorgidas and handed him a gold coin. She told him to look at the image on the coin. He was surprised to see that the image appeared to be a Greek warrior with his face. Robyn commented, "They will also build a statue to honor you, here, in Athens. This statue will crumble, and that coin will be lost in the next three millenniums, but the words of Socrates will still be as strong as they are today, and he will never even write them down."

Gorgidas suddenly woke up and realized everything was just a dream. There was no beautiful woman. The strange group of visitors was gone. He was in his sleeping quarters. It was all a very strange dream. The prediction about his statue and Socrates' words, however, remained vivid and very hard to forget.

Simultaneously, Robyn and her group noticed the city fading away and found themselves in the main hall of Portal Place in the palace. Robyn announced, "It is time to rest our legs and get something to eat." Paul quickly replied, "I know we were not in the physical world during the tour of Athens, but it feels like I really climbed all those stairs." Robyn turned and headed for the eating area and simply said, "You did." Glenna ran over to greet Stacey the minute they entered the room. Her tail was wagging hard enough to make her back end do a dance as she jumped and put her front paws on

Stacey to lick her face. Stacey quickly held her, kissed her back, and finished the happy little dance.

After everyone was seated, a volunteer from the palace wheeled in another Greek meal containing lamb, fish, fruits, and something that looked like squash. Everyone was hungry from the long walk through Athens but waited for Seymour to say a blessing over the food. It was a quick blessing that also included a thank you to the Creator for allowing them to go back in time and see the great city of Athens. An anxious "Amen!" followed the prayer, and the feast quickly began. Food was asked for and passed, the noise of utensils on plates was growing, and a minute of smothering their hunger in silence began. Finally, Paul commented, "The architecture of those temples was really something to see. Every stone cut to precisely fit in place and support the structure." Andy added, "There sure were a lot of temples and gods back in those days." The discussion continued about what they saw and heard on their first trip through Athens until Ruby looked at Robyn and asked, "Do you know where we will be going after we eat?" Silence reigned while everyone looked at Robyn and waited for her answer. "Tonight, we are going to meet Socrates, talking about the different types of existence." Joey, thinking about the game called Three X Pro, looked at Andy and instantly blurted out, "Maybe he can help us get to level three!" After a few chuckles, Jimmy looked at Martin and said, "Awesome!" Martin answered back, "Very." Paul glanced at Esther and whispered, "Now here's a guy that can answer some of our questions." Esther's replied, "Don't get too excited, dear. I do not think there is any hot chocolate in Athens yet to calm you down." Stacey handed Glenna a small scrap of food and murmured, "Boring." Seymour noticed the frown on her face and knew she needed something to

lift her spirits. He took Ruby's hand, and when she turned to look into his eyes, he turned his glance to Stacey. Ruby followed and realized he was telling her to take care of their daughter and said, "During the tour, I heard there were going to be many young Greek men gathered around him tonight." Stacey's frown did not leave as she pleaded, "Mother, can I take Glenna with me tonight?" Ruby stared at her husband with an expression that conveyed, 'your turn.' Silence again filled the room.

Only Seymour and Robyn heard the telepathic reply, "Yes, my child, this time you may." Seymour looked at Robyn, and her eyes were dark purple and flashing. He knew she was doing something complicated, so he waited. A few seconds later, her eyes turned sky-blue; she turned to face Stacey and instructed, "First, you must get Glenna to sleep, and then she can go with us to meet Socrates." A smile bigger than a crescent moon emerged on Stacey's face. She jumped down from her chair and led Glenna to an oval-shaped dog bed in the corner of the room. And while petting her head, Stacey whispered, "You need to lay down and go to sleep." Glenna licked her hand, stepped into her bed, laid down, and closed her eyes. Stacey softly walked back to her chair, sat down, and said, "OK, we're ready." It was so quiet in the room you could hear the fly that landed on Stacey's hand. She looked at the fly and ordered, "Go back to the garden; you don't belong here." The fly flew out of the room and was gone. Everyone was staring at her, entranced. Ruby finally broke the silence by commenting, "I think we have a dog whisperer in the family." Seymour added, "I think she's much more than that!" With a typical teenage reply, Stacey said, "What? I thought we were going to meet Socrates and the boys. Are we all going to just sit here and stare at each other?" Robyn immediately announced, "Everyone, close your eyes and clear your minds." They anxiously obeyed, and the next trip to the Meta-World began.

Chapter 23

SOCRATES & PLATO

When they opened their eyes, they found themselves in a large grassy field on the outskirts of Athens. Wild trees and flowers of different colors surrounded the area. In the distance, there was a group of people gathered around a man sitting on a large rock. The man's voice was strong, but they were far enough away to barely hear what he was saying. Robyn ordered, "Follow me." and started walking toward the group. She once again appeared to be a beautiful lady of great wealth and fully in control. The grass in the field was long, but there was a path that led to the rock, and it appeared to have been used regularly. Glenna walked close to Stacey's side and glanced at her often to prevent missing any instructions she might be given. Soon, they could hear the man clearly and found it interesting that he was just asking questions and not waiting for answers. They heard him say, "What is truth?" Then after a short pause, "Can we see truth? Can we taste, smell, or touch truth?" Another short pause then, "Does truth talk to us?" Finally, after a little longer pause, he asked, "If none of our senses can investigate truth, then how do we know such an entity even exist?" A very handsome young man stood up and offered his cupped hands to the speaker. Then the man on the rock noticed Robyn and her group joining at the back of the crowd and said to the man with his hands extended, "In a minute. I have just noticed a new group that has come to join in our discussion. Let us welcome them." Turning toward Robyn, he continued, "My name is Socrates. Do you have a person to speak for your group?" Robyn replied, "I am the lady Petritis, visiting Athens with my friends. We heard of your

gathering and would like to be included in your discussion, with your permission." Robyn introduced everyone by name and, pointing at the dog, added, "And this is Stacey's good friend Glenna." In an attempt to impress Robyn with humor, Socrates stared at Glenna and asked, "Are you going to take part in this discussion too?" Much to his surprise Glenna sat up, stared back at him, and barked one time, very loud. A few seconds of total silence passed, and Stacey declared, "She said yes!" Everyone except Stacey started laughing. Socrates seemed to laugh louder than anyone else. Then he raised his hands and said; "Glenna's answer must be true because the answer itself made her part of our discussion. What a wonderful Demonstration of a self-fulfilling truth." He turned to look at Glenna and remarked, "Thank you, Glenna for your participation in our discussion." Still sitting, Glenna barked twice this time, and Stacey proclaimed, "She said you're welcome." This time the group applauded by clapping their hands and finally, Stacey smiled.

It only took half a minute for Socrates to realize that the people thought this was prepared by him to prove that truth did exist. He immediately declared in a loud voice, "I have never met these people before, and I did not know what would happen when I asked the dog that question." Trying to get the group's focus back, he turned to the handsome young man who was still standing with his hands out and asked, "Plato, do you still want to offer something to the group?" Plato had turned and was staring at Stacey. He appeared to be frozen or in a hypnotic trance. Socrates realized that he had never heard the question, so he raised his voice and repeated, "Plato! Do you still want to speak?" Plato slowly turned to face Socrates, dropped his hands, and muttered, "Uh ... I ... What was the question again?" Socrates smiled

and replied, “How do we know that an entity such as truth exists?” Plato seemed to break his trance as he answered, “Oh yes. I was going to say that truth is a concept of the mind and not a physical object. Therefore, our senses cannot measure it. But after what I just saw and heard from the beautiful young lady and her canine companion, I am not sure our senses can be ruled out.” Turning to face Plato, Stacey smiled and blushed slightly. She did not expect this very manly and handsome young man would call her beautiful.

Martin turned to face Stacey and suddenly realized that she was no longer the little sister of his friend but was becoming a very beautiful young lady. Was it the chiton tunic that flowed smoothly around her, revealing her shapely figure? Was it the way Plato looked at her with longing in his eyes? Whatever it was, it changed the way Martin would feel about Stacey forever. He noticed Glenna staring at him with her head cocked to the side. Her tail was not moving, and she seemed to be reading his thoughts. Martin smiled at Glenna, and she started the tail wagging again. The dog turned, looked up at Stacey, and whimpered to get her attention. Stacey looked down for only a moment, then turned and smiled at Martin. His heart jumped as he thought, ‘Did Glenna know what I was thinking? Did she tell Stacey? What will I do ...’

Socrates interrupted his thoughts when he spoke in a loud voice to the crowd, “Let us assume that truth does exist as Plato suggests. If it is only in our minds and measured by our senses, is it the same for everyone?” Another, older man put out his cupped hands and was acknowledged by Socrates. He said, “No! Truth must be different for everyone. For example, I believe that dog was well trained to respond to hidden commands and therefore was not communicating with the group at all. I think you hired this group so you could make that

statement about self-fulfilling truth." Many in the gathering appeared to agree with this statement as they nodded their heads. Socrates once again proclaimed, "I tell you that I did not engage this girl or her dog in any way. I had never seen this group before they joined our discussion." The man responded, "I do not believe you. Therefore, the truth for me is what I believe!" Socrates seemed to enjoy being called a liar as he smiled and continued, "Have you ever believed something and then found out later that it was not at all what you believed?" The man replied, "Yes." Socrates added, "Then was your first belief true?" "At the time, it was true, at least for me." was the reply. For a short period, no one spoke as everyone contemplated the conversation. Finally, Socrates broke the silence with, "Let us assume that what you say is correct. Then we must ask ourselves if there is a universal truth that exists for everyone and cannot change. It would be independent of what anyone believes. For example, do you and I exist? If we do not exist, then how could we have this discussion?"

Another young man in the gathering put out his cupped hands to get Socrates' attention. Upon being recognized, he stated, "This could all be a dream. None of this would be real. We could wake up, and all of this would be gone." Again, Socrates smiled as he replied, "Yes, but as Plato pointed out, there may be different forms of existence. He even mentioned dreams existing in the same form as concepts and thoughts. Would you agree that we must exist in this form in order to be having this talk? And if that is true, then would you agree that our existence, wherever it may be, is a universal truth that does not change according to our beliefs?" The young man dropped his hands and simply replied, "Yes." A murmur instantly surfaced from the multitude. People

were creating small groups and analyzing the debate, which seemed to be completed.

The direction of the sun had changed and was now heading downward to attack the treetops. People with long journeys were already approaching Socrates to thank him for leading a great discussion and to say goodnight. Paul and Esther met a couple their age and were exchanging natural remedies for common health problems. Jimmy and Martin joined a group of young men and were asking about other sessions they had with Socrates. Seymour and Ruby were talking to a married couple about how fast children grow. Plato had walked over to the foursome and stood patiently by Seymour's side until the conversation paused. Seymour turned and asked, "Did you want to ask me something?" Plato replied humbly, "I apologize for interrupting your discussion, but I would like your permission to talk to your daughter." Seymour's face was blank for a moment as he contemplated being asked just to talk to his daughter. He gradually smiled and replied, "You have my permission. Her name is Stacey." Plato bowed slightly, replied, "Thank you," and turned to walk over to Stacey and Glenna. Smiling deeply, Ruby turned back to the married couple and asked, "How old are your children?"

Stacey was watching Plato when he talked to her father. She watched him turn and approach her slowly. He stopped a few feet in front of her and proclaimed, "I have permission from your father to talk with you and to call you Stacey. My name is Aristocles, but my friends call me Plato. My father is Ariston, and my mother is Perictione. My family lineage includes kings of Athens, Messenia, and the great Greek statesman Solon. I am a seeker of truth and beauty. Since you have both of these, I would be extremely grateful if you would converse with

me." Stacey's eyes glittered with delight at such a flattering introduction. Plato's spirit heightened as she smiled sweetly and replied, "I would be honored. What would you like to discuss?" He was not prepared for such a quick and direct response. He paused for only a moment, and then continued, "My senses show me your beauty, and I believe you are a lady of truth. Would you show me how you communicate with your obedient companion?" Instantly, Glenna walked over and sniffed Plato's sandals and feet. Looking up, she quickly sniffed his hand and turned to face Stacey. Their eyes met, and for a few silent seconds, they stood motionless. Then Stacey looked up at Plato and stated, "Glenna understood what you asked and decided to give you a little Demonstration. She told me you were in the flower garden today. You spent most of your time with the roses. She said you even picked a few of the same color. She did not know the color because dogs have difficulty smelling colors, but she thinks they were yellow." Plato looked like a flash of lightning had just hit him. His mouth dropped open, his eyes widened, and his body stiffened. Stacey laughed softly and said, "You never really thought Glenna was part of the discussion. Now you know the truth."

Earlier, when Plato was asking permission to talk to Stacey, the twins were asking Robyn if she would take them to Socrates to ask about the levels in the game Three X Pro. Robyn said when he seems to have some time, we will go and talk to him. Eventually, the congregation thinned, and Socrates was left alone, taking a sip of something from a wineskin. Robyn told the twins to follow her as she approached the large flat stone and Socrates. When she was at the rock, Robyn stared into Socrates' eyes and, with a very sweet but strong voice, asked, "May these two young men ask you some

questions about existence?" Socrates answered, "I am a man that knows very little. I do not know if I could answer their questions. I would be happy to discuss anything that might lead to answers for all of us." Andy put out cupped hands, and Socrates said, "No need to be recognized now, so please speak freely." Andy stated, "We understand the first level is the physical world and that the second level is pure thought and math. We would like to know how to reach the third level to discover the creator." Joey added, "We know many people that have studied levels one and two with us. Every so often, one of them will just be gone. We don't know if they just quit or found their way to this level and will not tell us. What do you think?" The boys were asking about the game, but Socrates' thoughts were about levels of existence. His attention sharpened as he sat up and asked the twins, "You think there is a third level?" Andy answered, "Of course. That is where the creator can be found." Socrates seemed to get even more excited as he continued, "You think there is only one creator?" Joey answered, "There has to be only one creator; otherwise, the other two levels would be a real mess." Socrates was really interested in this theory of one god, so he decided to slide down off the rock and look into the eyes of these two very young philosophers. When his feet hit the ground, he was not in the field but was standing by his bed. It was all a dream! The theory of only one creator, however, became his strongest belief. Later he would even die before denying this belief.

At that same instant, Plato snapped out of being shocked by the dog communicating with Stacey, but when he looked up to see her face, he was in his sleeping room looking at the tiled ceiling. It was all a dream! He sat up, put his face in his hands, and mumbled, "No! No! This cannot be a dream!" Looking around the room, he

realized that it was just a dream. He would still spend the rest of his life searching for the girl in this dream. He will never get married or intimate with anyone. In the future, the word “Platonic” came to mean loving without any intimate physical behavior.

Concurrently Robyn and her group flickered back to Portal Place. Everyone was complaining and wanted to stay longer. Robyn announced, “Please change and freshen up. We will meet in the eating area for dinner in one hour.” And the mumbling slowly diminished. Martin walked over to Stacey and asked, “What were you and Plato talking about?” She replied, “He did not believe that I could talk to Glenna. We gave him a Demonstration that blew his sandals off! Glenna also told me you liked the dress I was wearing and were a little jealous of Plato.” Stacey smiled sweetly at Martin and drove any thoughts of denial far away. He replied, “I better watch myself around this dog. She reads a lot more than just body language.” He smiled back and told her he would see her at dinner.

Chapter 24

BONDING

One hour later, everyone arrived dressed in normal attire and started taking their seats around the table. The table was set with metal plates, a soup bowl, knives, wooden spoons, and metal forks with only two prongs. There were glasses of water for everyone and empty wine glasses for anyone that might desire a stronger drink. Two napkins were folded next to each plate. Robyn told them as they sat, “The larger napkin is for your lap, and the smaller one is for your hands. Tonight, we are serving roasted beef, tart of salmon with dried fruits and spices, golden leeks, onions, and cherry pottage for dessert. This is a typical meal of the year 1500 in Italy. After dinner, you will be fitted for clothing from this era. Clothing will not be about comfort or convenience. Women may wear up to five layers, consisting of fitted garments worn underneath a belted dress. The women’s garment will cover their feet, so high heels will also be worn to keep your dress out of the muddy streets. The men’s garment is fashioned to accentuate the top portion of their bodies and is not as long.” Robyn mentally gave Seymour the prayer of that period that was said before meals. Seymour tapped his two-prong fork on the empty glass for attention and recited, “Bless the food before us, the family beside us, and the love between us, Amen.” Everyone repeated, “Amen”. Robyn and Yolanda started serving the food while everyone started discussing the meeting with Socrates and Plato.

Finally, the chewing exceeded the chatter and the room noise diminished. Paul took this opportunity to declare, “Tomorrow’s time and place will be the

beginning of the Italian Renaissance. The Renaissance has a reputation for its achievements in painting, architecture, sculpture, literature, music, philosophy, science, technology, and exploration. Italy was the recognized European leader in all these areas during the 15th century. This could be very exciting!" Joey asked, "What's a Ren-a-sans?" Paul explained, "It was the period in history marking the end of the 'Middle Ages,' and the time in which many cultural, scientific, and artistic changes took place." Andy turned to face Joey and whispered, "Do you think they could know about the third level and the Creator?"

After Yolanda had given everyone a cherry pottage for dessert, she sat down next to Martin, squeezed his hand in a loving way, and started eating her meal. Martin looked at his grandmother and realized that her great love for others always put her last. He wondered if he would ever find a woman as loving as his grandmother. He looked back across the table and noticed Stacey smiling at him. Thinking, 'Could she be the one?' He decided it was time to talk and find out. He smiled back and asked, "How do you communicate with Glenna?" Stacey took her small napkin, wiped her hands, and, looking down, placed it back on the table next to her plate. She looked back at Martin with a gentle smile and said, "I make my mind blank and try to be a dog. I look deep into Glenna's eyes. I try to look deep into her very soul, and when she wants me to know something, I can feel her message. Sometimes, I may see a picture in my mind. The rest comes from her body language." Fascinated by her answer, he continued, "What do you mean by body language?" She replied, "If it's a good message, she wags her tail. If it's bad news, she stands with her tail between her back legs. If it's danger, she will growl, turn, and stare at the problem. If she wants something, she will

cry softly and raise one paw. Do you get the idea?" Martin, feeling a little stupid, sheepishly replied, "I think so."

Sensing her grandson's mood and having just finished her cherry pottage, Yolanda decided to join their conversation. Looking over at Stacey, she asked, "Is there something you would like to know about Martin, dear?" Stacey answered, "Yes. A few years ago, when we were in that terrible lockdown, the town had a meeting. They were trying to decide on how to stop the Creature's army from invading the island and REED headquarters. Feeniks would not kill the enemy soldiers because they were humans. Everyone wanted to use the big laser cannons and sink all the ships. Then you got up on that platform and told us all that fighting for peace was like shouting to cure deafness. You woke everyone up to the only answer: love. I would like to know how you knew what to do?"

Martin took his grandmother's hand, still holding a napkin, and placed it between both of his hands. Gently holding her hand, he told Stacey, "When I was very young, my parents were both killed in a terrible riot. I hated everyone after that. I could always find a reason to hate anyone that came to help me until my grandmother took me in and told me to memorize a very old poem. She made me recite it every time I judged someone before I tried to love them. The poem was called 'The Cold Within.' Would you like to hear it?"

Stacey simply answered, "Yes. Please." Martin turned to face his grandmother and let go of her hand. She used the napkin to wipe away the tears running down both cheeks. Staring into her tear-filled eyes, Martin recited,

The Cold Within

Six humans trapped by happenstance
in black and bitter cold,
each one possessed a stick of wood,
or so the story's told.

Their dying fire in need of logs,
The first woman held hers back,
For on the faces around the fire
She noticed one was black.

The next man looking across the way
Saw one, not of his church,
And couldn't bring himself to give
The fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes.
He gave his coat a hitch.
Why should his log be put to use?
To warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought
Of the wealth he had in store,
And how to keep what he had earned
From the lazy, shiftless poor.

The black man's face bespoke revenge
As the fire passed from his sight,
For all he saw in his stick of wood
Was a chance to spite the white.

And the last man of this forlorn group
Did naught except for gain.
Giving only to those who gave,
Was how he played his game.

The logs held tight in death's still hands
Was proof of human sin.
They didn't die from the cold without,
They died from the cold within."

Martin finished the poem and instantly realized the room was extremely quiet. Loud applause suddenly broke the silence, and people came over to pat him on the back or shake his hand. He thought he was only talking to Stacey and his grandmother. He never realized everyone was listening to his recital. Even Glenna came over and licked his hand as he rose from his chair. Only Stacey and Yolanda were seated at the table, looking at each other with smiles that could melt the North Pole.

A man and a lady entered the room pushing carts with clothing designed for 15th-century Italy. Robyn announced, "Tomorrow's attire is here. The village tailors knew your size from yesterday's fitting, so just pick up your outfit. You should try them on tonight to

check everything, then return here for breakfast, dressed and ready to go. We will be visiting the Tuscan hill town of Vinci, in the lower valley of the Arno River, in the territory of the Medici-ruled Republic of Florence. We will have breakfast at the house of Messer Piero Fruosino di Antonio da Vinci, a wealthy Florentine legal notary, and father of Leonardo da Vinci. The year will be 1560, and after eating, we will mingle with the people from that era."

Later, everyone gathered into two small groups and were sipping drinks and conversing. Ruby, Yolanda, Martin, Stacey, and Esther were in one group talking about Martin's early life and the poem that had changed him. Jimmy, Joey, Andy, and Paul were in another group discussing how the Italian Renaissance began in the region that they were going to visit and how it changed the world. Seymour and Robyn, however, were sitting by themselves apart from the chatter in a quiet part of the room. They were immersed in a telepathic conversation with the other GA robots. The power freaks and satanic groups were getting stronger. Fear and prejudice were being used to separate people into groups and remove love from the human heart. So far, the movement was small, but the robotic police force could not stop it. They had to find a way to get the good people involved and help stop the fear and prejudice.

The telepathic conversation ended, and Seymour glanced around the room and whispered, "Who would know best how to get people to live?" Robyn did not answer. No robot, even one with a metaphysical brain, could answer that question. It was a question about how to get people to use their free will to choose good over evil. The GA robots had many gifts, but free will was not one of them. Finally, his eyes ended their search and parked on Yolanda. She was just sitting, facing her group

with a teacup in both of her hands. She was holding the cup like it was a precious baby's face. When she took a sip, it almost looked like she was kissing a baby with love. Seymour turned back to face Robyn and muttered softly, "Could it be that simple?" Not being able to read his thoughts, Robyn asked, "What do you think is simple?" He replied, "To show others love, you must live for others and not for yourself. You must take the 'I' out of live and replace it with an 'O' for others. That changes live to love. The Creature is trying to make us look at how to live backward. That changes live to evil! A person that lives for others can show you love with just a sip of tea. Yolanda is surely that type of person." Robyn, again, said nothing. Seymour glanced back at Yolanda just as she turned to place her teacup on the table next to her. Their eyes met. Yolanda instantly smiled and nodded as if to say, "Yes. You got it."

Without speaking, Robyn told Seymour it was getting late, and everyone would have a busy day tomorrow. He stood up, walked over between the two groups, and asked for everyone's attention. After the room babble ended, he announced, "It is getting late, and we will have a busy day tomorrow, so let us try and get a little sleep. Everyone please meet here, dressed in your new outfits at eight tomorrow morning." He took Ruby's hand and led her out of the eating area toward the sleeping areas. He asked Ruby what her group was talking about before he interrupted everyone. "Not much," she replied, "Just Martin's poem and his early years growing up with his grandmother. They had hard times with very little to live on. Martin made it very clear that he was never in need of love. All the rest did not seem to matter. He seemed to be speaking directly to Stacey most of the time. I think there was a connection made between them during the visit to Athens today." "I

noticed the connection and think you may be right. They would make a very loving couple." Seymour replied.

Later that night, during their final chat before sleep swept them away, Ruby asked, "Do you remember when you first knew you would be my soulmate?" Seymour softly whispered, "When you dropped your raincoat hood, and your beautiful red hair fell down on your shoulders. I said something stupid, and you put out your hand and said, 'Hi, I'm Ruby.' When our hands touched, your soul linked to mine and that bond only grows stronger each day." "Do you remember what you said?" Ruby asked. "No, just something dumb." He replied. "You said, 'You're a girl!' and sat there with your mouth open. I knew then that you thought me equal to you but never knew how much until our hands touched." She answered softly and added, "All women want to feel equal to their men." His final words were "I better get some sleep because I have a lot of work to do if I am ever going to be equal to you. Good night." He kissed her cheek, rolled over, and there in the dark silence, the meshing of two loving souls continued.

Chapter 25

LEONARDO

The first rays of morning broke through the mountain top opening and brought with them a misty rain to wet the gardens and grass around the palace. Robyn had made her rounds and knew everyone was safe and sleeping. She returned to the larger room in Portal Place and stood quietly by the entrance. Her metatronic brain, however, was very busy checking the rest of the world. She first telepathically contacted Max because it was the end of the day in Asia. He reported that greed and prejudice were growing, and the robotic police force did not have the tools to fight the corruption. She then checked with Min in India and got better news. The medical group had developed cures that were eliminating much of the sickness and getting people healthy again. Feeniks reported that REED programs were expanding, and many volunteers were finding ways to help put love back into the hearts that were suffering. She recorded the updates to discuss with the team later and then went into protect mode and stood silent.

The first to arrive was Yolanda. She was dressed in a very plain long dress and a homemade sweater to keep out the early morning chill. Looking up at Robyn she asked, “Should I get a tray of coffee, juice, and snacks for the people going with you today?” Robyn’s eyes turned sky-blue as she smiled down on Yolanda and then started flashing a deep purple. A few seconds later, they returned to normal, and Robyn queried, “Will you join us on our visit today?” In a shocked manner, Yolanda replied, “What!? No. I am not dressed properly, and I would be in the way and have nothing to offer.” Robyn added, “If you agree, you will be going as our

servant, so your attire will be appropriate. You have much more to offer than you realize. This request comes straight from the lady in blue we call mother. Again, I ask, will you join us on our visit today?" Thinking only of others first, Yolanda asked, "Will they know I am Martin's grandmother? I would not want them to think less of Martin knowing his grandmother was a servant." Robyn eased her fear with, "The person we are going to visit is the son of a servant."

The conversation was interrupted as Seymour and Ruby approached, and Ruby greeted them with a "What's up?" Robyn answered, "I am trying to get Yolanda to join us today, but she is reluctant." Ruby walked up close to Yolanda, took both of her hands, looked deeply into her eyes, and with a beautiful smile, gently said, "Oh, please sister, come with us today. You will bring so much love to the visit. You have brought so much to everyone without a single thanks; you deserve a magical vacation. Please come and be with us." Ruby's voice was identical to Robyn's, but Ruby's words were not robotic and were filled with caring. Yolanda could feel a warmth flow from Ruby's hands to hers. There was a connection through their eyes that brought their souls together. The shell of loneliness that had built up over many years and surrounded Yolanda's heart cracked a little as she burst into tears. She had a sister now. It was no longer just Martin. Ruby pulled her close and hugged her as two sisters would after a long separation. Yolanda whispered, "Yes, I will go."

It was close to eight in the morning, and the others started arriving. Upon arrival, Martin noticed Yolanda wiping her tears and instantly asked, "Grandma? What's wrong?" She replied, "Nothing, dear. These are tears of joy. I will be going with you today." "That's great!" Martin shouted as others gathered and crowded around

them to show their approval of the new addition to the group. It looked more like a family reunion but was really a family creation. From that day forward, everyone called Yolanda "Grandma," and the cracked shell of loneliness that surrounded her heart completely shattered and disappeared. She had much more than just a sister; she had a completely new family. Robyn finally announced, "Everyone, please gather around the breakfast table." Joey took Yolanda by the hand and said, "Come on, Grandma, you're going to love this."

In the eating area, the round table had been replaced with a long rectangular table. On the table in front of each chair was a setting of a cloth napkin, a metal plate, a two-prong fork, and a wooden spoon in a small bowl. Sitting down, Robyn asked everyone to sit on one side of the table next to her. Glenna laid down next to Stacey's chair and immediately closed her eyes. Martin sat next to his grandmother and held her hand. The twins sat next to each other and were giggling over a private joke. Ruby and Seymour sat next to each other. Paul and Esther also sat together. Then Robyn announced, "Everyone, close your eyes and clear your minds." After all had followed her instructions, the next trip to the Meta-World began.

Yolanda stiffened and squeezed Martin's hand when she opened her eyes. She was in a different larger room, and the table was filled with people. Martin squeezed back and whispered, "It's OK, grandma. I was a little dizzy on my first time too." There were servants with trays of food waiting to serve, standing in the room. The year was 1462, and a very well-dressed man was standing at one end of the table with his hands raised to quiet the room. He announced, "Welcome everyone to the royal banquet for special visitors to the Tuscan hill town of Vinci, in the lower valley of the Arno River in

the territory of the Medici-ruled Republic of Florence. I am Messer Piero Fruosino di Antonio da Vinci, the legal notary of this district. On my left is my wife Albiera, and next to her is my son Leonardo." He introduced an artist, a teacher and his wife, and a doctor and his wife that had joined them for the meal. Turning toward Robyn, who once again appeared to be a beautiful goddess or queen, he stated, "Please dear lady, introduce your group briefly before we partake of what the Lord has provided." Robyn quickly introduced Yolanda as her traveling companion, then Martin as her companion's grandson, the Blox family as royalty from Florence, and Paul as a physician with his wife, Esther. Stacey noticed Piero staring at Glenna with a frown of disapproval on his face. She placed her hand on Glenna's head and spoke to her with her eyes. The dog instantly found an out-of-the-way corner in the room to curl up and wait. Piero smiled at Stacey, said a very quick blessing, and sat down. The wine was poured while servers hustled to bring plates of food to everyone at the table. The meal and the table talk began.

During the meal, Andy asked if anyone knew how to get to level three of existence. He was hoping that someone from this place might have a clue for solving the game from his time period. Thinking that the boy just wanted a better view of all that existed, Piero answered, "There is a path up the mountain that will show you everything. Leonardo can take you there if you have the time." Looking at Stacey and smiling, Leonardo replied, "It is not that far away, but you have to go close to the cave of the howling monster." Smiling back, Stacey responded, "I won't be afraid. I will have Glenna to protect me." Hearing her name, Glenna instantly rose from her corner and quickly went to sit by Stacey. One look from Stacey and a pat on the head assured her

everything was safe, so she went back to wait in the corner. Leonardo's expression changed to one of interest in this very attractive young lady. Leonardo was only ten years old, but Martin still felt a twinge of jealousy and said, "I would like to go too." Andy and Joey both declared their desire to join the expedition, and the team was set. Leonardo quickly asked for his father's permission, and Piero replied, "Make sure they all have proper climbing shoes and coverings to shield them from the cold wind." The meal continued, but the newly formed team seemed to be eating faster in anticipation of the adventure ahead.

When the meal was over, the diners broke up into four groups. Piero, Seymour, Jimmy, and the men from the village went to the lounge to have an after-dinner brandy and discuss politics and profits. Robyn, Ruby, Yolanda, and the wives went into a sitting room to exchange stories about their families and the latest fashions. The newly formed team of explorers followed Leonardo to a local clothing store to be fitted with hiking shoes and jackets. Robyn had given Martin five silver coins to pay for the clothing, but it only required two. He received a few copper coins change, and the team was dressed and ready to go.

Leonardo led the group to a path behind the village that led to the base of a mountain. As they walked, the twins asked him about puzzles and solving mysteries. He was only ten years old but displayed an insight to nature. Glenna would trot ahead of the group and stop briefly to sniff at stones or bushes. She seemed to take a lingering interest in a flowering bush that had bright purple flowers. The group stopped to watch her when Leonardo said, "I am being taught how to paint by one of my father's friends. The problem he seems to have has been making colors that do not fade away. The plants always

have the same colors every year. I wonder what they have that gives them that lasting color?" Andy knew that Leonardo would become a famous artist and was curious to discover why. He asked, "Do you think you would like to be an artist?" Leonardo answered, "Only if I can please the powerful people like the Duke of Bavaria. Not that long ago, the duke's father had a woman named Agnes proclaimed to be a witch and then thrown into the Danube River to drown. My father tells me often that you have to be careful to stay on the good side of powerful people."

"Do you think being an artist will give you a path to the good side of these people?" Joey asked.

"Sure!" Leonardo replied. "They are the only ones with big paintings of their family hanging on their castle walls. I have to be a very good artist, however, or they may throw me in the Danube."

Martin knew that this fear was real and would probably be one of the reasons Leonardo would become a great artist. He turned and said, "You must face your fears if you want to find your purpose in life. Don't let anyone stop you from doing what you love."

Glenna interrupted the conversation with a bark and a trot up to a flat spot overlooking the town. "That's it! The spot my father was talking about!" Leonardo shouted like a child that had just finished a task he was told to accomplish. They all picked up the pace in silence to catch up with Glenna. Finally, everyone made it and turned to look back. The flat spot view was worth the climb. You could see the village below and all the farms surrounding the town. Leonardo was pointing to different buildings and saying, "There's our church, and over there is the farmer's market. I have never been down

that road, but it goes to a larger city with factories and many shops."

Joey turned to Andy and said, "Things do look simple when you can see the whole picture."

Andy answered, "Could that be our problem? Perhaps we need to find a way to see more levels in the game at the same time."

Stacey, looking all around, took Martin's hand and whispered, "What a beautiful world we have been given." Before Martin could respond, Glenna barked twice, very loudly. She had proceeded up a steeper narrow path and was sitting and waiting for everyone to follow. In a sad, frightened, childlike voice, Leonardo said, "That path leads to the cave I mentioned earlier. I do not want to go there." Stacey waved at Glenna to make her return and stated, "I'm cold. Let's head back to the town." Glenna quickly took the lead as the group turned, and their walk down the path started.

Leonardo went home and sat in a large comfortable chair to rest his legs from the climb. He closed his eyes for a second, and when he opened them, his stepmother was holding his hand and sighed, "About time you wake up. You have been sleeping in this chair for hours. Are you feeling sick?" Leonardo gradually sat up, rubbed his eyes, and realized the mountain climb was just a dream.

The family, however, did not leave the Meta-World but instead gathered at a small cafe near the farmer's market. Robyn seated everyone at a large oval table with Stacey, Ruby, Esther, and Yolanda next to each other on one side. Robyn requested, "Please hold hands and close your eyes." Lying next to Stacey, Glenna put her face between her front paws and closed her eyes.

After a brief pause, Robyn proceeded, “We are now going to Florence in the early fifteen hundreds. We will have lunch at a popular cafe. Leonardo will be in his fifties and is having trouble with a painting. We are going to help him. You may now open your eyes.”

Instantly, the sounds of a crowded restaurant replaced the silence of the empty cafe near the farmer’s market. There were servers with trays of food skillfully maneuvering through the open spaces. Everyone at the table had a plate with sliced sausage, fruit, and freshly baked bread. The smell of garlic prevailed and forced Seymour to comment, “While we are still holding hands, let us thank all that were involved in the making of this wonderful meal.” After a quick “Amen,” the handholding ended, and the eating and small-talk began.

Seated at a small table near the family was an old man with a long beard. Glenna sniffed the air and stared into his eyes. Knowing he was Leonardo, she whimpered softly to get Stacey’s attention. Stacey looked down at Glenna, then up at Leonardo. Their eyes met, and she smiled. It was the smile of a young lady deeply in love with life. She quickly whispered something to her mother. Ruby turned to stare at Leonardo and smiled. It was the smile a loving mother gives to her children when they go beyond what the world expects. Ruby whispered something to Esther. Turning slowly to face Leonardo, Esther smiled the smile of an educated woman with great confidence in her abilities. Leonardo then noticed Yolanda sitting next to Esther. She was looking into his eyes, and her smile radiated the highest level of love and peace. He felt faint, as if his face was falling toward the table. He snapped his head up and opened his eyes. He had fallen asleep for just a second. The long table in front of him was empty, and a server next to him said, “I’m sorry to disturb you, sir. Would you like another ale?”

Fumbling to grab his drawing pad, Leonardo shook his head and said, “No, gratzie.” Quickly, he drew the final touch of the piece he was working on for Francesco del Giocondo. It was a smile that contained the love of a young girl, a devoted mother, a confident woman, and an extremely loving grandmother.

The family suddenly found themselves sitting in the eating area of Portal Place. “Is that it? I thought we were going to help Leonardo with something.” Paul grumbled. “We did.” was Robyn’s reply. “Now, let us meet back here for dinner at six.” Another adventure had ended. Only Robyn knew that Mother had used them in a dream to help Leonardo create the smile on the Mona Lisa, one of the most valuable paintings in the world.

Leonardo

Chapter 26

THE GREAT HALL

It was early afternoon when the visit to Leonardo's dream ended. Paul and Esther decided to check the news for any medical breakthroughs. Ruby and Yolanda went to the kitchen for a cup of tea and a discussion about Stacey and Martin. Seymour and Jimmy decided to have a father/son talk in the den. Jimmy had noticed that the relationship between Leonardo and his father was strained somehow. He wanted to be closer to his father, so he asked, "Dad, how come you can telepathically speak to the GA robots and nobody else can? Will I be able to do the same when I get older?" Seymour knew his son was no longer a child and was searching for his purpose in life. His answer had to be honest and truthful. "I don't know why I was given the telepathic gift of communication with the GA robots. I do know that it was needed to help save the world from the coma virus. Perhaps we are given gifts like this when the time is right. I also believe you will be given special gifts when they are needed if you keep love for others in your heart." They talked for hours, and a strong bond between them was created. Glenna, Stacey, and Martin spent their afternoon in the garden. It could be likened to a first date with Glenna as the chaperone. The twins, however, rushed to their playroom/laboratory and spent the afternoon recording anything that Leonardo revealed that might help them solve the three-level puzzle called 'Three X Pro.'

Everyone arrived promptly at six for dinner. Robyn asked everybody to be seated, and she would explain tomorrow's trip. After the sitting and chatter subsided, Robyn proclaimed, "Tomorrow we will not be

in the Meta-World, but will be going to a place called ‘The Hall of Chambers’ or simply the Great Hall. We will use a special portal to get there, and the trip may be a little cold, so bring overcoats. The Great Hall is well heated, so you can dress casually.

As usual, Paul had many questions and interrupted Robyn to ask, “You mean we will not be leaving the physical world? And what do you mean by portal? Will we have to walk any distance? Should we wear hiking shoes?” Esther took Paul’s hand and gave it a squeeze to stop the plethora of questions. He quickly turned to look at his wife and saw a loving smile on her face with a twinkle in her eye. Esther whispered, “Let her finish, dear.” Paul looked down at her hand holding his, smiled, and fell silent. Her smile and her touch were more than enough to remove his anxiety.

Robyn continued, “No hiking shoes will be necessary. The portal is very similar to the black hole caves, but you will be transported in a vehicle. One of the chambers in the Great Hall is the birthplace of all the GA robots, and almost all of your questions will be answered there. Please, everyone, meet here for breakfast at seven in the morning tomorrow.” Robyn’s eyes were bright blue as she slowly turned and glided out of the room.

Ruby softly asked Seymour, “Did she tell you anything we didn’t hear?”

He replied, “No, but I think I heard her giggle a little when she left the room.”

Still holding Esther’s hand, Paul turned to smile at his wife and said, “I’m sorry. I just have so many unanswered questions popping up in my head like popcorn. It’s hard to keep my mouth shut.”

Esther replied, “It sounds like tomorrow is going to be an exciting day. Let’s go to bed early tonight.” Then, winking at Paul she added, “Even if we are not tired.”

Stacey, Martin, and Glenna left the dinner table and went to sit in the garden on a stone bench under the stars that were just starting to break through as darkness took over. This time, Glenna did not go between them but sat on the side and put her head in Stacey’s lap. Martin gently rubbed behind Glenna’s exposed ear and brushed the fur on her head. Stacey whispered, “She loves you too.” Martin said nothing as he wondered, ‘does that mean that she loves me back, or that Stacey loves me, and Glenna also loves me?’ Stacey put her head on Martin’s shoulder and softly whispered only one word, “Also.” Only Yolanda, his grandmother, could read his mind so quickly. And there, under the stars, near the garden, by a softly babbling brook, a great peace was branded on his soul. A peace he had never felt after the day his parents were killed, a peace that only comes from Agape.

Yolanda, Ruby, Seymour, and Jimmy had moved to the lounge in the palace for an after-dinner drink and to talk about the journey they would be taking in the morning.

Joey and Andy quietly returned to their little laboratory to enter a new block in the database to solve the Three X Pro puzzle. When they tagged it with the name “The Hall of Chambers,” it turned bright red and started showing connections to all the blocks that stood alone on the chart. When finished, it showed that everything was connected to “The Hall of Chambers” block either directly or through some newly generated blocks with no names.

Joey shouted, “Holy Crap!”

Andy added, “And beyond!”

A few hours later, Robyn entered the room with a glass of warm milk in each hand. They would have stayed up all night trying to fill in the empty blocks on the computer screen and were too excited for sleep. Robyn gave them each a glass and said, “This will help you sleep. Tomorrow you will learn more if you are not tired.” Because Robyn’s voice was identical to their mother’s voice, the request felt more like Mom giving them a command. With a little bit of grumbling, they drank their milk and headed for their bedrooms.

At seven the next morning, everyone dressed for an Earthly adventure, met at Portal Place, and were ready to go to the birthplace of the GA robots. All they knew was that it would be a little chilly on the way, and many of their questions would be answered when they arrived. Doctor Paul, who loved to ask questions, was quietly reviewing one of his favorite poems on his holographic computer link when Robyn entered the room. Conversation stopped as everyone turned to hear what Robyn had to say, everyone except Paul. Robyn waited, but Paul’s attention remained on his computer link. This time Robyn got to ask a question, so she asked, “Paul, what are you reading?” Paul’s focus remained on his link because, like many men, his brain shut off hearing when he concentrated on something that made him think. Esther placed her hand in front of the holographic image from his computer link and Paul snapped out of his trance and looked up.

Paul noticed everyone was looking at him, so he mumbled, “What?”

Robyn repeated, “What are you looking at?”

“Oh, it‘s just a little poem I like to read now and then. It makes me think.” Paul answered.

Stacey quickly exclaimed, “I love poems! Please read it to us.”

Paul started to blush as he responded, “Oh...No. It is just a silly little poem. I don’t think anyone would….”

The entire group interrupted Paul by saying, “Please. Come on,” but when Yolanda looked him in the eye and smiled as she softly whispered, “Paul, for me.” he knew it was over.

“OK,” Paul replied. “The poem is called Wisdom.” Looking back at his computer link, he started to sheepishly read.

“Wisdom”

What does it mean to be really wise?
Is it seeing the truth among all the lies?

What’s the difference between wise and smart?
Could it be wisdom is thinking with the heart?

Is there a difference between wise and clever?
Does clever pass on and wise stay forever?

If we break down the word what will we surmise?
Why does the word “is” live in the word wise?

What do we get if we take “is” from “wise”?
Why just the word “we,” is that a surprise?

Can these words be put back in a different way?
And if they are, then what will they say?

"We is" bad grammar, but what does it mean?
If we look with our heart then what can be seen?

What is the message these words want to give?
Could it be there is wisdom in letting things live?"

Author's note: There are meanings beyond the words.

Stacey was wiping tears from her eyes, and the room was very quiet for what seemed like a long time to Paul, so he added, "I was thinking about the note from the author when Robyn arrived."

Esther knew she had to lighten the mood, so she took Paul's hand and said, "Now I know why you like this poem, dear husband. Every line in it is a question."

They all laughed, even Paul, as servers entered the room with trays of food, and breakfast began. Paul knew that the meal was always a clue to the adventure ahead. They had toast made from the seeds of wheat, peach jelly made from the fruit of the peach tree, eggs made from the seed of a chicken, and orange juice made from the fruit of the orange tree. Nothing was served that would come from killing a living thing. He wanted to ask why but decided it would be best not to ask any more questions right now. He took solace in the fact that the poem and the meal both supported letting things live.

After breakfast, Robyn led the group into the garden to follow a seldom-used path to the far side of the cave. It went behind the algae-covered pond that supplied oxygen to its surroundings. The temperature dropped significantly when they reached the area where the sun was always blocked by the cave roof, so everyone put on their coats. The path had almost disappeared when they came upon a transparent cylindrical submarine parked

very close to shore. There was an open hatch at the back of the vessel that faced the shore and a small pier that led to the hatch. Robyn and Martin helped Yolanda enter first, then the rest followed like a string of ducklings marching in single file and being shepherded by Glenna, the last in the line.

The inside of the vessel was completely bare except for red rectangular markings on the floor with the words “stand here” printed inside. The areas were large enough for one person and spaced a fair distance from each other. After everyone was inside, the back hatch closed, and a voice that seemed to come from nowhere announced, “Please stand in a box marked on the floor.” When each person stood properly inside a box, the red frame on that box turned green, and a force field surrounded them to hold them in place. It felt more like a gentle hug than a restraint. Glenna quickly ran next to Stacey, sat, and pressed against her to fit in the same box. After all the boxes were green, the voice announced, “You will now be put into a comfortable sitting position. Please relax.” Everyone started floating and were gently turned like someone being picked up and placed into a large and comfortable lounge chair. This was a very strange sight for Glenna to see, as people were just floating about two feet in the air and in a sitting position. The dog put her head into Stacey’s lap and softly whimpered. Stacey calmed her with, “It is OK, girl. We are just going on a new adventure.” Robyn had taken a box at the front of the vessel and was the only one standing and floating about two feet off the ground. The robot had turned to face the family and stood there in midair, with eyes of bright blue smiling at the group.

Suddenly, there was a swooshing sound of water rubbing on the outside of the vessel, but no other indication of movement. Everyone felt like they were

still sitting perfectly still, except the transparent hull of the vessel showed water rushing past and darkness approaching as they headed toward the bottom of the lake. Paul was the first to realize what was happening. He turned toward Esther and said, “We are in a force field that cancels the effect of momentum. I heard they were working on this so doctors could operate in turbulent conditions but never realized it had been perfected.”

Robyn turned to face Paul and declared, “It is called an ‘MCB’ for momentum canceling bubble.”

The total trip took about an hour, and finally, the vessel slowed and entered a very large underground room, and stopped. The voice from the vessel announced, “Welcome to the Hall of Chambers.” The MCBs brought everyone back to a standing position except for Glenna. The dog was placed in her original position sitting next to Stacey. The rectangles painted on the floor turned red, indicating the momentum canceling bubbles were off, and the hatch at the rear of the vessel opened. The floor inside the vessel and the floor in the hall were at the same level, so no stairs were required to exit. A white-haired lady and gentleman, who both appeared to be in their mid-fifties, greeted each person by name as they walked through the hatch. Even Glenna got a pat on the head and a “Hello, Glenna, my name is Aaron.” from the white-haired gentleman and a “Hello, Glenna, my name is Zelma.” from the lady. Robyn was the last to exit and said, “Hello, Dad.” when she looked at the white-haired man and then said, “Hello, Mom,” to the lady. They both responded with enormous smiles and simultaneously said, “Welcome home, daughter.”

Chapter 27

THE TIME CHAMBER

Everyone was excited to meet Robyn's parents. Paul, of course, was bursting with questions about a human set of parents for a robot. Sensing Paul's anxiety, Aaron walked slowly over to Paul, took both of his hands, gazed deeply into his eyes, and softly said, "The 'GA' on Robyn's nameplate stands for 'Group Alpha.' Only four robots were made in this group, and each was given a metatronic brain. This type of brain requires a learning stage, much like a human brain. Each alpha robot needed a set of parents to guide them through this stage of learning. Zelma and I were Robyn's parents. Robyn's voice chromosome was picked to match her mission. Robyn's mission was predicted using logic, probability, and the time-sphere. All four alpha robots were also given a telepathy chromosome to allow them to communicate with each other during their missions. There are others working in this Great Hall that also communicate with the alpha robots to help them solve problems on the surface to make Earth a better place to live. Most of your questions will be answered in greater detail during the tour my wife and I are going to give you now."

Paul felt a flow of unconditional love through Aaron's hands and into his heart. He felt a great wave of peace, and for the first time, in a long time, had no questions at the forefront of his mind.

When Aaron let go of Paul's hands, he smiled and said, "That's better."

Yolanda, who always seemed to know when great love was in the area, looked at Paul, smiled, and said, “I bet that was better than my hot chocolate.”

Esther put her arm around Paul and, without saying a word, let him know she too felt his great state of peace.

Robyn got everyone’s attention by announcing, “Aaron and Zelma will now give you a tour of the ‘Great Hall.’ We like to call it the ‘A to Z Tour.’ Please give them your undivided attention.” There were a few giggles from the twins and smiles on many faces because of the double meaning of the name of the tour. Then they all turned to follow Robyn’s parents into the very large room.

The hall looked much like an octagon-shaped lobby of an office building. There were eight arched beams that met fifty feet above the center of the room and merged into a smooth circular area about ten feet in diameter. The circle and the beams radiated light evenly in all directions to eliminate shadows and dark areas. Four arched openings were equally spaced around the room and the other four walls in between the openings appeared to be holographic displays with pictures and information that changed as people or robots approached them. There was a symbol above each of the arched doorways.

Zelma stopped the tour in the center of the lobby and then pointed to a doorway that had the symbol of an atom above the door, and stated, “In this area, we study the physical world made up of matter and energy.”

Aaron pointed to a doorway on the opposite side of the room with the symbol for the mathematical number pi above the door and said, “Over there, we study

the metaphysical world, made up of concepts, mathematics, music, and dreams."

Zelma then pointed to a door with an hourglass above the entrance and explained, "In that area, we study time. In there, you will see the time-sphere, which is a round transparent hologram. The sphere's expanding surface represents the present moment in the existence of the physical and metaphysical worlds. Every point on the surface of the sphere has a path back to center, and represents a location in time past. The center is the beginning of time and the creation of both the physical and metaphysical worlds."

Andy interrupted the tour by pointing to a doorway opposite the time room with a large symbol that looked almost like an X over the doorway and blurted out, "Is that the answer to the puzzle Three X Pro?"

Joey added, "Is that where people go when they solve the puzzle? Why does the bottom of the X look like an A?"

Robyn, with bright blue beaming eyes, moved between her adopted human parents. The smiles on her mom and dad made the trio radiate joy like a beacon in the dark. Aaron tenderly proclaimed, "You were right, Robyn. The Great Hall has not seen that level of enthusiasm over discovery in a long time. It is the booster shot we really needed here."

Zelma stared at the X/A symbol above the door and answered the twins with, "The X stands for Xanadu and the A for Agape. And yes, in a way, it is the solution to your puzzle, but everyone has a different and still correct solution."

Martin was fascinated by the fact that everyone could have a different and still correct solution to the

same puzzle. He moved over next to the twins to get a better look at the door.

Everyone, except Glenna, was looking at the X/A door and did not notice an elderly, gray-haired, dark-skinned man enter the lobby through the door to the physical world. Glenna carefully watched him take a few steps into the room and then slowly sit on the floor with his legs crossed under him and his arms outstretched to beckon her. The man sat silent. His lips were not moving, but she could hear him say, “Hello, Glenna. I knew your grandfather, Glen. I helped give you the gift of communication with Stacey before you were born. Come here and let me give you a hug.”

Stacey felt Glenna leave her side and watched her walk toward the man on the floor. Glenna’s tail was at maximum wag speed, and it made her look like she was dancing as she approached the outstretched arms of this stranger.

Because Yolanda was sensitive to the occurrences of great love, she noticed the man sitting on the floor, hugging, and kissing Glenna. Yolanda felt she had met this man before somewhere, so she walked over to get a better look. The man stood up, took both of her hands in his, and said, “Hello, Yolanda. I see some of your dreams have come true.” Yolanda stared into his loving eyes. His voice was gentle. His face was familiar, but she could not remember her connection with this gentleman. Knowing she did not remember him, he let go of her hands and said, “I‘m sorry. My name is Eugene. We met once in a pet store many years ago. You told me you were trying to raise your grandson, who was filled with hate and prejudice. You were all alone, and his parents had just been killed. You thought a pet might help him. Your dream was that we could all love each other and act like

one big family someday. I told you to ask your grandson to memorize something that could show him the damage that hatred and prejudice can cause. Perhaps he could recite a saying or a poem about love every day. Do you remember me now?"

Yolanda responded, "Yes! We only met once, but you changed my life. I never did buy a pet, but I found the poem that changed everything. How did you know that was what we needed?"

Before Eugene could answer, Aaron announced in a loud voice, "Attention, everyone! I would like you to meet Eugene. He is a descendant of Dr. Eugene Adams of Tuskegee University. His specialty is in veterinarian research. Later, he will help you on your tour through part of the physical world section. But first, I want everyone to follow me through the door with the hourglass to see our time-sphere."

Eugene looked at Yolanda and asked, "May I go with you on this tour?"

Yolanda replied with a loving smile, "Yes. I would like that."

Seymour looked at Ruby, took her hand, and said, "After all these years, I still love going on these adventures with you."

Ruby never turned to face her husband as they walked toward the door but kept watching Eugene and Yolanda. She finally replied in a whisper, "I think Grandma has a boyfriend."

When Aaron approached the Time Chamber, the two large doors just vanished so the group could enter. Inside was a very large circular room with a three-dimensional holographic sphere of the known universe. The room was filled with a somber murmur of people

and robots scattered around communicating, calculating, and observing incoming data.

Aaron explained, “Most of the sphere will be dark and out of focus because we cannot see or extrapolate very far into the universe. The white dot that is bright in the center and fades at the surface is what we have been able to observe or calculate so far.” The dot was so tiny Aaron had to point it out by making a circle around it with a laser-type pointer.

The room noise reduced when Joey shouted, “Mind-blowing!”

Andy immediately followed with, “Ego shrinking!”

Glenna barked twice very loudly, and the room went dead silent. Stacey declared, “She said it smells good.” A roar of laughter filled the room, and most of the robots’ eyes were flashing purple, indicating a lack of understanding and looking for an explanation.

Zelma raised her hands to reduce the laughter and announced to everyone working in the room, “Your work has been declared astonishing by this young visitor named Joey Blox. His twin brother Andy Blox then put it into perspective when compared to the entire universe. Finally, our canine friend Glenna approved your work by saying it does not stink.” A little laughter mixed with applause followed Zelma’s explanation. All the robots’ eyes turned sky-blue, indicating they now understood and approved.

Eugene softly told Yolanda, “This is the first time I have seen how well Glenna and Stacey communicate. When Glenna was born, I knew that Stacey was going to get this puppy. I took a DNA sample from a glass Stacey used, and we tried to match Glenna’s communication

genes with those in Stacey's DNA. It appears to have worked better than anticipated."

Yolanda reached over and put her hand on Eugene's shoulder, turned him to face her, and asked, "Just how long have you been helping me and my friends?"

Eugene smiled and, with glowing loving eyes, answered, "Since the day I first met you in that pet store so many years ago."

Aaron ended their conversation by placing his hand on a robot near the entrance and announcing, "Attention, everyone! I would like you to meet our recorder of significant events, better known as Historian. Historian has the oldest memory in the Great Hall and can answer, in great detail, questions about important events from the past."

Trying to test Historian's memory and add a little humor Joey remarked, "Hello, Historian. When did I stop wetting my bed?"

With a very robotic voice, Historian replied, "Hello, Joey. That event did not reach my level of importance and was not recorded."

Ruby instantly replied, "Well, it was important to me. You stopped on New Year's Day at the age of five. You made a New Year's resolution to keep your bed dry, and you kept it." Laughter filled the room for the second time.

Paul could no longer restrain himself, and as soon as the laughter subsided, he said, "Greetings, Historian. I would like to know when the GA robot we call Robyn got a voice identical to the human we call Ruby."

Historian replied, “On the Gregorian calendar, it was day 153 in the year 2272 at the hour 10:18 AM Coordinated Universal Time.”

Paul quickly replied, “But, why?”

Historian answered, “Inappropriate question. Must be an event in time.”

Zelma moved over next to Paul and took his hand. With a lovely smile whispered, “We will answer all your questions soon. Please be patient.” Again Paul felt the warmth that only unconditional love could bring surge through his body.

Paul whispered back, “I’m sorry.” and squeezed her hand before letting go.

Martin and Jimmy had been quietly talking for the past few minutes. Martin used the quieting of the room to inquire, “Historian, my name is Martin. I would like to ask you how old the entire universe is?”

Historian replied, “Hello, Martin. In 2018, the Planck Collaboration updated its estimate for the age of the universe to 13.772±0.040 billion years.”

Martin continued, “Is there a recorded time for when the universe will end?”

Historian answered, “That event has not been recorded.”

Joey blurted out, “Thank God!” and for the third time, laughter filled the room.

Finally, Aaron announced, “OK, everyone, continue your studies.” Turning to face the visitors, he continued, “We will be going to the oldest chamber next. Please follow me.” When the group had entered the time chamber, it was filled with a somber murmur but as they

left the room, there seemed to be a joyous excitement in the air.

Zelma whispered to Robyn, “Thank you, daughter. This visit is exactly what the hall needed.” Although robots do not process praise in the same way as humans, Robyn’s eyes flashed blue, and the moment was recorded twice. It was recorded once in her robotic memory and once, deeply in her metaphysical memory.

Chapter 28

THE PHYSICAL WORLD

When Aaron approached the chamber with the symbol of an atom above, the two large doors just vanished so the group could enter.

Andy remarked, “Why have doors if they just disappear when you approach them?”

Zelma answered, “They are for protection and to keep the atmosphere in each chamber safe.”

“Protection from what?” Martin queried.

“If a person or device tried to enter and there was a potential for harm, the doors would not open,” Zelma replied.

Jimmy commented, “Boy! I’d like to see the computer that runs this place.”

Robyn announced, “I will leave you now, but I will join you at the end of the tour.”

They all said goodbye and turned to follow Aaron. The entrance to the chamber appeared to be another small and very old lobby. The walls in the room were rough and looked unfinished. The Historian had joined the group and quickly informed the visitors that this area was the first and only room built late in the twenty-second century by scientists from many countries to do research without political interference. It took over a century to add all the other sections and the Great Hall. There was an opening at the far end of the room that led to a very long hallway with many different sections. The entrance to each section had a symbol above the door to identify that space. Aaron took the group through the old lobby and down the hall. The Historian explained why

the walls in the hallway became smooth when different technologies were discovered to create each section. After passing many doors to the end of the hallway, the walls were very smooth and almost appeared to be metallic. A double helix, the symbol for deoxyribonucleic acid, the hereditary material in almost all organisms and better known, as DNA, was displayed above the entrance.

The doors disappeared, and the group entered as Aaron announced, “This is the birthplace of the Metatronic brain, and the four robots made in group alpha. They were marked with the letters GA and lived with humans for many years as the biological section of their brains developed. Robyn lived with Zelma and me before she was sent on her mission to be with Seymour on the surface. That is why we call her daughter.”

Paul interrupted, “So, the GA stands for Group Alpha?”

Zelma replied, “Yes, Paul.”

Andy looked at Joey and grumbled, “See! I told you it did not stand for guardian angel!”

Joey grumbled back, “That was still better than government assistant.”

There were quite a few smiles as the people working in the room heard the squabble.

Turning back to face Zelma, Paul quickly inquired, “But why are Robyn and Ruby’s voices identical?”

Zelma replied, “Because part of her mission was to get Ruby and Seymour together.”

Joey declared, “Well, I guess it worked.”

Andy added, “Or we wouldn’t be here at all!”

Once again, the room filled with laughter. Even Paul could not hold back a chuckle or two. The laughter subsided slowly, and Esther finally spoke, “The GA robots must have taken years to develop. Can the people in this Great Hall see the future?”

Zelma laughed and replied, “No. With help from the Meta-World, however, we can make predictions about the future that are fairly accurate and then prepare for them. The coma virus, for example, was predicted over twenty years ago. We noticed a code being put into satellites by military leaders working with scientists that induced sleep by using radiation. We also noticed the bad life forces in the Meta-World were busy luring people into deeds that were harmful to humans. The good life forces were telling us to help get people together that would fight these actions without killing or spreading hate. This led us to all of you.”

All at once, there was an explosion of chatter from the group.

Paul simply said, “Life forces?”

Martin turned to Jimmy and asked, “Did you know about these life forces?”

Jimmy replied, “No! Did you?”

Seymour softly whispered to Ruby, “I think the creature that we saw in the sky many years ago, might be one of the bad life forces.”

Ruby whispered back, “And the one Robyn calls mother could be one of the good life forces.”

Glenna killed the chatter by barking very loud three times. Everyone stopped talking and stared at Stacey and Glenna. Stacey explained, “She says she has to go outside. She can’t hold it much longer.”

Eugene instantly looked at Glenna, gave her the come to me sign, and apologized with, “I’m sorry. Follow me. Back up the hall a little ways is a farm chamber with some beautiful green grass I think you will love.”

After they left, Joey remarked, “Oh, she will love that grass for sure!”

Andy instantly added, “But I don‘t think the grass is going to love the little gift from Glenna very much.”

Again, laughter filled the room. The laughter faded, and Aaron took a moment to get everyone’s attention by announcing, “I think we should all take a little break right now. Please follow me to an eating area with tables, chairs, and other facilities for humans.”

Andy asked, “Do you mean grass for humans?”

Followed by Joey’s comment, “I hope not. I sure would not want to wipe myself the way Glenna does.” This brought about another round of chuckles as they followed Aaron to the cafeteria.

The entrance to the eating area was just an open doorway. The room was large and rectangular, with various sized tables and chairs scattered throughout. On the far side of the room, opposite the entrance, was another opening to allow robots to bring food to the tables. Aaron led the group to a collection of tables that had been arranged to accommodate the touring unit. He pointed to doors on one of the walls and told them they could use those rooms to freshen up. He then asked them to please meet back at the table in ten minutes to continue their discussions and have a brief lunch.

When Seymour sat down, the chair automatically adjusted to put him close to the table and at the correct height. A holographic menu appeared with all of his

favorite lunches and drinks. At the bottom of the menu, a meal labeled “Best Choice for Health” was suggested, and the meal was explained in detail. The menu seemed to know him and was prescribing the best meal to eat based on his physical health. Everyone at the table started commenting on the personal attention paid to each diner.

Joey and Andy were comparing menus when Joey declared, “It looks like your computer knows what we like to eat.”

Followed by Andy’s, “Yeah, but does it know how to cook?”

Zelma smiled and looked at Ruby as she proclaimed, “Perhaps not as good as your mother, but I think you will find the food tasty. Please make your selections by just telling your menu what you want and how you want it cooked.”

Everyone placed their orders, and the food was delivered very quickly to the table by robots designed to serve. Before anyone started eating, Aaron stood with his hands extended over the food to produce silence and said, “Creator of all, we give you thanks for the gifts in our lives and this humble banquet.” As he sat, he said, “Let‘s eat.”

The lunch produced little conversation but many compliments on the quality of the food. At the end of the lunch, a mint and a drink were served to freshen the pallet.

Aaron stood once more and said, “Now that we have satisfied our physical appetite, it is time to feed our mental hunger. I would ask that you all listen without interruption to what I am about to reveal. I will stop after every topic for questions and comments. Do you agree?”

Everyone nodded, and the table became totally silent.

Aaron continued, “OK. First of all, when I use the word ‘we,’ I am referring to the majority of the residents of this Great Hall. In this Great Hall, we agree that there is only one all-powerful Creator that brought everything into existence. In the past, people have called it ‘The Big Bang’ or ‘The Beginning.’ We shall call it ‘The Creation.’ Except for the Creator, nothing existed before The Creation. After The Creation, there existed Time, the Physical World, the Meta-Physical World, and Xanadu. Most of you understand Time as the past, the present, and the future. The past and present can be recorded, but the future can only be predicted. Some predictions come true, and some do not. Do you have any questions about Time?”

Aaron paused and surveyed the group. Everyone seemed to understand, so he continued, “The Physical World is made up of matter, energy, and the laws that control their existence. The insects, animals, and people are in the Physical World and are subject to one of the laws that control their existence, called evolution. They are slowly adapting with Time to the Physical World they live in. Can everyone understand this basic description of the Physical World?”

Everyone looked puzzled but nodded eventually because they wanted to hear more.

Aaron continued, “The next place you will visit is where we investigate the Meta-Physical World. The Meta-Physical World is where things like dreams, mathematics, concepts, and the laws that control them, exist. We believe that the Creator also put life forces in this world. In the past, they were called spirits, Angels, and Demons. They co-exist at the same Time as we do in

the Physical World. Can everyone understand this basic description of the Meta-Physical World?"

This time, many had questions and raised their hands. Knowing that Paul was burning for answers, Aaron pointed at him first.

Paul asked, "These are really not physical places but different types of existence, right?"

Aaron answered, "Correct."

Paul continued, "Does any one of the life forces in one type of existence have control over any other life force in another type of existence?"

Aaron replied, "We believe that the Creator has given many of these life forces the power of free will. They can let another life force control them, or they can choose their own path to follow."

Many hands were lowered at the answers given to Paul. Only Ruby and Yolanda still had their hands raised. Aaron pointed to Yolanda, and she asked, "Is there loneliness in both types of existence?"

Eugene reached over and took Yolanda's hand, looked at her, and smiled. Aaron looked into her eyes for a long time and then finally answered, "I don't know." When he turned to point at Ruby, she noticed tears running down his cheeks. Ruby knew that Aaron was empathetic and had felt Yolanda's years of loneliness. Her question seemed even more appropriate now as she asked, "Do the people that pass from the Physical World go to the Meta-Physical World and sometimes come back to us in dreams?"

Aaron picked up his napkin and wiped his eyes as he answered, "We believe they do but cannot prove it to be true." Seeing no one else had a hand up, he sat down

and said, “Zelma will now answer one of Paul’s earlier questions.”

Zelma did not rise from her chair but immediately started to talk, “Paul asked once about the telepathic powers of the GA robots and why only Seymour was able to communicate with them. We discovered that a chromosome in some twins allowed them to communicate thoughts at great distances instantaneously. You may have noticed this with Andy and Joey. We took some of Seymour’s DNA when he was very young and isolated what we believe to be that particular chromosome. We placed it into the biological part of each one of the GA robots’ brains. The experiment was successful because their brains developed telepathic communications within three years. We also believe that evolution will someday allow people to communicate telepathically.” She paused when she noticed Jimmy looking at her with his hand slightly raised. She looked straight at Jimmy, nodded, and said, “Do you have a question?”

Jimmy replied, “Can the life forces in the Meta-World communicate with people in the Physical World using telepathy?”

Zelma answered, “We believe that the spirits in the Meta-World communicate with us through dreams and visions we call hallucinations. Sometimes, when a thought pops into your head, it may be a form of telepathy, but we do not know. Free will gives all of us the choice to reject these thoughts or act on them.”

Martin instantly asked, “Is the way Stacey communicates with Glenna a form of telepathy?”

Zelma turned to face Eugene and replied, “I think Eugene should answer that question.”

Eugene released Yolanda's hand and sat up straight. He clasped both hands together on the table in front of him and stared down at them in silence. His silver-grey hair seemed to glow as he paused to reflect. He finally looked up and said, "When I was young, I worked with my father, who was the dean of a veterinarian college. My mother loved every living creature and filled my youth with caring for anything that had life. I began to study animal chromosomes and how similar they are to human DNA. Eventually, I found my way to the Great Hall, and we discovered that animals like Glen, Glenna's grandsire, had a strong desire to serve humans. Glen was also able to detect epileptic seizures in humans up to 45 minutes before they would occur like other service dogs we studied. We also discovered that Stacey was a human that had a gene similar to those used for communication in many animals and insects. We have not found this gene in any other human's DNA stored in our massive memory banks. Robyn helped us put Glenna and Stacey together to see what would happen. Now we would like to ask Stacey just how she does this communication, because to be honest with you, we do not know."

Glenna sat up, leaned on Stacey's leg, and whined softly. Stacey looked down at her and whispered, "It will be OK." Then, turning to look at, Eugene she added, "She is afraid you are going to separate us or hurt me."

Eugene locked his eyes on Glenna's eyes and, with a loving smile and gentle voice, said, "You know I would never do anything to hurt you or Stacey." Then, lifting his glance to Stacey's eyes added, "How did you know what Glenna was thinking?"

Stacey explained, "I felt her fear and just knew why she was afraid."

Eugene added to his investigation with, “Can you do this with other living things?”

Stacey continued by proclaiming, “I can feel the hunger in a mosquito when it lands on my arm, and by thinking of slapping it, make it leave without biting me.”

Martin exclaimed, “Wow! You are awesome!”

Jimmy followed with, “I think Martin is in love with you, sister.”

Stacey bashfully said, “I know.”

Joey added, “I think Glenna told her.”

Andy quickly followed with, “Or maybe it was the mosquito.”

After the laughter subsided, Ruby added, “No, I think she knew when she fell in love with him in a dream.” Ruby took Seymour’s hand and turned to face Yolanda as she continued, “True love is not that hard to see, is it, Grandma?”

Yolanda took Eugene’s hand and softly confirmed with, “No.”

Aaron stood up and ended the conversation by announcing, “I think it is time we make our way over to the Meta-World. There is one stop we have to make on the way because someone is anxious to meet Seymour.” Everyone rose and followed Aaron out the door and down the hall. The Historian would explain the purpose of each section as they passed different doors. Aaron stopped at a section with a symbol of a satellite above the door.

The Historian announced, “This section monitors the satellites and provides worldwide communication.”

The door disappeared, and the group entered a room with many holographic screens showing Earth from space. A few screens showed zoomed-in pictures of various spots on Earth. The displays on one wall of the room were filled with streaming data and were being monitored by robots.

A silver-haired lady with a loving smile walked up to Seymour and took his hand in hers as she stated, “Hello. The people here call me Oma, but you know me as TB. Ever since we discovered we could control the Tri-Blade from the satellites, we needed someone to work with it to prevent man-made disasters. Our research team suggested you when you were only a boy because of the special genes they found in your DNA. I have been watching you ever since you pulled the Tri-Blade out of the river, and now, finally, we meet.”

Seymour was dumbfounded. He tried to speak, but all that came out at first was, “I ... What ... Uh.” Finally, he asked, “Are you the one that said goodnight to me after TB dropped the boys off from school?”

Oma answered, “Oh no! I cannot communicate through TB. You were possibly hearing from the lady we call Mother. She helps us now and then.”

Ruby grabbed his arm with both hands, pulled herself close, and whispered into his ear, “So maybe you are not the biggest fool on the face of the Earth after all.”

Chapter 29

THE META-WORLD

After a short visit with Oma, the group finally made their way back to the lobby of The Great Hall. Crossing the lobby brought them to a doorway with the symbol π above the entrance. Pointing at the symbol, the Historian explained, "The number π ("pi") is a mathematical constant equal to the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. It is also referred to as Archimedes constant. Pi cannot be expressed as a common fraction because its decimal representation never ends and never settles into a permanently repeating pattern."

Aaron added, "This symbol was used because, in this world of mathematics, concepts, dreams, and thoughts, many things cannot be totally understood or determined. Pi shows a true relationship between all circles, yet it cannot be totally calculated to its last decimal place."

The door vanished, and a girl a little older than Stacey greeted the assembly. The room behind her was totally dark, but a light from above lit up the area around her. She had very fair skin and blonde hair that fell down past her shoulders. Her round blues eyes twinkled as she greeted them with, "Hello. My name is Grace. Aaron, Zelma, Eugene, and the Historian will leave you now, and I will be your guide through this magical chamber."

In a robotic style, the Historian added, "My job is done. I will not see you again. Have a safe journey." Everyone said goodbye as the robot turned and made his exit into the Great Hall.

Aaron said, "Grace will take over now, but we will see you again before you leave." Zelma took Aaron's

hand, and with Eugene, they turned to leave. The vanishing door reappeared and isolated the family before anyone could say anything. The room was totally dark except for a light from above that lit up the family and their new escort.

Joey commented, “It’s kind of dark.”

Andy added, “And spooky.”

No one laughed, but Grace smiled and softly replied, “Sometimes it is in your darkest hour that you discover the most important things in life.”

Yolanda responded, “Amen.” Martin moved over and took his grandmother’s hand.

They all followed Grace as she walked into the darkness that moved ahead of her as she advanced. Glenna stayed close to Stacey and looked excited as the swishing of her tail wagging was the only sound that broke the silence. After what appeared to be a long time but was only three minutes, Grace stopped. Everyone stopped and remained silent. The swishing sound stopped when Glenna sat down next to Stacey. In the stillness, a large holographic screen slowly appeared in the distance directly in front of them.

Grace stated, “This is the window of mathematics. I would like you each to tell the others what you see. Who would like to be the first?”

Paul raised his hand, and Grace nodded, so he started with, “There is so much up there. I see Pythagoras’ Theorem, Logarithms, The Law of Gravity, The Theory of Relativity, Chaos Theory, Euler’s Identity, The Fourier Transform, Maxwell’s Equations, and more.”

He lowered his hand, and Esther added, “There are medical and chemical formulas also.”

Grace waited, but all were silent. She finally asked, “Any other volunteers?”

Martin slowly raised his hand a little and said, “Well, I don‘t see most of the things mentioned, but I see some algebra and trigonometry stuff.”

Jimmy added, “And maybe a little probability theory.”

Then Joey finally declared, “I see the Three X Pro puzzle we are trying to solve.”

Andy instantly added, “But I don‘t see any solutions.”

After a silent pause, Grace looked at Seymour and asked, “What about you, Mr. Blox, what do you see?”

Seymour responded with, “Please just call me Seymour. I see some of the things mentioned, but I also see many binary equations. I see software mathematics that is written in base two and hexadecimal numbers.”

Stacey slowly raised her hand slightly and waited for Grace to give her a nod before saying, “I see a little of the things mentioned, but also musical notes of songs and chords.”

Glenna whined softly and then barked twice. Stacey translated, “She says she is sad because she cannot see anything, but she did hear the chords when I looked at them.”

Grace’s excitement level jumped as she expounded, “Wow! I have never had a dog take this tour before. And I have never met anyone that could tell me what an animal was thinking. I’m flabbergasted!”

There were many smiles and a few giggles as the group witnessed the very well-trained girl lose her composure. It did not take long, however, for Grace to calm down and say, “I’m sorry. Uh, anyone else want to add to what has been seen on this display?”

Ruby said, “I see the music and some of the math mentioned. I also see fractions and measurements used in recipes for cooking.”

A long period of silence ensued. Finally, Grace looked at Yolanda and smiled. Yolanda said softly, “You want me to tell you what I see?” Grace nodded.

Yolanda said, “I see very little of what was mentioned. Oh, I see some recipes and music, but mostly I see my budgets over the past many years. I see how I calculated my little income against my expenses to raise my grandson and get him a good education.” She turned and locked her eyes on Martin’s and said, “But in the end, when you add it all up, I see Martin. That’s enough math for me.”

Martin walked over with tears running down his cheeks, threw his arms around Yolanda, and whispered, “I love you, Grandma.”

Many eyes were being wiped as Grace exclaimed, “It’s time to move on.” The display slowly faded away, and they all walked, once again, into the darkness.

Suddenly, a table appeared with ten notepads and pencils. Behind the table was a placard displaying the word “DATE” in large letters. Grace gave everyone a pad and pencil and said, “Would each of you write a short sentence, phrase, or question that uses the word shown on the poster? Do not discuss or let anyone see what you write. Then fold the paper in half and give it back to me.”

Grace waited and was finally given all the papers as instructed. On the sheets, the following was written:

Yolanda - “I think a DATE tastes wonderful.”

Ruby - “On what DATE were you born?”

Jimmy - “I would like to bring Grace as my DATE to a dance.”

Joey - “I would like to ask Grace out on a DATE when I get older.”

Andy - “What is Today’s DATE?”

Seymour - “What is the best software to DATE?”

Esther - “Don’t forget to DATE your message.”

Martin - “I want to DATE Stacey.”

Paul - “I found a scientific way to DATE objects.”

Stacey - “I wasn’t allowed to DATE until I was sixteen.”

Grace opened a small metal box on the table and placed all the notes inside. She closed the box and took a couple of steps backward away from the table. A large holographic display appeared above the table, showing:

“I think a DATE tastes wonderful.”...Noun, a fruit.

“On what DATE were you born?” Noun, point in Time.

“What is Today’s DATE?” Noun Most recent Time.

“.. ask Grace out on a DATE.”.. Noun, a meeting.

“.. Grace to be my DATE ..”.. Noun, a person.

“.. best software to DATE?” ..A selection in Time.

“..DATE your message.” ..Verb, marking time.

“I want to DATE Stacey.” ..Verb, courting.

“.. scientific way to DATE objects.” ..Verb, to get age.

“.. allowed to DATE until sixteen.” .. A verb, to court.

Grace commented, “Please observe that this one word has a different meaning for everyone. Some of the differences are slight, and some are not. This experiment is done to show why language and words can sometimes be a poor form of communicating our thoughts.” Turning to face Stacey, Grace continued, “I am very curious. What did your dog have to say about this?”

Stacey made eye contact with Glenna, then looked back at Grace and replied, “Nothing.”

Grace smiled and said, “OK. Let’s move on and see what comes up next.” She turned and walked into the darkness that slowly vanished at her approach. Everyone followed in silence except the twins as they whispered so nobody could hear their discussion about how Grace seemed to destroy the darkness. The walk ended when a room slowly appeared that everyone recognized as Portal Place. It had the table where everyone sat when they went on their first trip to Athens in the year 400 BC. There was a glass of water in front of each chair. Grace sat at the head of the table and asked everyone to take a seat. Glenna followed Stacey and sat next to her on the floor. After everyone was seated, a holographic display appeared in front of Grace, and she proclaimed, “I will now read you a summary of your tour so far and an overview of what is next.”

Grace adjusted her chair to be closer to the table, placed her arms on the tabletop, and stared at the display as she read, “In the Time Chamber, you were shown how little we know about time in our universe. Much is being recorded, however, from what we can see or have seen. In the Physical World of our existence, many areas have been investigated, and using mathematics, communication, logic, and dreams from the Meta-World,

we have been able to help guide ourselves according to each individual's free will and moral compass. It is time to explain what we have discovered about dreams."

Grace paused for a moment to take a sip of water from her glass and then continued reading, "Not long ago, we discovered that certain dreams and some forms of hypnosis appeared to be an altered state of mind, marked by a level of awareness different from the ordinary state of consciousness. After years of research, we were able to put groups into shared dreams with each other. Using hypnotic suggestions from a robot with metaphysical abilities, we could guide the course of these group sessions. This did not change anything that happened in the past because these were only dreams guided by our knowledge of history. We all know that we cannot change anything that has happened in the past because that would create a paradox. What we do not know is if dreams can be a form of communication with life forces in the Meta-World and sometimes even predict the future. There is evidence that this may be true."

Grace stopped reading, pushed her chair back slightly, and glanced around the table. There was only a moment of silence then everyone seemed to start talking at the same time. There was so much chatter that hardly anything could be understood. Grace raised her hands to initiate silence, and when the prattle stopped, she declared, "Let me introduce you to someone who will try and answer all your questions."

Grace stood up and turned to face the darkness as a tall, slender man with long blonde hair and a matching beard slowly entered the room. He was dressed in just a white robe and sandals. Walking over to Grace, he put his right hand around her and rested it on her shoulder as she introduced him to the group. "This is my father,

Ezekiel. Many people in The Great Hall call him 'Prophet' because his dreams often predict the future. I will be leaving you now and will not see you again. Thank you for being such a great group." She turned and walked into the darkness before anyone could say goodbye.

Ezekiel, still standing, turned and faced the family, saying, "You may call me Zeke. We do not have time for many questions, so please try and keep them brief."

Paul raised his hand instantly, but Seymour started speaking without being recognized, "I am sure Paul has many very important questions, but, perhaps, I have one that will help us move on faster."

Ezekiel looked at Seymour with a smile and replied, "Proceed."

Seymour continued, "In the beginning, I thought we were all going on a vacation, but so far, this seems like an educational conference. Are we all here for some important reason?"

Ezekiel sat in Grace's chair and chuckled as he pulled himself closer to the table. Looking into Seymour's eyes with a smile that covered his face, he proclaimed, "You are very wise, Mr. Blox, and that wisdom has served you well."

Turning to face the entire group, he continued, "Yes. You are all here because I had a dream that appears to predict an approaching dilemma. Before I discuss my dream, I would like to summarize a few theories in the Great Hall. Like Socrates, we believe there is only one Creator of all that exists. In the Great Hall, we have divided existence into four groups. These groups are Time, the Physical World, the Metaphysical World, and Xanadu. It is also our theory that at some point in Time,

the Creator added life forces or beings to live in the Physical World and the Metaphysical World or Meta-World. The Creator also gave these beings free will and a test to pass, so they could live happily in a beautiful idyllic place called Xanadu. For now, let us call the beings that passed this test in the Meta-World the good spirits or Angels, and those that failed this test the bad spirits or Demons. Dreams can sometimes be a communication link between beings in different worlds. The approaching dilemma in my dream shows that the Demons are persuading people to turn off the path to Xanadu, seek fleeting pleasures, and eliminate human life. This family helped prevent the coma virus and great lockdown in the past. We have a plan to help people turn back to the path that treasures life and will take them to Xanadu, but we need your help again. If you could hold your questions until later, we could move on to the next chamber and discuss our plan."

Paul did not raise his hand again but nodded in agreement. Jimmy raised his hand and waited.

Ezekiel glanced at Jimmy and nodded. Jimmy asked, "Excuse me, sir, but will we ever see Grace again?"

Ezekiel replied, "Perhaps, I really do not know."

Andy sorrowfully added, "Yeah, but only in our dreams."

Everyone, except Jimmy, laughed. Ezekiel waited for the silence to return and added, "The people in the Great Hall have a poem that motivates them to help protect human life. We know words convey differently to each of you, but I want you to read it before we proceed." A display appeared in the darkness with the poem.

"Perfect People"

Pompous people pronounce with purified pain,

The righteous road is rocky and riddled with rain.
The wide way will be wicked and woefully wrong.
Beware and behave and begin by begging to belong.
And the child softly stirs from within.

Clergy cry come correct controversial crime.
Metaphors many mumble and magnificent mime.
Prophets produce ponderous paths for the pure.
Saviors surmise strategies simple and secure.
And a new life very quietly does begin.

Priests propose problems perplexing and profound.
Ministers manipulate the multitudes middle ground.
A feverish frenzy of fervor finds fellows forlorn.
Hideous hauntings hallow hearts of all heaven-born.
And the child in the womb remains free of our sin.

While wicked women willfully weave a worrisome way.
Malignant men manufacture machinery made for mayday.
Riches are righteous; repenting reveals no reward.
Beauty becomes bogus, bought by beings beyond bored.
And the child's peace prevails genuine.

Corruptions cause columns of calloused creatures.
Evil evolves even easier than evil endures.
Chilling choices chop chasms twixt chosen and child.
Demented doctors destroy daily each daughter defiled.
And the child is mankind's only next of kin.

What way will we wander, with wisdom's warning wrought?
Never needing to nurture nearby neighbors for naught,
Or yearning for Yesterdays in years yielding to youth,
Turn toward Tomorrows to teach the tremendous truth.
For the child is our future, as children have always been.

Note: All unborn for sure, are Perfectly Pure.

"Ezekiel waited until all eyes were off the display, then stated, “For the first time in recorded history, the Earth’s population is decreasing. We now believe it is"

due to the influence of the Demons from the Meta-World on people. Please follow me to your last stop on the tour.”

Everyone rose and followed Ezekiel into the darkness.

Chapter 30

THE PATH

After a short walk, the darkness faded, and the group found themselves back in the lobby of the Great Hall. They were standing in front of the doorway with the symbol X above the entrance. The bottom of the X had a line that made the bottom half look like a capital A. Pointing at the symbol, Ezekiel said, “This figure represents Xanadu and Agape. Follow me.”

He dropped his hand and walked straight through the very solid-looking door. Everyone followed, but Glenna hesitated when she reached the door. Stacey looked down into the dog’s eyes, and her smile was enough to convince Glenna to follow. Stacey pondered how the power in a simple smile could lead this animal to deny her visual senses and walk into a solid door.

There was no chamber on the other side of the door. It was like walking into another dimension. The ceiling had been replaced with a night sky full of stars on the right and a morning sunrise on the far left. On the right was an ocean that extended outward into the darkened horizon. There were waves gently caressing the beach and stones scattered along the shoreline. As you looked to the left, the beach became a desert with mountains far in the distance, and sand dunes nearby. A little further to the left and in the distance, an oasis with palm trees and a small pond could be seen. From there, the desert appeared to fade into rolling hills with trees and then a thick jungle of foliage on the far left.

Everyone, except Glenna, eventually turned around to find the door to the chamber was replaced by

a view of valleys and mountains with rivers and waterfalls.

Glenna was not fooled by the holodeck that created these visual illusions but sensed friends nearby. She could smell that the floor that looked like grass was really polished marble. She could smell the paint on the ceiling and walls and knew they were not oceans and night skies. The echoes she heard said she was in a large room and not standing on a high mountain with the view her eyes suggested. The nearby sand dune had the odor of a wooden table with varnish and people. Trusting her non-visual senses, she ran toward the sand dune and disappeared from Stacey's view. After passing through the holographic wall, Glenna saw a very large doughnut-shaped table with chairs, placemats, and water glasses. She instantly recognized Robin, Aaron, Zelma, and Eugene, her new friend sitting at the table with a few strangers. She quickly ran to sit on Eugene's right and put her head in his lap. Gently rubbing her neck, Eugene whispered, "You know what's real, don't you, girl?"

Within seconds, Stacey walked through the holodeck wall and entered the reality room. Then the entire family entered, and finally, Ezekiel followed. A man sitting at the table shouted, "Only took forty-eight seconds for this group to find the reality room! That has to be a record that will never be broken!"

Aaron added, "Until today, the record was nine hours, so I think you are right."

Exciting chatter followed by everyone at the table except one elderly white-haired lady with a face that displayed both age and wisdom. She stayed seated and waited for the excitement to diminish and then held up one hand to calm the gathering. "My name is Sibyl. Please, everyone, take a seat at the table."

Stacey sat with Glenna on her left and Martin on her right. Yolanda sat on the other side of Eugene and placed her right hand into his left. After the family had found chairs and was seated, only one chair was open for Ezekiel. He placed himself in front of the chair but did not sit. He clasped his hands in front with fingers interlocked, and announced, “In the past few decades, the bad life forces have managed to use visual means to coax people away from the path to Xanadu. They do this with simulations like the one you just came through. They call it news, but it is really fake propaganda. They have created fear through this media to make people take drugs and hide in their homes. They send them holographic movies that make people think killing is the only answer. They tell people that babies are problems and to seek only money and momentary pleasure. They have even removed the smile that is the seed of friendship by making face masks mandatory. Your family displayed the ability to ignore what you see and hear in order to find the path to reality in only forty-eight seconds. I believe you are the family to help us, and the good life forces can start putting the people in the world back on the right path.”

Other non-family members at the table nodded in approval and simply said, “I agree,” or “Yes.”

Sibyl softly spoke again, “I know you have many questions, but please let me explain what we believe we must do to honor our Creator. We must use Agape to turn as many souls as we can back toward the path to Xanadu.” Then, turning to face the twins, she added, “Xanadu is the final X in your quest to solve the ‘Three X Pro’ challenge.”

Andy shouted, “I knew it!”

Joey added, “But how do you find Xanadu?”

Sibyl answered, “By searching and staying on the right path. The key is Agape, unconditional love for all. Many have lost their way because bad spirits have them believing Xanadu does not exist. These evil ones convince people that wealth, power, and momentary pleasures are the goals to seek. People are being told that babies are too expensive and wars must be fought to force others to follow certain rules. They use fear to control and remove the free will that can put people back on the right path.”

Ruby sheepishly looked at Sibyl and partially raised her hand. Sibyl stopped speaking, smiled, and, looking at Ruby, nodded. Ruby asked, “Why do these bad spirits want to kill us and stop us from having babies?”

Sibyl continued, “We believe every living creature is given a path to follow and a test to pass in order to get into Xanadu or heaven. Perhaps the spirits in the Meta-World were given the task of helping humans find their path, and some refused because they believed we should serve them instead. The spirits that passed the test became Angels, and those that failed the test became Demons. Angels can move in and out of heaven to be with the Creator and serve us. The Demons were blocked from heaven because they refused to serve us. Therefore, the Demons hate us and do not want any of us to get to heaven by following the path to Xanadu.”

Sibyl paused to take a sip of water. The room was silent, so she continued; “We would like to send this family back to the surface with some special helpers to stop the attack from the Demons and the people they have possessed. Would you be willing to dedicate your lives to this mission?”

Everybody nodded or said yes. Even Glenna barked once and wagged her tail to show she was committed to the mission.

Sibyl sat back in her chair and said, “Good.” After a short pause to take a sip of water, she continued, “Now, I would like you to meet one of the ‘Group Beta’ assistants that will be going back to the surface with you.”

A man started to rise out of the open hole in the center of the doughnut-shaped table. As he rose, he slowly rotated so everyone could see his face and upper torso with smooth ochre-colored skin. His hair was black but sprinkled with grey near the temples. His smile was extremely captivating, and his eyes twinkled when they made contact with each and every person at the table. His bottom half was clearly robotic but made in human form with two shiny gold metallic legs.

Sibyl proceeded, “This is one of our GB robots. We will call them Betazoids because they are from the Beta group of androids. They have medical technologies and are capable of performing surgical procedures. They can communicate in all known languages and also have telepathic links with each other and the GA robots. This one has been named Jason, meaning healer. You may ask him questions now if you want.”

Paul quickly asked, “Are you a cyborg ?”

Jason turned to face Paul, his eyes shining, a beautiful smile on his face, and with an affectionate voice, he replied, “If you are asking if I am I a human with added mechanical parts, the answer is no.”

Sibyl explained, “The Betazoids are made with materials that cannot spread disease. Only a small portion of their well-protected metatronic brain is

organic. Therefore, they will never need to wear a mask, and their smiles will always be seen. Because a smile is the seed to Agape, this is very important. Some leaders that have been misled by the evil ones have tried to make it a law that everyone must wear masks to stop disease from spreading. Betazoids may be an answer to this problem."

Esther's curiosity was piqued, so she asked, "In order to stop worldwide mask-wearing, how many of these Betazoids are you going to make?"

Everyone was surprised when Jason answered, "I will be going back to the surface with you and Paul to help set up a very large factory on the island and make as many like me as possible."

Sibyl quickly declared, "Time is running short, so I believe now Ezekiel should explain what he has seen in his visions."

Ezekiel stood, "Many of you know my visions often predict the future. Many years ago, I saw the evil ones using an organization called Regulators Ending Environmental Destruction, known as REED, to control people and promote evil. We made the GA androids and sent them to get a family together to fight back. We also sent a dog with special powers and his cat companion to help with the task. When the evil ones lost control of REED, they decided to use a more direct approach to control the world and created a disease that put everyone into a coma. A vision showed me their plan, and we sent another dog and a white crow to help stop the worldwide genocide. Another vision has shown that the Creature and his misled followers plan to conquer the Earth by making everyone believe that babies are trouble and only power and wealth are important. They want nobody to find the correct path in life. They want us all to lose our

way and never find Xanadu. In this Great Hall, we believe our most powerful correction of false news and fake propaganda is Agape. We also believe that this family gathered here right now can bring many back to the truth and their path to Xanadu."

Aaron and Zelma interrupted Ezekiel by entering the room through a door that suddenly appeared and announced, "We are very sorry for the intrusion, but it is time for our guests to have a quick meal and return to the surface."

Jason descended, and the hole in the center of the table was replaced with trays of food. Each tray magically slid in front of a person seated at the table. The meals were all different, but somehow everyone received their favorite. Stacey's tray even had a bowl of Glenna's favorite dog food. Aaron blessed the food by thanking the Creator and those that prepared the meal as the trays slid in front of each guest. Stacey placed Glenna's bowl on the floor next to her, and the table talk began. The conversation consisted mostly of questions as the meals were being consumed. Aaron and Zelma acted as servers and made sure everyone at the table had what they needed to enjoy the meal. Twenty minutes passed, and the room went silent for a moment.

Andy broke the silence with, "Now, that's what I call fast food!"

Joey put his fist in front of his mouth to subdue a polite burp and added, "And worthy of a good belch!"

After laughter diminished, Zelma remarked, "Please, finish your meals and then join us in the lobby." Both Aaron and Zelma left the room as the small-talk continued.

It did not take long for the family to gather around the transparent submarine in the lobby of The Great Hall. The back hatch was open, and a small crowd had gathered to say goodbye to the visitors as they entered. Many in the farewell group were there to say goodbye to Eugene because he had been their friend during his time in the Great Hall. Others were there to wish Jason well on his new adventure. Aaron and Zelma told the twins that their visit brought a new spirit to the Great Hall, and they may be summoned back in the near future to work on the project they will undertake.

Andy asked, “We have a project?”

Zelma replied, “Everyone does, my dear.”

Joey remarked, “We are going to have to work?”

For one minute, the hall was again filled with laughter. It was a display of the new spirit the twins had brought to the community.

After the laughter diminished, Aaron looked at Joey and said, “It is never work when you do what you love and have fun while you are accomplishing what must be done.”

Joey smiled at Aaron and replied, “Yes. We know.”

Andy added, “We just wanted to give the hall one last chuckle before we leave.”

Aaron turned to face his wife and asked, “Am I getting a bit preachy in my old age?”

Zelma whispered in his ear, “No, dear. You were always a bit preachy. That’s why I love you.”

The inside of the vessel had changed, and now it had red rectangular markings on the floor with the names of people printed inside. The areas were larger and

spaced a fair distance from each other to ensure a private conversation, if required. Robin helped Yolanda and Eugene through the back hatch. She brought them to the first row and helped them stand in the red box on the left side that displayed their names. The box turned green, and a force field surrounded the pair. They were put into comfortable sitting positions and started floating about two feet above the floor. It felt like someone had placed them into a comfortable couch made for two. Seymour and Ruby found their spot in the first row on the right. Paul and Esther were placed behind Yolanda and Eugene in the second row on the left. Stacey and Martin sat in the second row on the right behind Seymour and Ruby. Placement continued with the twins in the third row on the left and Jason and Jimmy in the third row on the right. Glenna, however, found her spot in the center behind the third row. She knew it was her spot because it had a picture of her and smelled like her dog bed.

After everyone was in their "MCB," or their momentum canceling bubble, the back hatch closed.

Robyn was at the front of the vessel facing all the passengers and announced, "Our journey back to the surface will now commence. Our mission is to get people back on their path to Xanadu. You may discuss what you will do with your seat partner to help achieve our goals on the surface." Suddenly, there was a swooshing sound of water rubbing on the outside of the vessel, but no other indication of movement for the passengers inside the MCB spaces.

Eugene moved closer to Yolanda, put his arm around her, and whispered, "We will do all we can for the lonely and forgotten people."

Yolanda put her head on his shoulder and, for the first time in many years, felt the warmth of a cuddle with

a soul mate. She giggled and whispered back, “Perhaps we can open a string of free hot chocolate shops.”

Seymour and Ruby snuggled the moment they were placed on the invisible couch. While Ruby pondered how fast the children were growing, Seymour’s thoughts drifted to all the adventures he shared with his wife. Wondering what was next, he finally softly asked, “Why do you think Robyn brought us to the Great Hall?”

Ruby knew her husband expected a serious answer to his question, but then, she rarely gave him what he expected. Cleverly she replied, “That is a two-part question. The first part is ‘Why?’ A question that has plagued us since time began. Why are we here? Why are there so many stars in the sky? Why? Why? A question that probably has no answer. The second part of your question is, ‘Do you think Robyn brought us to the Great Hall?’ The answer to that is yes.”

After a short giggle, Seymour said, “Smarty pants! Now I know where the twins get their sense of humor.”

Ruby squeezed his hand and quietly whispered, “I love you.”

Seymour gave her back her often-used reply to those three little words by saying, “You better!”

Paul had been sitting in silence for the first few minutes of the journey back to the surface. Ultimately, Esther took his hand and said, “A penny for your thoughts.”

Paul smiled as he answered, “I’m afraid you would not get your money’s worth, and I can’t make change.”

Esther persisted, “Tell me anyway.”

“I was just thinking how the name ‘Creature’ is almost the same as the name ‘Creator.’ The Creator wants us to live with love and joy and find our way to his magical kingdom. The Creature wants us to kill each other in war and serve only him to satisfy our greed and fleeting momentary pleasures. He hates us because we can still stay on the path and find Xanadu, but he, apparently, has been banned and cannot go there. He wants to turn the word ‘live’ around and make our existence ‘evil.’”

Esther exclaimed, “Wow! You just summed up the reason for our mission without one single question!” She moved close to Paul, put her head on his shoulder, and they both sat in silence, enjoying the warmth of a long-time loving relationship.

Martin was sitting on his invisible bench facing Stacey. He could hardly believe that this beautiful woman was the little sister of his best friend, and she now filled him with the excitement of first love. He was telling her everything about his plans to finish school with a degree in psychology and help get people back on the right path. Finally, he asked, “What do you think?”

Stacey was thinking about all the creatures she could communicate with and how they could help keep people on the right path. She thought of them more as her children than just animals or insects. She replied, “I was just thinking about my children.”

Martin stared in astonishment as the picture of children running around him in a house blew away any other thoughts about the mission. Stacey noticed his gawk and remembered how words can mean different things, so she clarified, “I mean all the animals and other creatures I communicate with when I say, ‘my

children.’” Martin smiled and said, “Of course.” but was mostly quiet for the rest of the trip.

The twins wasted no time in making a journal showing their role in the mission. They would rework the game Three X Pro to fit all ages. The final X in the game would be Xanadu. Even children too young would get toys from a company they would build. The toys would lead them to look for the light of truth. The company name would be E-BLOX and would stand for “Enter-By Loving Others, Xanadu,” They looked like two beavers building a dam as they added each note to the journal with pronounced enthusiasm.

Jimmy was discussing the plans for the Betazoid factory with Jason. He was surprised at how quickly he forgot Jason was a robot. The smile and manner made Jason feel like a person you could trust and be friends with. Jimmy took a tablet from Jason to read about the mission and the factory that would be made on the island. His thoughts soon drifted to Grace, and he wondered if he would ever see her again.

Jason and Robyn were using telepathy to get up-to-date information from the GA robots on the surface.

Glenna was sitting up and watching everything. Like a shepherd guarding her sheep.

Perhaps it was the long day, or the great meal before getting on board, or the quiet swaying of the seats in the motion canceling bubbles, but before long, almost everyone had fallen asleep. Only Robyn, Jason, and Glenna were awake. Robyn was watching Glenna and finally sent a telepathic message to Jason. “Did you notice that Glenna’s eyes look at the one talking even though we are using telepathy to communicate?” When Jason answered, Glenna turned to face him. “Go to top

security encrypted mode and see what she does," Jason instructed.

The robots' eyes turned a deep purple as they went into a highly secure mode that nobody should be able to receive. Glenna's eyes still followed the speaker.

Robyn transmitted, "Perhaps she only knows who is talking but not what is being said." Turning slightly to look directly into Glenna's eyes, Robyn transmitted in the highly secure mode, "Glenna, if you can hear me, wag your tail."

Glenna wagged her tail.

Just to make sure, Robyn added, "Good girl. You can lay down and go to sleep now."

Glenna laid down and slowly closed her eyes. Just before they closed, Robyn noticed they were bright purple.

Jason recorded everything and, without speculation or emotion, sent the incident to the Great Hall Animal Department.

The vessel docked before sunset, and all were back at the palace before the mountaintop village went dark. They agreed to meet in the morning and settled in for the night. The vacation had just ended, but a worldwide war with the Creature was about to begin.

But that's another story.

BOOK 4

The Ultimate Weapon

Chapter 31

SILENCE

The world was still the same, but the Blox family had been transformed. After traveling deep inside the Earth to visit the Great Hall, everything was different. They started to see things that never bothered them before—but now they were concerned. Science was being used to make life more of a shadow than a reality. The news was more of a fabrication than a real documentation of facts.

Advertisements promoted illusions to make people follow a contrived path to a poor replacement for true happiness. Sadness had been classified as a disease and was treated with drugs that numbed the brain. People were following the pied piper in a trance with eyes blind to the true path to joy and peace. Free will was being coerced to follow the Creature and worship him. Robots did not have free will and were not capable of understanding this attack on humanity. But the people in the Great Hall had been watching for years, and now the Blox family and their friends were given the task to open the eyes of the world.

After returning to the castle, Seymour found sleep out of his reach. It was after midnight and he was sitting at the table in the kitchen sipping tea when Ruby, dressed in her pajamas and bathrobe, entered the room. She made herself a cup of tea and sat down next to her husband.

“The twins fell asleep in front of their computer,” she whispered after taking a careful sip of tea. Then she added, “I managed to get them into bed but they wanted to go back to whatever they are working on. ”Seymour smiled knowing her biggest concern was always for the children. He turned to face Ruby and with a sad face mumbled, “We were given an impossible mission. I don’t think we can do it.”

“What!” Ruby exclaimed. “Where is my husband? You look like the man I married. You resemble the man that helped save the world from a pandemic and eliminated the great lockdown. Except for that sad look on your face, I would think you were he. What happened? Did someone steal your happy pills?”

Seymour’s expression did not change. He looked down into his teacup and muttered, “I guess so.”

In a calm voice and a clever smile Ruby concluded with, “Well, whoever took them, I hope they’re happy.”

Seymour first chuckled and then looked at his wife’s huge grin and after another small giggle said, “You sure do know how to soften a disastrous situation. How did you get so smart?”

She never answered his question but replied, “Let’s finish our tea and head back to the bedroom. We have a big day tomorrow and we will need some sleep.” Despair quickly returned and Seymour sadly mumbled as he turned his eyes back to his cup of tea, “We cannot change the world. The Creature and his followers have obscured everything we did in the past. People cannot see past the poison fruit being offered. What could I ever do to change the minds of these misguided people? Free will has been turned into momentary satisfaction and

feared regulation. I have no answer for fighting these evil forces."

Ruby had never seen this look of anguish on her husband's face before. She listened to his words. Unsure of how to respond, she slowly got up from her chair and walked to the counter to rinse her teacup and place it on a towel lying on the counter by the sink. Silently she left the kitchen and walked down the hall to the balcony with the two-seat glider and sat thinking in the dark. After a long soft cry she whispered, "I need your help. If anyone can hear me, please tell me what to do." She was surprised and quickly sat up when a man's voice declared, "What seems to be your problem? Perhaps I can help."

In a dark corner of the balcony, unnoticed by Ruby when she entered, stood Jason the group beta or Betazoid android. He was highly skilled in all things medical and had returned with the family from the Great Hall to help in their mission. When he approached Ruby, the smile on his face, the blue shirt he was wearing, and his artificial skin made him look more human than robotic. Jason knew that looking down at someone when talking was very intimidating, so he sat on the floor in front of Ruby, took her hand and looking up asked, "What is the problem?"

Ruby found his gentle approach and the warmth of his hand soothing. She replied, "It's Seymour. He seems to be in a deep state of depression and I don't know what to do."

"Has he ever been like this before?" Jason asked.

"No, never," Ruby answered. "And he has never refused to go to bed with me before."

"It is probably not clinical or major depression. I will take a look at him and run some tests. He will not be aware that I am scanning him so it will not add to his condition. You need to try and get some sleep and we can discuss this further in the morning," Jason added.

Ruby found it challenging to sleep, but Jason's calming voice and reassuring touch encouraged her to make an attempt. They both went back to the kitchen and found Seymour asleep with his head lying on one arm on the table. Ruby took his empty teacup to the sink, rinsed it out, and put it next to her cup on the towel while Jason carefully got Seymour to his feet. In a daze, Seymour mumbled, "What's up?"

Ruby replied, "It's time for bed." She took his hand and helped him shuffle his way to the bedroom where he mechanically took off his outer garments, shoes, and socks then plopped on the bed and pillow.

During the journey to the bedroom, Jason performed all known medical scans on Seymour's brain and found no irregularities. His programming led him to wait to see if sleep might make things better. When Ruby placed her bathrobe on the chair next to her side of the bed he commented, "After a good night's sleep things may be better. I will see you in the morning," and proceeded to leave the room.

During his exit, Ruby replied, "Thank you Jason. Good night."

The next few days were difficult for Ruby. Seymour responded to simple questions but refused to say anything about the mission. Robyn told Ruby that he has not communicated telepathically with any of the androids since returning from the Great Hall. Jason ran every test and concluded that Seymour was using his free

will to go silent when conversations were about the mission. Because all of the androids were programmed to respond to questions and did not have free will to refuse, this was a problem they could not understand or fix. Ruby's ability to experience empathy let her feel his struggle but offered no solution to the problem. Before returning from the Great Hall, the Creature determined that Seymour was a significant factor in the previous plans' lack of success. The Creature understood that failure was an undesirable outcome pill to swallow. Therefore, this master of demons sent many to whisper in Seymour's ear that changing the world was impossible. Constant whispers of failure to change the world made the evil ones able to convince Seymour the best action to take was to remain silent. Even Ruby's great love could not block these whispers of disaster.

Paul and Ester waited two days for Seymour to get everyone organized, but heard nothing. On the third day, they asked Robyn to set up a meeting to discuss the plan for waking up the world. On the day after Paul's request, they all gathered in the large chamber of the palace at the time Robyn had set. After everyone was seated, Robyn explained, "The purpose of this assembly is to clearly define the undertaking we all agreed to and the role each will play to accomplish this task. Paul would like to propose a simple statement to define our mission." Everyone turned to look at Paul when Robyn stopped talking.

Paul glanced at his notebook, looked up, and stated, "I propose we call this project 'Wakeup World.' No one liked the name and there were many negative comments.

Andy laughingly said, "It sounds like an alarm clock," and others followed with similar statements.

Paul requested, “Then what do you suggest we call our project?”

Many hours of discussion finally ended with a majority agreeing on ‘Illuminating Truth’ as the name for the mission. During the debate, Ruby would ask Seymour to help but he would just shrug his shoulders and look down at his hands on the table. He kept hearing whispers of how his words could lead them in the wrong direction and failure would be his fault. He chose silence as the best action he could take.

Paul ended the meeting by setting up the next gathering in two days. He asked everyone to bring their plans on how they would proceed to ‘Illuminate Truth,’ and what they might need from others in the group. Then turning toward Seymour he asked, “Would you like to add anything?”

Seymour said nothing, but shook his head to respond with no.

Paul added, “How about a closing prayer?”

Seymour shocked everyone by answering with the same non-verbal response of no, rising, and leaving the room. For the next two weeks the group held many meetings, but Seymour did not attend any of them. Nobody could figure out what had made him go into this shell of silence. Even the people in the Great Hall were mystified and could not offer a cure.

The Creature was pleased at the success his demons had on shutting Seymour down. He sent even more of his evil spirits to intensify the attack and told them they would turn him and make him choose to follow them. There was one thing, however, the master of the demons missed. That was the unconditional love Ruby had for her husband. Ruby felt his anguish and

suffered with him, but never left his side. In those horrible weeks, she observed one thing. She noticed that music and some harmonious sounds gave Seymour a small amount of relief. These sounds could momentarily block the whispers from the demons and Seymour felt less troubled. Because Ruby was very empathetic she could feel even these insignificant moments of relief. One morning, Ruby told Robyn, "Seymour is on the balcony. Let's go ask him if he has any song requests or sound that he wants to hear. He may not comment, but if he does, I want you to play that song or make that sound."

Robyn followed Ruby to the balcony as instructed. Ruby sat on the glider next to Seymour and said, "It is awfully quiet out here. Is there any song or sound you would like to hear?"

All the evil spirits around Seymour whispered, "Tell her no. Tell her you want silence."

Seymour followed the orders and replied, "All I want to hear is the sound of silence."

Robyn heard his request, searched her extensive memory banks, and played the song called The Sound of Silence. {Click link to hear.}

Perhaps it was the harmony of the voices and the chords in the melody of the song, but no matter how hard they tried, the whispers of "Don't listen" were obscured. Seymour could not only hear the words, but he also could understand their significance. When the melody, ended a glut of murmurs returned.

"Pay no attention to that bizarre song!" "Nonsense, that was all nonsense!"

"That song will lead you to failure!"

Seymour quickly stood up and shouted, “Leave me, you demons! I command you to be gone from this place and never return! Take your words with you! I ask the virtuous life-forces to chase these frauds from this place, please.” And the whispers stopped. In that moment of silence he felt someone grab his hand. Looking down he saw Ruby’s face, tears running down from her bright eyes, and a smile of joy. She softly commented, “Welcome back.”

Seymour felt like a man who had been locked in a solitary confinement prison for a long time and just got released. The key to his cell was the song. He also knew he had power over his enemy’s guards and made them leave. But the most important thing was he felt the unconditional love from Ruby. Taking both of her hands, he pulled her from the glider, put both arms around her, and hugged her. His cheek was on hers and he could feel the cold tears of joy running down her face. His eyes were closed and his mouth was close to her ear as he softly said, “Forgive me. I am so sorry for leaving you. I was weak.”

As they both sat on the glider still holding each other close Ruby replied, “You are back. That is all that matters.”

Robyn interrupted the reunion by asking, “Would you like some tea?”

Seymour sat up and turned to face Robyn and said, “Where did you get that song? Who told you to play it?”

With robotic obedience Robyn answered, “The song was in my memory bank. It is over five centuries old. Ruby told me to play anything you wanted to hear. You told me you wanted to hear The Sound of Silence so I played it.”

Seymour added, “Would you play it again and put the words on a display so we can stop and discuss after each stanza?” Instantly a large holographic display appeared with the words being highlighted as the song played.

Hello darkness, my old friend
I’ve come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping,
Left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain Still remains
Within the sound of silence

Robyn paused the song when the first stanza ended. Seymour looked at Ruby, with an excited expression and quickly said, “Do you remember in the Great Hall’s meta-world how it was dark and Grace told us that in our darkest moments we can sometimes see more clearly? The dark can truly be our old friend as the song says. Then her father came and planted that vision in our brains. Exactly like the song says!” Ruby had never seen her husband this excited before. Her shocked expression made him continue with, “Wait! Wait! There is even more! Robyn, play the next verse.” Robyn followed his command and displayed the next verse as it played.

In restless dreams, I walked alone,
Narrow streets of cobblestone.
‘Neath the halo of a streetlamp.
I turned my collar to the cold and damp.
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of a neon light.
That split the night,
And touched the sound of silence.

Robyn, following orders, paused at the end of the second verse. With the same excited enthusiasm Seymour remarked, “These singers who lived centuries ago were in the same dream state, walking narrow cold damp streets alone. Then a bright light split the night and

freed them. Just like this song freed me." Staring at Ruby's dazed face, he shook her hands, turned back towards Robyn and remarked, "Resume." Robyn played the next part of the song.

And in the naked light, I saw,
Ten thousand people, maybe more.
People talking without speaking.
People hearing without listening.
People writing songs that voices never shared,
And no one dared
Disturb the sound of silence.

Seymour instantly offered his analysis of this section but with a less excited voice he said, "Even centuries ago the people were entranced into silence. They were afraid to speak out or to listen to anyone who showed them a different path. Even way back in their time the whispers of the evil ones kept them disconnected and silent. Everyone chose to be silent." Ruby's smile and understanding expression helped Seymour relax for a moment. Ruby finally asked, "Should we continue?" and Seymour replied, "Yes, please." Without being told, Robyn played and revealed the next part of the song.

"Fools" said I, "You do not know.
Silence like a cancer grows.
Hear my words that I might teach you.
Take my arms that I might reach you".
But my words, like silent raindrops fell,
And echoed in the wells of silence.

Seymour calmly offered his analysis of this section by saying, "The composer of this song tried to show the people of his time how silence is like a disease that grows in you. He hoped his words could help them understand, but it seems his words fell like silent rain and did nothing. I believe this was an expression of depression at his failure. I understand failure and it was one of the reasons I

wanted to hide in a well of silence." A moment of sadness followed and then Seymour said, "Robyn, continue." The final verse was played.

> And the people bowed and prayed
> To the neon god they made,
> And the sign flashed out its warning
> In the words that it was forming.
> Then the sign said, "The words of the prophets are written
> on the subway walls,
> In tenement halls",
> And whispered in the sound of silence.

Seymour's voice was firm as he spoke his final analysis of the song. "We have also made a god out of technology. The words of the prophet were given to us in the Great Hall and we all promised to help people get back on the right path. The master of the evil ones found my weakness was fear of failure and he sent soldiers out to persuade me to choose silence to avoid misleading our family. I now know that fear is one of the Creatures strongest weapons, but I also learned that we could choose to be strong and drive away the demons by just commanding them to leave. Free will is a great weapon, but we must desire to find the right path to help each other. We must use unconditional love even for those that hate us. We must choose Agape!"

Ruby pulled her husband up as she stood and said, "Well your vacation is over. It is time we get to work on that promise we made."

Seymour had one more question for Robyn and asked, "Who wrote that song and what were the words written on the walls?" Robyn's eyes flashed a deep purple as memory banks were searched and replied, The Sound of Silence song was written by Paul Simon, sung by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, and the words on the walls found in an interview were, 'The end is near' and 'Repent.'"

Chapter 32

IT

It was early afternoon when Seymour and Ruby left the balcony. Robyn followed and asked, “Do you want me to make you both a lunch?”

Seymour replied, “I am too excited to eat! I need to catch up on all the meetings I missed! I need to find out what is going on!”

Ruby squeezed his hand and ordered, “You need to calm down. A little lunch with some hot chocolate may help. I will fill you in while we eat.” Robyn led them into the kitchen and started processing some buttered biscuits and hot chocolate. Seymour sat next to Ruby and held her hand as she lovingly started her summary of the last two weeks.

“Do you remember the meeting you were at when we decided on the main goal and name of our undertaking?”

Seymour replied, “Vaguely. It was about truth and clarification I think.”

“Actually, the mission that was agreed upon by everyone was to illuminate truth and ‘IT’ was the name we gave our project.” Ruby continued, “In the early meetings that followed we discussed how to organize the group, pick a director to run the meetings, and a secretary to record the minutes of every meeting. Paul was elected as the director and Ester, his wife, as the secretary. I made all of these meetings through a video link with Robyn who attended and made recordings of each meeting that you can watch to catch up if you want.” Seymour interrupted, “Why weren’t you there?” Ruby

smiled and with sparkling green eyes and sighed, “I could never leave your side. You were suffering and in such torment. I did not know what to do, but I knew you needed me with you, so I stayed close. I always stayed close and held your hand when you would let me.”

With a deep look of remorse and eyes full of tears he asked, “There were times when I would not let you hold my hand?”

Ruby could always feel his pain and this time was not different as she felt the shaft of shame that pierced his heart. He was still holding her hand so she placed her other hand on top of his, stared into his weeping eyes and declared, “It was not you that denied me. They were controlling your actions. It was them not you! I have never doubted your love for me, so don’t you believe that you hurt me. That sounds like something they would want you to think. Tell them again to be gone!” Her words fell like soft snow on a burning heart. He could truly feel the pain of remorse expire and the love for his wife replace it.

Robyn’s timing was impeccable as she placed a plate of biscuits and fruit on the table in front of them and mechanically announced, “Eat. I will show you all the recordings of the meetings when you are ready,” and went back to the sink to clean up the area.

Seymour looked at Ruby and smiled as they both said simultaneously, “Always one step ahead!” It was true that the GA androids had metatronic brains, but they still could not predict the future. They all were in constant contact with the folks at the Great Hall and often received messages of what might be necessary in the near future. Because of this, the Group Alpha androids did indeed seem to be “one step ahead.” After lunch they followed Robyn to a small office in the palace that was

rarely used and sat on a couch, still holding hands. The many years of marriage did not diminish the joy of touching your soul mate. After two weeks of emotional separation, neither one wanted to let go. Robyn used the technology of making the room into a holodeck and placing the couple into the recording of the meeting. It felt real as it started with Paul sitting at the head of a circular table and opening the meeting.

"In our last session we agreed our job was to illuminate truth. We then agreed to call this project 'IT.' I asked everyone to spend the next couple days to decide on how they will bring their talent to help IT. I will start with what I feel I can do to illuminate truth in the world." He paused to take a sip of water then continued, "I will be working with Jason and Ester to build the factory on Jarvis Island that will make more Betazoid androids like Jason. They will be no-fee- doctors for the people, and they will require no masks over their mouths because they are not capable of contracting or spreading any disease. They will be funded by us and available twenty-four hours a day to anyone who needs help. These doctors will determine when people can remove their facemask or give those who can't a new transparent mask that allows smiles to be seen. I believe that smiles are the seeds to agape and hope this will bring the people back to their true path to Xanadu."

Ester spoke next and added, "After the coma war, we took many infected soldiers from the evil army and tried to cure them on the island. Some responded quickly and went back to their homes with a desire to spread love. Many took longer but eventually left with love in their hearts and a conviction to treat others as friends. A few, however, spent years in the center and left with a desire to get back power and wealth and control others. Last year the facility was empty and no longer needed, so we

closed the doors and shut it down. A group of very loving patients had no desire to leave and remained to live on Jarvis Island." Ester paused for a moment to lean forward and put her clasped hands on the table. Her expression changed and with a stern voice she revealed, "Tons of guano that was mined centuries before we took over the island is still there. Guano is high in phosphate, and potassium, two of the hard-to-get chemicals we need to make the cells in the artificial skin of the Betazoids." She unclasped her hands, sat up straight, and with excited animation emphasized each phrase by waving her hands as she cried, "The facility, the workers, and the chemicals all waiting for us to start! This is no coincidence!" Putting her hands palm down on the table, she stared at the group.

Andy broke a long moment of silence with, "I have never seen Ester this excited before."

Joey quickly added, "Especially over bird poop." Once again, the twins released the tension as everyone chuckled. Even Ester smiled and sat back in her chair. Ester had spent most of her life motivating people, but this group was already eager to start and the twins knew it. They also knew that humor could clear the tension and relax the mind.

Seymour smiled at Ruby and whispered, "That's your boys!"

The holodeck recording continued with Paul putting everyone back on track with, "Looks like Ester has a plan and will be up and running soon. Anyone else have a plan to help IT?" He noticed Eugene sitting next to Yolanda with his hand slightly raised like a shy child in a classroom. Paul acknowledged with, "Eugene, you have a plan?"

Soft and mildly, Eugene replied, “Yolanda and I know a smile is a seed to agape, but that seed needs nourishment to grow. We believe that a cup of hot chocolate and a person to talk to about your problems can provide those nutrients. We would like to use the technology that is putting people on the wrong path to give them a place to enjoy a cup of hot chocolate and a quiet loving conversation. Do you think these new Betazoids could also offer this when people come to see them? Perhaps they could have a mini holodeck or something? Yolanda and I could make an interactive recording that has active listening for this holodeck with positive feedback. I think having each new Jason- type doctor dispense a cup of hot chocolate or tea would be easy but the holographic projector with advice to illuminate truth may be difficult. What do you think?”

Paul’s eyes widened and his excitement jumped into a new dimension as he instantly remarked, “Yes! Using the same method that is spreading lies to illuminate the truth is brilliant! In fact, it is how we ended the coma virus!” He paused when he noticed that both Robyn’s and Jason’s eyes were flashing a deep purple, then queried, “Jason? Robyn? What is happening?”

Robyn’s eyes turned blue but Jason’s eyes remained deep purple and flashing. Robyn inquired, “Do you remember Sibyl from the Great Hall?” Everyone nodded or said “Yes.” Robyn continued, “She monitors our meetings and, with your permission, would like to address the group.” Again, everyone agreed except Jason who was still in a trance with flashing eyes.

Robyn’s eyes started flashing again as a silhouette of a person appeared in the center of the table. It was not a holographic image but something entirely different. It appeared to be more like an out of focus ghostly figure

you might see in a dream. As it came into focus, everyone saw a personalized image of Sibyl smiling and looking directly into his or her eyes.

Paul's vision was of an old female doctor who taught him to always ask questions before deciding. When he would suggest an answer to a problem, she would always come back with many questions. In a way, she was his mentor.

Ester saw an elderly aunt who lived alone and was very independent. When Ester was studying to be a doctor she would visit her. Somehow her aunt's logic was more educational than the courses in school. A professor in class once asked, "Is the glass half empty, or half full?" When Ester repeated the question to her aunt, she replied, "Are you drinking it, or filling it?" Ester always marveled at the brilliance of the answer from a lady who never finished high school.

Eugene and Yolanda both observed a woman of color similar to grandmothers who raised the orphans of the black children in the past. They all had the look of love and a smile that understood suffering. For Martin the image appeared to be very similar to his nana, Yolanda. He had to glance back to see if she was still sitting next to Eugene, then retuned his gaze to the image on the table. Stacey's apparition made her think of Mrs. Miller, an old lady she stayed with one summer on a farm with all the animals. All the local farmers called her "Millie" and said she was a whisperer who could talk to animals. One day Millie showed Stacey how to place herself into the mind of a butterfly and make it land on her arm. She told Stacey, "You have the gift but you must practice every day to make it stronger."

"Stacey later learned the technical name for her gift was called interspecies telepathy."

James thought the lady on the table resembled his maternal grandmother. He spent many hours with her discussing his studies and plans for the future and this lady looked like her somehow. She had a way to make him forget his worries about passing exams and think about other things. Just recently when he was deep into his books she had inquired, “Did you ever contact that girl named Grace, you told me you met in the Great Hall?”

He replied, “No. After these tests are over, I might try.” Then added, “I think I will take a break for a few minutes.” He took a walk in the dark outside and remembered the tour of the Meta-World with Grace as his guide and for a short time his worries were gone.

Because the twin’s minds were so closely linked, they both perceived a person similar to their paternal grandmother at the table center. She was an elderly lady who lived in the castle and could always use humor to relax a serious situation. One day, when they were struggling for their purpose in life, they asked her, “Grandma, what will we be when we grow up?” She smiled at them and answered, “I don’t know,” and after a short pause added, “What do you think I will be when I grow up?” They laughed, but the meaning of the words “grow up” never again just meant getting old.

Seymour and Ruby knew they were watching a recording of the meeting, but they also saw women from the past who had changed their lives. In that moment, they both realized that this was much more than just a recording. They waited to see what would happen next. When Sibyl finally spoke, her voice matched the image each person was seeing. Because of the intimate visual and audio connection, everyone listened carefully to her as she explained, “I am visiting you through a new

technology called an intellect transformed vision. When you stare into the flashing light you are put into a conscious hypnotic state that allows your intellect to change what you perceive to what you would really want to see and hear. In order for this to work you must have free will and choose to look into the light and listen for my voice. Because Robyn and Jason are androids and do not have free will, they only see flashing lights and hear clicks when I speak. We developed this skill recently but did not know how to use it until now. Jason is receiving all the information needed to put this projector in every new Betazoid that will be made. They may also carry an interactive program made by Eugene and Yolanda that will allow a Betazoid patient to speak to a vision they trust." Jason's eyes stopped flashing and returned to normal as Sibyl continued. "Jason now has all the information needed to build this feature into the new androids." Turning to face Eugene and Yolanda she added, "Also they will be able to make hot chocolate, tea, or coffee if necessary. I believe I have given you the answer to your request for a means to allow communication and a drink. Goodbye." And just like that, she was gone.

The playback of the recording stopped, putting Seymour and Ruby back into the small office on the couch, still holding hands.

Robyn asked, "Do you want to pause for a moment for any reason?"

With eagerness to see more they both replied, "No. Please continue."

Once again, the holodeck put them into the meeting and sitting at the round table. The room was filled with electrifying chatter as everyone was talking about the image that had just disappeared. Paul raised his

hands and waited for prattle to dwindle then declared, “Any questions on what we just witnessed?”

Eugene asked, “Who do we see about making this interactive recording for the new doctors?”

Jason immediately replied, “I have all the data and will help you.”

There was a moment of silence before Stacey spoke. “When Sibyl’s image was speaking, I noticed Glenna staring at it. When I reached out to Glenna, I got an image of me. Because the image did not smell like me, she turned away and turned to face the actual me. I got the feeling she knew it was not authentic and chose to look at the real me. If others are being misguided by visions like this, how can we open their eyes and illuminate truth? They may choose to watch a vision because it is appealing, but not truthful. How do we get a person to look away from something that is appealing and sounds good but is not true? Can we somehow make it smell bad?”

Suddenly this new technology appeared to be more dangerous than helpful. The chamber got very quiet and there was a feeling of anxiety in the room.

Andy commented, “We use seeing eye dogs for the blind.”

Joey added, “If we can make a false vision smell bad then all we need is to get everyone smelly nose dogs.”

Andy enhanced with, “Instead of bloodhounds they could be called ‘phew-puppies.’”

Once again AJ, as the twins were sometimes called used a little humor to ease the tension. Paul waited for the chuckles to stop and said, “Stacey is right. We are

going to need a way to make people choose not to look at the misleading publicity and turn to look at things that can illuminate truth. It may not be an odor, but we certainly need something." James raised his hand to get Paul's attention. Paul responded with, "Yes James. What would you like to offer to the group?"

"Martin and I are in a group at college researching Information Technology. We use the latest processors to analyze both video and audio data to verify if the information presented is accurate. Then software can be placed into each H2 so people will know if the message they are receiving is accurate or false." {The cell phone had evolved into a supercomputer and the name had changed to Hand- Held or H2 device.}

Martin added, "The marketing, advertising people, and some of the news organizations are trying to stop us. They have power and vast resources, so our group is shrinking fast. Many left out of fear and some were just paid to leave and work for them. There are only four left in our group now and the college is getting pressure to shut us down."

Paul inquired, "Do you think the other two in the group will quit?" Both James and Martin responded with words like "never," or "no way," and then James explained, "They are twin girls from France and are very dedicated to making this project work. In fact, whenever Martin or I talk about giving up, they shout at us and call us cowards. If we quit, I think they would keep going with or without college backing. Even their names suggest they won't quit." Paul had traveled to France many times when he was with Doctors Without Borders and he knew their custom for naming girl triplets and twins. He replied, "Are their names Hope and Faith?" The

response from both boys was, “How did you know?” Paul merely answered, “Lucky guess.”

Jason interrupted the conversation with, “the Great Hall told me they will contact your school to help resolve this problem.” Paul ended the session by asking everyone to bring their best ideas to the next meeting. He said he would send an agenda and a date for the next gathering.

Seymour and Ruby emerged back in the small office when Robyn stopped the recording again and commented, “It is getting late. Perhaps we could continue after dinner.” They agreed and slowly walked back to the kitchen discussing different parts of the meeting like they were scenes from a story. Robyn went ahead of them and said, “I will prepare something.” Alone in the hallway, Seymour stopped walking, turned to look deeply into Ruby’s green eyes, and questioned, “Why did we both miss these planning sessions? Why were we both made to suffer the torture of being separated from the family? If I’ve learned one thing, it is that nothing happens in this life without a reason.”

Ruby softly replied, “It’s hard to help the suffering if you never had to suffer.” The cobwebs in his brain blew away. He could see clearly now what his part was in the struggle to illuminate truth.

Like always, Ruby was his guiding light.

Chapter 33

The Shell

As fate would have it, Paul had scheduled the next gathering of the IT group two days after Seymour's release from his prison of silence. Seymour spent that time with Ruby reviewing all the get-togethers they had missed. They were both eager to attend and become active members again. No one was told they were coming, so when they entered the room at ten that morning, everyone was surprised. There were shouts of joy and hugging. It looked more like a party than a conference. After the group settled and all were seated, Paul brought the session to order with, "Will the secretary make note that Seymour and Ruby have joined us and the agenda will be put on hold to allow them to speak." The room went silent as all eyes turned to look at Seymour.

"I apologize for being away these past couple weeks. I am also very sorry I made Ruby miss these gatherings in order to be with me. Robyn has brought both of us up to date with the holodeck recordings she made. We both would like to commend this group for all that you have accomplished. Please go on with your agenda, and when you are finished perhaps we can talk about what Ruby and I can do to help."

The chatter stopped as Paul announced, "Thank you both. OK, the first item on the agenda was funding. I believe we may have solved the problem of financing all the projects needed to accomplish IT. Since I am mostly a medicine man, I will let the real project leader explain the solution." He turned to face his wife and said, "Ester?" Ester's face displayed a smile but her expression was all business. She placed her hands on the

table and stated, “As some of you may know, the world markets have many different types of currency. For centuries different countries used crypto currency, which did not exist in physical form like paper money, and is typically not issued by a central authority. The first decentralized crypto currency was Bitcoin, which created within a decade more than 9,000 other Cryptocurrencies in the marketplace. About a century ago the Daori coin came into existence. The Daori is composed of materials that make the coin itself valuable. It contains diamond, astatine, osmium, rhodium, iridium, and secret software chip agreed upon by the Universal Council. Ninety nine percent of the coin is made from very high-grade diamond produced only under extreme pressure. We happen to have a source that is high-grade diamond and the Great Hall has the other materials needed to make enough Daori coins to fund all our projects.” Everyone applauded and a few high fives could be seen.

Seymour and Ruby smiled and glanced at each other. They remembered the first time they met getting the large diamond and bringing it to the mountain near his lab. That stone had brought them together. Many years had passed and now that rock was going to help illuminate truth. He whispered, “I always thought that diamond was our engagement stone.”

Ruby whispered back, “Looks like it is going to get us engaged again.”

Paul announced, “The second item on the agenda was progress reports. I will let Jason describe what is happening on the Betazoid factory. Jason?”

“We have the old center converted into a living facility for all the workers and scientists. It already contains labs and shops for processing unique and secret

parts. Only a few highly technical pieces of equipment need to be delivered and they will be operational. Construction on an automated manufacturing factory near the mines has the foundations ready. The building should be completed and operational in thirty days. Another building near the factory has been designed to make the intellect transforming devices for the new Betazoid doctors. Physical construction on this building will start next week. Still need software for H2 devices to determine incorrect and false information. Still need interactive video to be used to expose bad information." Then in a very robotic fashion, Jason added, "End of report."

Androids never needed a polite expression of one's gratitude, but Jason looked more human than machine, so Paul automatically responded, "Thank you, Jason." He then added after a very short pause, "Let's cover the two required items Jason mentioned next. Martin or James, do you have a report on the progress of the Information Technology group at your school?"

James replied, "An anonymous donor with initials TGH has made a large donation to the school and earmarked it to only be used by our group. It appears the donation was entirely in Daori coins that are programmed for approval by four members of the group in order to be cashed. The four of us have to hold the coin and say, 'approved,' before the internal chip allows using. We can each hold it separately, but it must get all four approvals within five minutes or it resets."

Martin interrupted, "The school is holding all the coins and they suddenly want to work closer with us. Our partners, Faith and Hope, are very excited and have become a couple of workaholics. I think we will have testable alpha version software in the next couple of weeks."

A murmur of approval could be heard from the group when Martin paused.

Paul continued, “Very good! That seems to be well on its way.” Turning to face Eugene and Yolanda he remarked, “What about the interactive video to reveal false information?”

Eugene said, “I have been working with Jason and we have the intellect transforming vision devise that will display an image pleasing to the viewer. However, the person must choose to look into the light in order to see that image. Because people have free will, they may not want to even glance at the light and will close their eyes. I do not know how to get around that problem.”

Paul queried, “OK, but if they do look, what will they see?”

Eugene did not answer. He turned, took Yolanda’s hand, smiled, and waited. Yolanda knew that he wanted her to answer that question. She was not comfortable speaking to assemblies of dedicated people, but the warmth of Eugene’s hand and the loving expression on his face gave her the courage to softly say, “I’ve lived many years but learned little. One thing I do know, we are all different. Babies are all like little sponges that will suck up what they are put in. Some learn to love, and some learn to hate. Some learn to give, and some learn to take. They will choose to see what they want and that may be good or it may be bad.” She timidly squeezed Eugene’s hand and stopped speaking. Nobody said a word. Even the twins had no humor to break the dead silence around the table.

Seymour had been silent too long. He finally opened his heart and poured out, “Oh loving grandma! Your suffering has made you the wisest person I know. I

chose the bad for the past couple of weeks exactly as you just stated. I heard whispers of how I would make everything go wrong if I said anything. My fear of leading everyone to failure made me silent. The enemy had found my vulnerability and attacked with many comments to keep me silent. I chose to listen and soon could hear nothing else but their voices. They used my fear of failure to keep me totally in their control. The one thing they did not realize was my loving wife always by my side would never give up. She found that music and her voice could break through my shell. When she asked what song I would like to hear, the demons told me to answer that the only sound I wanted was the sound of silence. They did not know that was the title of a song. The words in that song, the love of my wife, and that break in my prison wall shattered their control. It is the fissures in the prison walls that we must find if we are going help others see the true path to peace and joy. As Grandma so wisely pointed out, it will be different for each person and some will always choose the bad because they are filled with hate and greed." Seymour looked at Ruby and stopped speaking.

For the next few minutes, the chamber was filled with the babble of many conversations. Finally, Paul stood up and raised his hands to restore silence. The prattle diminished and Paul declared, "I thought our biggest problem was going to be making the Betazoid doctors, but that seems to be going smoothly. Now I am thinking the biggest problem is going to be getting people to choose to even look at what we offer. I suppose we can bribe the greedy with Daori coins to look into the light. Perhaps we can trick the hateful with the promise of power to look into the light. If they all see something different, how will we know what to do? In medicine, when I find a cure for a disease, I know that I need to get

people to take it. This! This has a different cure for each person! I cannot think of where to start. It's hopeless!" Ruby felt the anguish and despair that engulfed Paul and quickly responded, "Don't you dare give in to those feelings of hopelessness! I know what you are going through right now. I had those same thoughts when my husband would not even hold my hand."

Seymour jumped to his feet, held his hands out as if he was hugging the entire table, and shouted, "In the name of the Creator of all, I command you evil spirits to leave this room!" He then looked into Paul's eyes and said, "Command them to leave you now!" Paul did as he was told. Seymour sat down and took Ruby's hand. He stared into her clear green eyes and once again could feel the warmth of her tremendous love. The complete silence in the room was broken by a soft whisper from Yolanda. "Amen."

The room seemed to glow and was filled with the fragrance of flowers mingled with vanilla and cinnamon. Still standing, Paul inquired, "What just happened? I feel different. I am at peace and have nothing to worry about. What happened?" Slowly he reclined and Ester took his hand and gleamed into his eyes.

Everyone at the table saw what happened next. A ball of light slowly appeared at the center of the table. It grew larger until it covered everyone in the room like a large glowing pancake. It felt like a warm blanket on a cold winter night. Then it broke up into small circles over each person and appeared to be absorbed by that person. Somehow everyone knew that they were all now protected from the evil spirits that sought to destroy them. They had been covered with the blanket of Agape. They also now knew that there would be times of suffering ahead. Each person in the room felt prepared,

however, for the hardships coming. Even Glenna softly whimpered and showed Stacey she was ready to do whatever a lowly canine can do to help. Not one person could describe that feeling of unconditional love, but nobody would ever forget it either, not even Glenna.

Jason and Robyn were present when the epiphany transpired but did not see the light or smell the aroma during the event. Their metatronic brains did not have the power that comes with free will. Their sensors did record what they were able to see and they waited until the event appeared to be over. Then Robyn recommended, "You have been in chambers for five hours now. It is mid-afternoon and I suggest we break for lunch and come back in an hour." The group wanted to stay, so many murmured, "Not now" or "Later."

The twins had been very quiet during the meeting, but suddenly Joey said, "I could use with a drink and maybe a light snack. Would you and Jason get a tray and bring something here?"

Robyn answered, "We will bring a variety of drinks, fruits, and some small biscuits." After the two androids left the meeting room, Paul asked, "Robyn did not need Jason's help for such a small task. Why did you send him with her?"

Andy responded, "We will explain in a minute." Turning to face Seymour he continued, "Dad, is this chamber equipped with a device to prevent eavesdropping?"

Seymour replied, "Yes. It can block almost everything but has a problem with telepathic communication. We never could find a way to block this type of talking other than putting the telepath to sleep." Seymour seemed to know exactly what the boys were suggesting as he rose and walked to a control panel on

the wall. He flipped a few switches and continued, “Now everything is being blocked except mental communication. A person with freewill can just choose to turn telepathy off, but the androids are programmed to use it when requested by others such as myself, other linked androids, or certain people in the Great Hall. They do not have the capacity to choose to turn it off.” The chamber was very quiet when he walked back and sat down next to Ruby. He did not like being only a few feet away from her. He put her hand between both of his and felt secure again.

Joey proceeded to explain in greater detail what was happening. “You all have heard about the fracture that allowed our mom to reach dad with music. This same opening allowed the Creature and his demons to tempt our dad into silence and rejection of everyone he loved. We all have passions that can be twisted and used against us. We all have cracks in our wisdom.”

Andy injected, “If you like, you can call them wisecracks.” A few giggled and everyone smiled.

Joey continued, “We believe the bad spirits have always been a little ahead of us because they are listening to our plans. If the Great Hall can listen to our meetings, perhaps others can also. They use what they hear to send whispers of doubt and fear to prevent us from being successful. We believe that is why Paul was having feelings of hopelessness and despair.”

Robyn and Jason entering the room with a tray, interrupting Joey. They placed the food on the table and Andy immediately instructed, “Now both of you go wait in the kitchen for further requests.” Nobody objected, so the androids followed his command.

Seymour commented, “I just received a telepathic message from Sibyl in the Great Hall. She claims they have lost all contact with the group and request I explain. I told her we are in a secure conference mode and will explain later.” Joey continued, “Our enemy knows we are making doctors who will cure physical disease and have the power to provide thoughts in a recording to make people watch and listen. They have been doing this for centuries in their false propaganda and commercials. The leader of these demons has a vast army spreading hate, greed, prejudice, and lies to make people follow him or else live in fear and despair. The ancient Greeks had a name for this leader of misguided souls. They called him Hades, the king of the netherworld. Today, we call him the Creature. No matter what we call him, he is the master at finding the flaws in our loving nature. He then injects his evil and leads us to choose a path away from Xanadu. This happened to my father and it can happen to anyone. I believe this group has just found a way to patch the cracks and make a shell that keeps the evil ones out.”

MARK SPOT

Andy added, “Perhaps we should have a little to eat while we review what we know and then move on.”

The family ate, then Paul stood and stated, “I have lived long and traveled far but I have never seen such insight as was just displayed by our youngest in this gathering. Before we continue, I would like to summarize what I know, as they suggested. Please only record what is discussed in your memories so there will be no documents that can be seen by the outside. Ester will no longer take minutes of our dialogues. We must keep these proceedings hidden in our minds only. Agreed?”

Everyone nodded in approval or murmured, “Yes.” Glenna softly woofed once and Stacey interpreted. “She said ‘yes.’”

Perhaps it was because the evil spirits were gone, or perhaps it was because everyone in the room had been covered with the blanket of Agape and peace, but for the first time they all realized that Glenna had the power to choose. Stacey always appreciated this fact, but now this special group of twelve was completely united for their mission and ready to proceed. Glenna was now recognized by all as the twelfth member of the group. They could all see clearly the part they had to play to help others get to Xanadu. Paul knew he would be working with Ester on the medical androids. Eugene and Yolanda had the job of getting the interactive video ready for the Betazoid doctors. Seymour and Ruby became aware that they would need to keep the evil spirits away from the group. James and Martin were eager to get back to work on the software to expose lies in propaganda and advertisement. Stacey and Glenna would use their powers to spread the message of Agape through every living creature. The twins knew that children were like sponges absorbing the environment that surrounded them. They had a plan to make every child see the light of joy and hear the sounds of harmony. They kept their plan secret because they were afraid that spies for the Creature could hear. Now the plan could be revealed

Chapter 34

THE WHEEL

After a brief meal, Andy stood up and extended both hands in front of his body, side by side with palms up. Remembering the visit with Socrates, most of them knew he wanted to speak. It took a while but eventually the chamber got silent. In the silence, he turned to look at Paul and waited for recognition. This simple act established two important rules for all upcoming conferences. First, it made Paul the chairperson of future discussions, and second, it founded a meeting format that prevented interruptions when people were speaking. Paul no longer thought of Andy as a child, so he responded with, “Please Andrew, proceed.”

Both Joey and Andy knew they had just lost their childhood names and were now seen as adults. Therefore, Andrew responded with, “Joseph and I have a plan to bring light and harmony to both young and old. This idea may help reduce the hate and prejudice that is growing in the world. We will create a business that produces educational products that are fun and exciting. The owner of this enterprise needs to be someone that the Creature believes is under his control, but he will follow our direction and advice. The core of all the products will be a simple construction block or brick that contains electronic circuits. Connecting them will produce colorful lights and soft pleasant musical notes. This will be pleasing to the very young. Using them to build structures that flash, move, fly, speak, and play music will also appeal to young adults. They will be part of the answer to a complex puzzle challenging the older adults and intellectuals. These cubes will be called E-Blox and advertised as educational blocks. The real acronym for

the name, known only by us, is Enter By Loving Others Xanadu. The evil ones must never know this or they will try and destroy the business known as E-Blox Inc.

To further demonstrate the new protocol, Joseph remained seated and outstretched his hands palms up. He did not look at Andrew but instead gazed at Paul. Everyone was so accustomed to the twins just interrupting each other that this action came as quiet a big surprise. Andrew declared, “I yield the floor.” and sat down.

The room was silent until Paul realized he had to recognize Joseph before he would speak. He ultimately said, “OK, Joseph, I guess it is your turn to talk.”

Joseph stood and wasted no time as he stated, “The highest priority is keeping our work top-secret. When we leave this chamber, everything we say can be heard by those who will help us, and by the evil ones who will try and stop us. We must learn to communicate in code. Perhaps the keyword we use could be something like, ‘it’. When this word is used without a connection to a member of this group the message is about illuminating truth. For example, if I say, ‘It is strange what the World News One broadcast is saying about that new disease.’ I am really asking everyone to use their skill to help ‘Illuminate Truth’ in the messages coming from World News One transmissions. However, if I attach a name to the comment then the message changes to be a request for a specific investigation by that person. If the statement was, ‘James, it is strange what the World News One broadcast is saying about that new disease. What do you think?’ I am really asking James to use the information technology software to investigate the truth and misinformation in the broadcast. The ‘it’ associated with James is the information technology software. Does

anyone have any questions?" Joseph remained standing and waited.

Everyone except Andrew, Glenna, and Yolanda put their hands out with the palms up. Joseph turned to face Paul, who also had his hands out and said, "Request permission to pick members for conversation without your approval."

Paul hoping he would be the first one picked responded, "Permission granted." To everyone's amazement, Joseph turned to face Yolanda and asked, "Grandma, is there nothing you want to ask?" All withdrew their hands and the chamber went silent.

Yolanda took Eugene's hand and gazed into his eyes. She did not want to speak and he could sense her fear. There were no demons in the room whispering to amplify her fear. She was covered with the cloak of agape and Eugene's love flowed into her and smothered most of the fear and doubt. It was time to bare her soul to the group. She turned to face Joseph and softly muttered, "I am not smart enough to even ask a question. I do not know what my 'it' is. I cannot solve riddles or codes. I'm afraid I am of no use to this gathering. The only thing I am good at is keeping your secrets and offering you a smile now and then."

Joseph and Andrew beamed with smiles from ear to ear. They both seemed to glow with joy and excitement. Still standing, Joseph responded, "I love you Grandma! Your wisdom is so overwhelming! Instead of asking a question you gave us a perfect example of illuminating truth! We must first recognize who we are and what we can offer to each other. By the way, that smile you offer now and then is the glue that holds us together. That plus the hot chocolate, of course."

All eyes turned toward Yolanda and there was a round of applause to show agreement. Glenna even barked twice signifying she also agreed with the group. Eugene was holding Yolanda's right hand so he could not clap, but he gave her hand a squeeze of approval. Martin, who was sitting on her left, leaned over and kissed her on the cheek. He lovingly whispered in her ear, "You have been the most important person in my life!"

Joseph interrupted the affirmation with, "I would like to turn speaking over to Andrew to explain a possible formation of this assembly." He sat down and Andrew placed his hands on the table with palms up and stared at Paul. The room noise evaporated as Paul announced, "Andrew you have the floor."

Andrew stood up and looked at Yolanda, smiled, and declared, "Grandma, hope you realize how much you have done for everyone here in this room. Your 'it' has always been showing others how to handle any situation with humility and a smile. Of course, you sometimes throw in a cup of hot chocolate to sweeten the deal." Many smiled and a few chuckles could be heard. Andrew continued, "You do not need to know how to solve puzzles or speak in code. Eugene will be with you to take care of these items. This brings me to my next topic for discussion."

He paused, took a sip of water, and surveyed the eyes that were on him before he continued, "There are exactly twelve of us gathered here. This number may not be a random coincidence. Now we can have six groups of two attached to every IT code. You already heard that Eugene and Grandma are the ones to go to when you need advice on a difficult situation that you do not know how to handle. Perhaps Paul and Ester should be the pair

to go to with medical questions and issues on the new Betazoid androids. This could be their IT The IT for discovering false information in software and advertisements could belong to James and Martin. Since Mom always knows what others are feeling and Dad seems to be great at telepathy, perhaps communication could be their IT. Anything to do with animals and insects could be the job of Stacey and Glenna. Joseph and I would like to inspire people with toys and puzzles and make that our IT. I would now like to open the floor for any questions or comments." He remained standing and looked at Paul.

Paul felt that permission from him on everything was overkill and responded, "When asking for questions, you do not need my permission. Please just continue."

Andrew scanned the table and noticed many open palms looking for recognition. He picked Eugene first and heard, "I am still working with people in the Great Hall. How much can I tell them about what we are doing?"

Andrew responded with, "Can someone answer this question?" All hands were palm down, except for Seymour. Andrew smiled and said, "Father, you have the floor." and sat down.

Seymour stood, put one hand on Ruby's shoulder and said, "Since communication is our IT, this seems to be a question for us. We recently discovered that the most important ambition is the unconditional desire to help others find their true purpose in life. If everything we do shows this intention then we need not worry about what we say or write. For example, if we stop saying bad whispers are coming from evil spirits or demons and say instead they are coming from misguided souls, then they may not try so hard to be against us. When I was lost in

a shell of silence, it was one of these lost spirits that gave me the name of the song that freed me. I would like to believe that my freedom and the love shown by my wife helped that spirit somehow. I made a mistake when I chose to remain silent, but that error taught me how anyone can be misguided. It showed me the pain of being on the wrong path. Only Ruby's loving conversations kept me from giving up. We must not judge anyone, and we need to communicate the way Ruby talked to me. I hope this helps answer your question." He took his hand off Ruby's shoulder and sat down.

Silence prevailed in the minutes that followed. Only Stacey had hands on the table with the palms up waiting to be recognized. Paul's meditation on how to communicate finally diminished and he broke the stillness with, "You have a question, Stacey?"

"No. Not me. Glenna, however, does not understand how she can communicate. She cannot use words and I may not always be with her to help explain what she feels. I can feel her sadness and despair at not being part of this group because she cannot talk."

Suddenly Martin stood up so fast his chair fell over behind him. He did not wait to be recognized by anyone as he proclaimed loudly, "Stop! I do not want to hear any more of this nonsense!" Walking around the table towards Glenna he continued, "I know what it feels like to be different. I know how it feels when you cannot communicate with others." He stopped talking when he reached Glenna. He bent down and pulled her front paws up to make her stand on her back legs. Bending down slightly, he looked at her eye to eye and continued. "I know you may have trouble understanding words so I will try and be brief and to the point. In the Great Hall, the final chamber, you entered last. We all thought we

were on another planet. You knew better. You must have heard echoes we could not hear. Perhaps you could smell things we could not smell. It only took you seconds to run through that holographic sand dune and into the hidden room. We all followed. You did not use words. You didn't even bark. You led by example. You are not only a good leader, but a great teacher. We must all lead by example. Never, never, think that you are less than anyone in this room!"

Glenna surprised him by quickly kissing him on the cheek the way loving canines often do. Martin stopped talking and let go of her paws. The commotion that followed made the chamber sound like a hockey stadium right after the home team scored the winning goal. People stood to applaud and some shouted phrases of praise. With tears running down both cheeks, Stacey hugged Martin and whispered, "I love you."

Martin responded with, "Are you speaking for Glenna, or for yourself"?

She answered with a single soft, "Both." The meeting protocol was shattered as everyone broke out into comments and private conversations. Although most eyes were still focused on Martin and Stacey, Seymour and Ruby were watching Yolanda quietly pick up Martins chair and place it back at the table. They knew that even during the celebration and joy, she humbly did what must be done to serve others. A simple act that demonstrated how to show, without words, love.

Like a rumble of thunder and a flash of lightning, the excitement soon passed. Decorum returned to the meeting and people started to sit silently in their chairs. Ultimately, Paul stood and took control of the assembly by declaring, "I believe spokesman Martin has passionately and profoundly established Glenna as an

important part of our circle of truth seekers. He has also established the fact that my elegant words and profound statements mean little when compared to one simple example of truth." Paul noticed Ester's hands on the table, palms up. He ended with, "Ester, your turn." and sat down.

Ester placed her palms together and interlocked her fingers. She stared down at her grip and confidently said, "Sitting at this round table with you has made me realize that we are like a wheel. When my dear husband called Martin a spokesman, a vision of a wheel with spokes materialized in my mind. Close your eyes and try and vision a large wheel with twelve spokes. Each spoke represents a member of this group. Every member is connected to the hub of the wheel. At the very center of the hub is the Earth surrounded by the sands of time.

The wheel is moving along the highway of life over bumps and holes. It avoids obstacles on the journey by drawing from every spoke as it travels. The spokes are different colors giving the wheel all the colors of the rainbow. Clear your minds of everything except this wheel. I will give you a couple of minutes to focus on this image."

Stacey and Glenna were the first to see the image because they normally communicated with pictures. Soon everyone placed their hands with palms together and fingers interlocked on the table. The gang all displayed smiles as they mentally watched the wheel travel.

Ester broke the total stillness with, "OK! Open your eyes and raise your hand if you could see the wheel." She did not expect to see the response that followed. Everyone had one hand up and Glenna had one paw in the air. She gasped, "Everyone saw the wheel?

How can that be? I can hardly believe it! I expected maybe one or two, but not everyone. I guess we are truly linked together, even more than I expected. I was going to ask for suggestions on how we could communicate as a unit, but now I think I have my answer."

After a brief pause, Paul realized that his wife was done and noticed that Andrew was looking for recognition. He just nodded and said, "Go ahead." Andrew stood and stated, "This wheel has answered many questions about our jobs, partners, and connections. It is getting late and before we investigate this new way to communicate with images, I would like to suggest a break. I know I need one and I bet Glenna would appreciate some grass to dampen. Perhaps we could come back after supper or…"

Paul stood and interrupted with, "Excuse me Andrew. Yes, it has been a long meeting and a great deal has been discussed. We should end the meeting for now and think about all that has been presented. It might be best to try and put some of what we talked about today into practice and then have another discussion in a couple of days. I have always thought of myself as an educated man. I believed I was more important than others. When Seymour went silent, I thought you elected me to be your leader and that only boosted my ego. I feel the veil of self-importance that covered my eyes has been lifted today. I see that Glenna also has free will and chooses to do what serves others first. Thank you, Martin, for your passion in pointing out that what I thought was the least among us just might be the best member of this group. I guess you could say my value system just went through a renovation. I would like a couple of days to adjust to this new way of thinking, if it is acceptable to all of you."

Both Andrew and Paul sat down and waited for a response. There was a long silence broken finally by two loud barks from Glenna. Stacey did not need to translate because they all knew what she wanted. There were a few chuckles, then Seymour said, “I think we all agree with Paul, so I suggest we end our meeting and let Glenna find that nice field of grass.” They all agreed and went back to their rooms to get ready for dinner.

You could say the wheel started rolling.

Chapter 35

THE MASTER PLAN

The meeting that created the wheel was three days past. On the third night, Seymour was sitting next to Ruby on the balcony in their favorite two seat glider when he twisted to face her and said, “I have been told that all life forms share at least one essential purpose: survival. They claim that survival is even more important than any other key purpose for life, like reproduction for example. Plenty of organisms, after all, are alive but do not reproduce. To be alive is more than passing genes along to the next generation. After the last meeting, however, I wonder if all life forms might have a higher purpose than just physical survival.” He paused the motion of the glider, turned to look deeply into Ruby’s eyes and asked, “Do you think that everything has a role to play in some master plan?”

Ruby knew her husband better than anyone and could feel his emotions and anxiety no matter how small. This question came with no sensations attached except for a feeling of awe. It appeared to be more of an eye-opener than an inquiry. Her eyes sparkled as her grin appeared and she remarked, “What do you want to tell me?”

He softly chuckled as he stood up and walked over to the stone wall railing that surrounded the balcony. He turned to face his wife and rested his bottom on the flat top of the railing. His feet were on the floor and his arms were folded across his chest as he continued. “Sometimes I think you know me better than I know myself. There is something I need to talk about to someone. I think you are probably the only

person who won't think I'm crazy."

He stood and returned to the love seat. Sitting next to his wife, he took her hand and held it gently with both of his hands in his lap. Staring down at her beautifully painted fingernails he softly stated, "Something overwhelming has taken place. My insignificant brain can hardly comprehend what happened or why, but I know we will never be the same. Do you remember when Glen gave me the power to see digital programming and control it?"

She replied, "Yes."

"When that happened, I felt the transition. It was like a wave of static electricity passing through my body. The first few seconds after, I was dizzy. Then everything came into focus, including the digital software entering the computers upon which I concentrated. Somehow, I knew what each program did, and I could modify it by just thinking of what I wanted it to do. That gift helped us to stop the coma transmission and win the misguided power struggle without killing anyone. Now I believe those events were part of a master plan to help in the evolution of life. In that last meeting, when we all had the same vision of the wheel, it was again part of this universal development."

Ruby could feel his excitement and wanted to hear more, so she probed, "A master plan for evolution?." "Yes! Every living thing is part of the process, and the process is part of everything that exist. Everything is connected. I had my first glimpse into this connection when I researched discoveries made by our most advanced scientist. They discovered a relationship that could not be explained. They named it Quantum Entanglement. It is the concept that an object can be affected without being physically touched by another object. It is the non-

local interaction of objects that are separated in space. Non- contact force is action at a distance affecting specifically an object's direction. The connection we used at that last meeting is a very small part of this entanglement. Stacey was the first to use this ability when she connected with Glenna. She even told us of her communication with a mosquito. Can you imagine everything that exists is part of a movement to follow the purpose for which it was created? A master plan, so to speak."

Ruby could not understand the excitement over a master plan and the universal connection. She always knew they existed and thought her husband believed the same. There was something else that had him so excited. "Is there something I am missing? I thought we always believed in these things."

"Yes, but we never knew why they were there. Last night I was looking at a picture of our planet from space. I could see our moon and all the planets in our galaxy. I was filled with love for all of creation. I wanted to show everyone the beauty in our galaxy that held our Earth and all the planets in place. I could feel the love that was attached to all of creation. Suddenly, everything changed. The Earth was greener and had three moons. The whole galaxy was different! I could feel adoration for all that existed coming to me from the other side of the universe. I was communicating by sharing unconditional love of creation with another life form. I was absorbed in the beauty of my world and a living thing out there was captured by the beauty of its world. This common attraction connected us for a moment. Could it be in that last meeting we experienced Macroevolution? Do you think we will be able to interconnect beyond our galaxy? Do you think these other life forms will look like us? I think we were all

created to find each other and help each other back to the source of all creation, and the key is agape." Ruby's interest level jumped an order of magnitude. Turning to face her husband, she displayed an enthusiasm even greater than his as she asked, "Are you saying we have made a jump in the evolution process and can now communicate with living entities on the other side of the universe?"

"No, not a jump in evolution, but a discovery of how to communicate with all of creation using the feeble powers we possess. The Greek word sýndesi, (σύνδεση), should be added to agape to describe the loving connection that is required to allow this interaction."

Ruby knew there was more to this connection than loving everything that had life. She could feel the change in Seymour's heart and wanted him to tell her everything. "Please tell me everything you know about this master plan."

"Ruby dearest, you know I am not a very smart man. I often jump to conclusions that are incorrect and do things that are wrong. Your intuition, however, has always been the best compass to guide me. Here is what I now think might be the master plan."

She said nothing but smiled and waited for his thoughts. He continued, "Scientist have turned the star's movement backwards in time and suspect that everything came into creation with a big bang. Religions also talk about creation by some entity with ultimate power. Everything seems to point to a moment when there was nothing and then suddenly there was everything. My question is why? There must be a reason or purpose for creation. Do you agree?"

She simply answered, "Yes."

He continued. “This Initiator of everything is far beyond our feeble minds to comprehend. For example, we live in the present phase of time. Oh, we can talk about the past and dream about the future, but we live in the present. The Creator knows the past, present, and future because time was made by the Creator. Knowing everything that exist in time does not mean that everything is predestined or forced to happen. I know the sun will rise tomorrow but I do not force the sun to rise. The sun just follows the laws of nature, or you might say the master plan.”

Ruby nodded and said, “Of course, everyone knows that.”

Seymour continued, “Now each part of creation has a role to play in this master plan. I think everything is connected and performs according to the Source that brought it into existence. I also believe that many life forms exist in the universe that were given the power of free will. They can choose to be part of the path back to the Source or, pick a different path of their own making. They were all given the power to choose their path.”

Ruby interrupted with, “I am a little confused.

Are the Creator and the Source the same thing?” “Yes, but our meager minds tend to put

inconceivable things into a category that we can comprehend. The word ‘Creator’ makes us think of a person or thing that brings something into existence. Even the word ‘God’ is defined by us as a superhuman being or spirit having power over nature and human fortunes. I have just come to realize that the ‘Source’ of everything is much more than I can comprehend. It is not a being or super spirit. It is not a father of all. It has no gender or physical form. Since it created time, it is not

subject to time and knows our past, present, and future events."

Ruby interrupted again. "You said there was a master plan. I assumed it was from the Creator or Source of all. If we cannot fathom the Source, how can we grasp this master plan?"

Seymour stared into Ruby's eyes and felt the unrestricted affection for his partner in life. Once again, she opened his mind to see the error in his thought process. That one question simplified and clarified everything. For a long time, he sat in silence and just held her hand. Finally, he whispered, "You're right. The master plan was my attempt to make the Source something I could understand. Because I make plans and if the Source were like me, it would make a master plan. But it is not like anything I can comprehend. It is like trying to say that unconditional love has a plan."

Stopping the glider and letting go of Ruby's hand, Seymour slowly rose to his feet. Staring down at the houses and farms inside the gigantic cave, he slowly walked to the edge of the balcony. At that moment, the sound of the babbling brook and a soft breeze on his face was more important than master plans or the problems in the world. Turning to look back at Ruby, his mind was filled with all the events they had shared together. She was just sitting with her hands in her lap waiting for his next reply. His memories abruptly stopped with the image of Yolanda picking up Martin's chair. Suddenly he knew! There was no master plan, but there was a universal responsibility. Seymour returned to sit by Ruby without speaking. Taking her hand, he started the slow back and forth motion of the glider. He murmured, "I guess you have a full-time job taking care of me. You freed me from my shell of silence and now you showed

me how my ego is taking me away from true understanding of why we were created. I thought I was the one who would reveal the master plan to the world. Now I believe that I will never do anything more important than putting a fallen chair back in place at the table. I must learn to humbly do the little things that help restore order and love to my insignificant space in the universe during my microsecond of time in existence. To sum it all up, I am just a spec of paint in the portrait of life."

The moon was more than half-way through its journey when Ruby realized how long they had been talking. The night air had brought a chill to the balcony when Robyn suddenly appeared with a blanket and declared, "Would you like a covering to keep warm?" The glider stopped. They both rose and Ruby replied, "No thank you. I think we are ready for bed." On their short walk back to the comfort of the night quarters, they discussed how Robyn appeared to be loving in the simple programming of taking care of humans. Then Ruby gave the last comment on the subject by saying, "Perhaps that is because she was built by very loving humans. Earlier you said you now believe the Source of all is like agape. Perhaps that love is in us, and we can put it into things we create."

That night started out the same as every other night. They snuggled together and held each other like young lovers before kissing and saying good night. Ruby turned to rest on her pillow and drifted into a silent sleep. Seymour put his hands behind his head with fingers interlocked and stared at the shadows on the ceiling. He started thinking of all the marvels in his life and Ruby, of course, was the greatest.

He remembered how he found the tri-blade in the river when he was very young. He pondered how it slowly became more than just a propeller and starting to have a mind of its own when it saved the stag from the vine in the swamp. Later, in the Great Hall, he learned how many scientists were watching him and controlling the tri-blade during all those great adventures. He got credit for flying through the sky in the tri-blade and preventing many disasters. But it was the people in the Great Hall who were in control of those missions.

His brain then drifted to how he could change software with his mind. He remembered how he was given that ability by an electronic shock from the dog Glen. He knew that Glen had been altered in the Great Hall by the scientist working on animal DNA. That shock did not give him any special power, it only made him a link to the people in the Great Hall. They were the ones changing the software and controlling the situation. He got the credit, but he was just a conduit to the experts doing the work.

This last revelation suddenly made him realize that his communication with the advanced androids was due to this link and not some special power he controlled. He was only able to communicate with these most advanced androids through this link and not telepathically. Everyone told him how powerful a gift he had been given and he believed he had some telepathic power. Now he realized it was only a connection to the specialists who were transferring the message.

Many universities and agencies thought Seymour was highly educated and had given him advanced degrees or certificates of recognition. They claimed he was a philosopher and deep thinker, but he knew he was no more than a connection. The feeling of being a fraud

grew and prevented him from falling asleep. Shame and guilt started creeping into his mood. He snickered when he thought of how he was going to solve the mystery of life. Mockingly he mumbled, “Oh yea, I am going to reveal the Master Plan.” Yes, on that balcony, rocking back and forth in the glider, Ruby had gently and lovingly asked the simple question, “If we cannot fathom the Source, how can we grasp this master plan?” That query now made him aware that the only thing bigger than the universe was his ego. He was no more than a tool being used by the silent heroes in a cave below.

The feeling of guilt was turning into despair when the words Martin told Glenna erupted from the pit of his memory to the forefront of his thoughts. If a dog that could not even speak could be a leader, then being a tool for helping others was not trivial. The despair and guilt left, and he felt peace cover him like a warm blanket. Wrapping his arms around the pillow, he turned to lay on his side and closed his eyes. He wanted sleep to take over, but the last words from Ruby echoed in his ears. “If the Source of all is like agape, perhaps unrestricted love is in us, and we need to put it into things we create.” Was it that simple? Is putting unconditional love into everything you do the Master Plan?

Unexpectedly the vision returned. A blue and green planet with three moons. A sky full of stars, but very different from our sky. It had a quasar in the distance that appeared to emit purple light. There were clusters that appeared to be galaxies and dark areas that must be black holes. He knew a black hole is a place in space where gravity is so strong that even light cannot get out. He had heard the gravity in those areas was due to matter that had been squeezed into a tiny space when a star died. Last time when he tried to take control of the image or ask questions, it vanished. This time he just observed the

beauty in the vision and tried to show love to the Source from which it came.

Meanwhile, in the Great Hall, a group was overly excited as they tried to record some very fuzzy pictures coming from Seymour's link.

One person shouted, "It's coming in faster than we can record."

Another added, "The data detail is beyond our storage capacity."

People were scrambling to get more storage to record the data. The excitement was at a peak when someone shouted, "We are losing the connection. I don't know why, but it is slowly fading. Can someone help me?"

Seymour, however, would remember everything and the beauty of not trying to record or use what was in this communication of love. His whole being was at peace with the Source of all creation for the first time in his life. His searching and struggle for understanding ended with this agape connection. Sleep covered him like a warm quilt on a cold night and the link to the Great Hall faded away.

Chapter 36

CONNECTIONS

During the same week that Seymour had his agape vision and the crew in the Great Hall were left scrambling to explain fuzzy images, the twins finished building a box with organic construction bricks. They were not far from Mom and Dad's sleeping chamber, and they had worked long and hard on the project.

Joseph commented, "Well there it is. The first structure ever built with living bricks."

They knew that biopolymers were produced by the cells of living organisms and could be used to make plastic parts. Wanting to make a small toy construction block that mimicked a living object, they had managed to make many different biopolymer plastic toy bricks. Each brick had a different DNA infused in the organic plastic, much like each human has a different DNA that sets them apart. They were still just small toy construction bricks for building walls and toy objects but they each had distinctive identities.

Andrew commented, "Each brick is unique, but it can connect to others and make many different objects. They are like people that can work together to accomplish projects. Now we need to show people that if bricks can work together to make the world a better place, so can people."

Joseph stretched his arms out, yawned, and replied, "They may be unique, but they still don't have free will. I think we are going to need more input from the girls to solve this problem. Let's get some sleep and see them tomorrow." Both Joseph and Andrew had been working very close with Faith and Hope, the twins from

France, ever since the girls moved into the university lodging on a scholarship provided by the school. Perhaps it was just the age of the group, but the connection had grown into more of a relationship with deep feelings. Andrew was eager to see Hope, so he agreed quickly and turned off the lights as he headed for the door. Sleep was swift to put the boys dreaming of the meeting that would come in the morning. Centuries had not changed the desire that dwells in the souls of those who are drawn to others by physical attraction and similar goals.

In the morning when the twins met, the universal clock seemed to change pace. They no longer worried about the new DNA bricks, but the hours and days that followed looked more like a courtship. The only truth to be illuminated was the link between Joseph and Faith, and the connection between Andrew and Hope. All the love songs written cannot come close to the music that played when these soulmates touched. The desire to hold one another and kiss overpowered all thoughts of saving the world from disaster.

Other connections had transformed during this same time period. Stacey and Martin were making plans to get married. Yolinda and Eugene wanted to make it a double wedding. James was making trips to the Great Hall to visit Grace and rumors had been heard that he asked Ezekiel for her hand in marriage. Even Glenna had found a male golden retriever named Ezra to spend time with when Stacey was busy with Martin.

A few people in the Great Hall were complaining because some links were lost. They could no longer see any of Seymour's visions and Robyn was not sending reports the way she did in the past. The disconnect started when the people in the wheel realized the Creature was also using the information being sent to the Great Hall.

The isolation and privacy produced an environment that promoted intimacy among the members of the wheel. Intimacy allowed everyone to open up romantically and emotionally to those closest to them. The only truth that could be illuminated was the fact that many weddings were on the path the wheel was taking.

One day, when James was visiting Grace in the Great Hall, a man walked up to him and asked, “Are you James Blox?”

The man’s demeaner caused James to hesitate in answering. He thought everyone knew who he was. The serious tone and the question itself made James restrain from a quick answer. Finally, Grace interrupted with, “It’s OK, Jim. This is Edmund Howe from security. He always looks like a major problem is in progress. You can talk to him.”

Edmund quickly responded, “I’m afraid there is a major problem right now. Someone is making Daori coins that are programmed for general use. They are being used to corrupt people in the Great Hall. Further analysis revealed the diamond content in these coins is the same as the one given to us by your father. We programmed the coins we made to be used by the university only for your group and not for general use. Recently, your father has blocked our link to his visions and communication with Robyn has been minimal. Can you explain any of this?

James took Grace’s hand, looked her in the eye, smiled and said, “I would be glad to.” Turning to face Edmund he continued, “When the school used the coins to cover our expenses, we had to approve the payment which erased the restriction on the Daori and made it a general-purpose coin. It cannot be restricted in its use after that, but it still should have been linked back to the

Great Hall mint with a record of use. If the link back to the mint that made it has been destroyed, you do have a problem. The coin should register as a counterfeit when checked by anyone accepting it. If you checked the link, how did it register?"

Edmond answered, "Some were counterfeit and some were not."

James continued, "Our main purpose at the university is software that shows people false claims. Included in our study was a way to detect counterfeit papers and coins. Unfortunately, the material in a true Daori coin makes them even more valuable in the black market when the link is blocked. The coin may be illegal, but the value is still high."

Grace had often discussed the work at the university with James and interrupted with a question. "Do you mean the programming is still in the coin but is being blocked and not removed?"

James responded, "Yes. The only way to remove the program is to melt the coin. This would take an extremely high temperature and destroy the value of the coin." Before anyone could continue James added, "I do not like talking out here in the open where everyone can hear. Do you have a secure room we can use?"

Edmund agreed and told them to follow him. On the walk to the room, James explained, "The reason my father has blocked your monitoring of his visions is because he realized the enemy may also be viewing and listening to everything."

Edmund queried, "Enemy?"

Grace had already reached a level of connection with James equal to the bond Ruby had with Seymour. She could feel the desire in James to tell Edmund

everything he knew about the Creature but she felt it was not the time or place. She interjected, “Let’s wait until we get to the room!” The walk continued in silence Edmund told them the secure room was a gold-plated sphere with an outer covering of lead over a foot thick. Inside the sphere on a flat floor evenly spaced chairs surrounded a round table. The inside walls were made of silicon and contained circuits to produce an electro-magnetic field to block transmissions when activated. After entering the room, Grace asked Edmund to wait by the table for a minute. She turned toward James and with one quick glance he knew what had to be done. James held his hands out and repeated his father’s words by shouting, “In the name of the Creator of all, I command you evil spirits to leave this room!” He then looked into Edmund’s eyes and said, “Command them to leave now!” Edmund thought it was silly, but repeated the command. There was a strange haze that filled the room. Most of it seemed to come from Edmund’s area. The haze seemed to be sucked out the door but there was no wind in the room. James quickly slammed the door and spun the wheel to lock it. Grace ran to a panel on the wall and placed her hand on the red area under the words “Activate Protection.” A loud rumbling could be heard and the walls in the room started to produce light when the overhead lights went out. A red light over the door appeared indicating the door could not be opened. The rumbling faded away, and the room was fully illuminated when the red panel on the wall turned green.

Grace turned toward James and explained, “The noise you heard was the thick lead walls starting to rotate randomly to prevent anyone from focusing on a spot to penetrate. The lights went out because electricity is also blocked from entering the room. The electro-magnetic

field generator in the walls prevents transmissions and lights up the room. I think we can talk now."

They both turned to face Edmund and found him sitting at the table with a strange look on his face. He first glanced at Grace, then James, and finally muttered, "What happened?."

Both James and Grace sat down at the table next to Edmund. Grace sat at his right and James on his left. Grace was the first to speak. "You know I have given many tours of the chamber called the Meta-World—the room with the pi symbol above the door. My experience in that chamber has opened my eyes to the fact that metaphysical beings exist. Some call them angels, or spirits. Some say there are also demons or devils. Others have claimed they are the souls of the dead. All I know is they exist and I believe they can connect to the part of us that is beyond the physical world."

James added, "I believe one of the strongest of these spirits is the one we call the Creature. This being has many followers or soldiers in its army. The Creature wants all who die to join him and never find the path to Xanadu. This is why we have labeled the Creature as the enemy."

Edmund interrupted, "But, what was that haze that flew out the door? Are you saying those were spirits from the Meta-World?"

James continued. "I don't know. I do believe that we have the power to order these spirits and they will follow certain commands. My father showed us the command to get them out of the room at one of our meetings." He stared into Edmund's eyes and asked, "Do you feel different?."

Edmund softly replied, “I feel tired. I no longer want to interrogate anyone. I just want to sit back, close my eyes, and take a nap.”

Grace whispered, “You may have lost your connections to the spirits that motivated you to act. They provide thoughts like whispers in your mind, both good and bad suggestions. They are like the legend of the two wolves. This conflict energizes the brain and stimulates the body. When the battle ends the mind is at peace and the body wants to sleep.”

James quickly added, “I can tell you now about the general purpose Daori coins. We have a record of where they first went and how they were used by the university. The record is only in the memories of the four people that changed the coins. I am one of the four and you must memorize what I tell you. Do not record or write it down because the enemy may find it. This should give you a starting point in your search and lead you to the source that is trying to bribe the people in the Great Hall. I could not tell you before because we were afraid the enemy spies could hear and obstruct your search. “

Suddenly Edmund felt energized to start the hunt. He sat up in his chair, interlocked his fingers on the table, and said, “OK. I will try to memorize your information. I am still skeptical about these beings in what you call the Meta-World, but I will play your way for now.” He separated his hands and waved them to emphasize, “It seems rather ridiculous because if they exist, the minute I leave the room they will just read my mind and get what I memorized.”

James quickly grabbed Edmund's left hand and held it tightly with both of his hands causing Edmund to look into his eyes, “They can only read your thoughts if you let them. By repeating the command we used to drive

them from this room, you can keep them away from your thoughts. They live in the Meta-World and many of your thoughts exist in that realm. You exist in both the physical and metaphysical worlds. You have the power to block their vision in the physical world and drive them away. Be careful. They are very clever. They convinced my father to listen to them and almost had him in control. Only my mother's unconditional love could break the hold they had on him."

Grace seized Edmund's right arm, causing him to break his eye lock on James. Edmund turned to face her while she proclaimed, "I will always be here when you need someone. We can meet in this room and drive them out so you can have peace of mind. If he can, I'm sure James will join us. From now on, you will never be alone again. We are connected."

Edmund was a doubtful man, but for some strange reason he could feel the connection with Grace and James. He thought it was only because they had their hands on him, but when they let go it was still there. He remembered when he was on the football team and the coach had just given a speech before the big game. He was a third string player and knew he would never be out on the field, but he felt the tension in every play. Once again, he felt a strong connection with the members of a team seeking the same goal. He replied, "Thank you. I will do my best to solve this problem." He memorized the information, placed his hand on the green control to drop the security, and when the door finally opened, they all left the room.

The past few years had brought many new connections and commitments to the people in the wheel. There were marriages and celebrations of festive times, but also forlorn passings of family and friends. The

wedding between Grace and James seemed to spark a fire as nuptials for the twins, Stacey and Martin, and Yolanda and Eugene soon followed. Not long after as the cycle of life continued, Seymour's parents passed and within months, Ruby's parents followed. It was not unusual for elderly couples to pass together from a disease called Geriatrics. They were found holding each other and smiling as they journeyed from this world into the next. Everyone knew they had found the path and took it together. The ultimate and final connection.

These years were not just filled with joy and sorrow, there was also fear. Edmund had followed the information he memorized in the secure room and discovered corruption in the Great Hall. The chamber with the symbol of the Daori coin above the door was where the counterfeit coins were originally minted. They were used by the university and converted to general use and then they passed through different stores to a small company called Speculations Incorporated. This company had been investigated for removing programming and creating counterfeit coins. Spec Inc. also worked with the people in the mint at the Great Hall. These were the same people that had accused Seymour of making the coins for his own use. They were putting together a case against him and trying to shut down the wheel. Edmund feared the worst was yet to come because the enemy was now connecting to people in the hall and using them to fight for unworthy causes. They even asked Edmund to help build a lawsuit against Seymour and put him in jail. He could feel their anger when he refused and heard the bad spirits whisper, "Get rich. Do what they tell you or you will be next on the list. Take some coins and you will be happy. If you don't, they will have you removed from the Great Hall. You will lose your job." He felt fear and immediately left the chamber.

He went to the secure room and executed the ritual to remove the spirits before he closed the door. Again, peace came over him, the fear was gone, and he was able to think clearly. He remembered a phrase from a president during the great depression centuries ago. It tugged on his brain like a dog on a chain. "The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself." He remembered his father telling him that his ancestor worked with a president long ago and helped to make that saying timeless. He remembered how the fight against the depression was considered to be a war. He knew, beyond any doubt, he was in a war with the enemy James had called the Creature. He may have retreated from the first battle due to fear, but now he would get ready for the next encounter. He knew he needed help.

That night, Edmund contacted Grace and asked her to meet him. She said, "I will meet you in front of the secure room at eight in the morning in two days." He agreed.

Arriving at the room two days later, Edmund was surprised to see not just Grace but James, Seymour, and Ruby as well. He started to say something but Grace put her finger on her lips to keep him quiet and they all entered the room in silence. After the ritual to remove all beings from the Meta-World and the start up security finished, Grace said, "I detected an urgency in your voice and felt it best to get a few others involved. I hope you don't mind."

Edmund responded, "I think we will need all the help we can get. The people in the mint are using counterfeit coins to start a war against Seymour." He turned and faced Seymour as he continued, "I believe they have been turned by what you called the Creature to try and put you in jail or worse. When I would not help them, they threatened me with being bribed by you and cooperating with you. I felt like I had lost a battle and a big war has just begun!"

Chapter 37

THE INVESTIGATION

In the secure room Edmund said he suspected that the leaders in the coin minting chamber were making special purpose Daori and using them to corrupt people in other sections of the Great Hall. Looking directly at Seymour he grumbled, “They told me they had some very powerful people in the Hall already on board and I better not go against their plan. They said if I would testify against you, I would be promoted and paid enough to make myself the leader in my chamber. Then yesterday the banker notified me that a large amount of Daori was placed in my account by an unknown source. He said it was programmed for my testimony in a trial and it could only be released by the judge after I give witness in court. Late last night a man came to my door and told me he would be the judge in the trial against you. He said I needed to make sure you were found guilty or he would proclaim the Daori coins were a bribe from you to get acquitted.”

Seymour interrupted with, “What did you say?” “He never gave me a chance to reply. He just turned and quickly walk away.” Edmund added, “They know the diamond in the coin came from you. I’m sure they will use that to back their claim. If I defend you in any way, I know they will come after me. I don’t know what to do!”

Seymour felt Ruby grab his hand. He turned to gaze into her beautiful emerald eyes and noticed the smile on her face. Without words, she was telling him to help Edmund overcome his fear. She knew he would know what to do and her smile said proceed. He turned back to Edmund with the same grin and said, “Peace be with you. Be not afraid. Truth and love cannot be

destroyed, they can only be hidden. You have been given the task of exposing the truth. You will do this with agape and humility. Your name will be recorded in the history of the Great Hall as the man that destroyed the invasion of corruption and greed and made this place pure again."

Edmund did not know what to say. He glanced around the table, and everyone was looking at him with beautiful smiles. He finally just blurted out one word, "How?"

James broke the silence with, "I have been working for years on exposing truth and I would like to offer some advice, with your permission."

Edmund responded, "Please do."

"Who is the most trusted person you know that has authority in the Great Hall?" James asked.

Edmund took a moment to think and then answered, "I guess that would be Sibyl. Do you know who she is?"

Everyone grinned and said, "Oh yes!" or "Certainly!" and "I agree."

James continued, "Go to Sibyl and in a very unprotected, public place ask her for permission to investigate the misconduct of someone we thought was honorable. Tell her you were made aware of this by people in the coin mint so you would like to start gathering facts in that chamber. She will probably agree and anyone listening will think you are doing what you were told." Edmund's interest level peaked when he heard what James had proposed. He was no longer slumped in his chair but sat up straight and asked, "Then what?" James continued, "Then you will need to go to the mint and tell them you are gathering facts for the forthcoming trial. You must put in writing all the data

against Seymour but memorize how it was gathered and if people were paid to say things that were not true. Record the names of everyone that is against Seymour but memorize the names of anyone in the mint that is not in favor of their plan. It must look like you are working with the people against Seymour while you are really gathering evidence to reveal the truth. Especially learn all you can on how the judge was picked for the trial."

There was a moment of stillness as Edmund digested the comments from James. He ultimately responded with, "They know we are meeting in this secure room and may not believe anything I say."

With a very gentle voice, Seymour spoke. "Always tell the truth. They will probably monitor you to see if you are lying. Never forget humility is more powerful than arrogance. You must stay calm. They will be using eye-detect to see if you are telling the truth. Never look down, but look straight into the eyes of the person you are talking to. Tell them you were only supposed to meet with Grace and were surprised when we showed up. Disclose to them you were afraid of being called Seymour's accomplice and did not know what to do. Also add that there will be no more meetings like this until after the trial and all the culprits are in jail. All these things are true and their lie detectors will show them you are not trying to deceive anyone." James firmly added, "From now on you are on your own. There can be no communication with anyone in this room. Are you sure you want to accept this mission?" Edmund did not answer immediately. He scanned the people sitting at the table. He noticed that Seymour was holding Ruby's hand. Grace also held James by the hand. He never found a soulmate and devoted most of his life to protecting the Great Hall. He knew he was truly alone but could feel love coming from everyone at the table. With a strong

voice, full of confidence, he declared, “This is not just my mission, it is why I am here. I hope I do not let you down.”

Like her father, Grace could sometimes predict the future and she instantly stated, “You won’t!”

They decided to make the meeting very short and told Edmund to walk away from them quickly when they were out of the room. The control light turned red, the door opened, and Edmund hustled out into the corridor walking quickly toward the coin mint. The others walked out slowly with dejected looking faces. Because Ruby was an empath, she could feel the presence of lifeforces gathering around them. She said with a sorrowful voice, “What do we do now?”

Seymour knew what she was doing so he added, “Let’s find a place where we can pray.”

Grace added, “I know a place. Follow me.” They departed in silence to the small chapel in the Great Hall.

Edmund knew that Sibyl would be in the courtyard advising people, so he went there and asked her for permission to investigate the misconduct of someone thought of as honorable. He told her the coin mint made him aware of this and asked for permission to start gathering facts in that chamber. She agreed.

He then went directly to the coin mint and asked a young man at the chamber door if he could meet with the people in charge. He was led into a room with a rectangular table and asked to sit in the middle of the long side near the back wall. He was given a glass of water and told it would take a few minutes but the people he wanted to see would join him soon. Because he was in security, he had seen rooms like this many times before. They had cameras in the corners of the room

aimed directly at him and the chair he was in would all be used to detect lies. It was definitely an interrogation room. He glanced at the glass of water they had given him and wondered if there was any drug in it just as the door opened. Three people entered followed by a robonaut that stood by the door and stared into his eyes. He knew that his answers to all questions needed to be the truth or they would know he was trying to deceive them.

The first person to enter the room was a man in his thirties with a mustache and a goatee. He was the person who told Edmund they wanted him to help put Seymour in jail. Sitting directly in front of Edmund, he activated a display that could only be viewed from his side of the table. The second person who entered was the young man that met Edmund at the door and he sat on Mr. mustache's left. He was followed by a young woman that sat on the right. Then the bearded man said, "Nice to see you again. Did you decide to help us put Seymour in jail?"

Edmund stared straight into his eyes and answered, "After I left here, I asked for a meeting with Grace from the Meta-World chamber for her opinion. I thought she might know something because she was very close to Seymour's son. She told me we could meet in two days, and then showed up today with Seymour, his wife, and son. I only wanted to talk to Grace and when I tried to tell her she made a gesture to be silent. She insisted on not talking until they were in a secure room. Once inside, I told them I was afraid of being accused of collaborating with anything they may get charged with. The discussion was cut very short. I left that meeting, got permission to investigate, and came straight here to find out what you know about Seymour."

All three investigators glanced down at the display Edmund could not see. They did not realize that during his many years of investigating, he had learned to focus on a person's eyes to see what they were looking at. The reflection showed, "TRUTH. Members of meeting left hopeless. Went to chapel to pray. PROCEED."

The bearded man continued, "Good! I think you will find that Seymour has been using coins made in our mint to benefit his sons and other personal ventures. My name is Gered Werop, Director of the mint. The young man on my left is Sile Salef, Head of Mint Security. And the lady on my right is our head lawyer on this case, Megotis Ipred. Where do you want to start?"

"I am Edmund Howe. An investigator from the Great Hall Security chamber. I was told to look into some counterfeit coins found circulating in the hall. If you would permit me, I would like to keep notes of our conversation."

Gered nodded approval and Edmund touched a button on his watch and started talking shorthand. Only the robot in the room knew what he was recording. It was translated and sent to the display in front of Gered. It read, "Investigation of Seymour at coin mint on 3BT-?$!"

Megotis instantly probed, "What does 3BT-?$! represent?" Edmund smiled and looked straight into her eyes as he explained, "It is a double encrypted code linked with my watch that can only be decoded by two external devices and my password. It is necessary to protect people and events recorded in my notes from being used unlawfully. Even reading my memory electronically to get the password would not work because the external devices would detect the probe and guard the information. In the event of my death, certain

key members in the hall would get my notes and could decrypt them with their passwords. Gered, you know about this system, don't you?"

The display in front of Gered read, "Truth," and before he could answer, Megotis continued, "Please tell me what those letters and symbols mean. I do not like private notes!"

Edmund answered, "The 3BT is the date, place, and time of this meeting. The dash signifies names are coming, and the three symbols after the dash are your names and titles."

The display again flashed "Truth" as Gered finally answered, "I did not know about this double encrypted code because I had to replace the former director when she had a mental breakdown. Let's move on and get Seymour put in jail where he belongs."

At that moment, Edmund was made aware of two important facts. They could not read his encrypted notes and Gered was not a sanctioned director of the mint. Because the mint had its own security force, he had never met the former director and asked, "Who was the former director and what caused the breakdown?." "She's a lady about your age and could not handle the stress of putting Seymour in jail. She is being treated right here at the mint to bring her back but right now she just mumbles crazy stuff and cannot handle the job. Her name is Elizabeth Van Lew named after her relative from long ago. Like her namesake she is now known as 'Crazy Bet.' I guess her mental condition is in her DNA." Gered replied.

Edmund made a note and probed deeper, "I would like to talk with her. There may be something big we can use at the trial that made her go crazy."

Once again, the display indicated “Truth” as Gered answered, “She gets very violent and may attack you. We keep her on a high dose of ‘benzos’ every day to keep her under control. I would prefer you stay away for your own safety. She gets very violent when we try to inject her so she has to take her medication orally. In fact, it took us a long time before we found a nurse that she would not throw things at when they entered the room. He is a very old man that she worked with when she was in charge of the mint. I think she recognizes him and feels that he won’t hurt her. But she may get violent if you walk into the room.”

“OK. Let him go into the room and I will enter right behind him. He can stay while I try and talk to her. You can even have your robot stand by the door to protect me and record the session,” Edmund insisted.

Gered glanced at the display and read, “Truth. Reasonable request to gather data.” He reluctantly agreed and grumbled, “OK. But don’t waste much time on her. We have the trial set for Friday and our judge, prosecutor, and witnesses are all in place. Most of these are not from the Great Hall and we have them living in a restricted area. Seymour got his summons and is defending himself without a lawyer. You are the final nail in his coffin. This should be a slam dunk and the man could be in jail Saturday!”

The meeting ended and Edmund spent the rest of the day gathering information about people who worked in the mint. He could not get anyone to explain why Elizabeth was being treated at the mint and not sent to a health center in the hall. He discovered that the man acting as Elizabeth’s nurse was retired and used to be her head of security. He also found a few people in key positions to program the coins that would not answer any

questions. They seemed to be working under tension and in great distress. After leaving the mint, he went to his secure room and made encrypted notes of what he had discovered. He also made notes of what he wanted to ask Elizabeth in the morning. He left the secure room and went directly to his sleeping chamber. Even though his mind was filled with questions and worry, exhaustion overpowered him and slumber came quickly.

The next morning, Edmund woke early, showered, dressed, and scuttled to the mint to follow the old man into Elizabeth's room. They were accompanied by Gered's robot who stood at Edmund's side and would monitor everything. When they entered the room the man said, "Good morning, Liz. Do not be afraid. I have brought someone to see you. The robot is only here to record the meeting. No one will touch you. I will give you your medication after the meeting."

To Edmund's surprise, Liz seemed very calm as she stared at the old man from her chair facing the door and replied, "Who are you?"

"My name is Joseph and I am your nurse. The man behind me is called Edmund and he would like to ask you a few questions. He is from the security center in the Great Hall and just wants to make sure you are safe." Joseph stepped aside to let Edmund get closer.

Edmund took one step forward and froze. She was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. When he stared into her dark brown eyes, he felt a connection he never felt before. Most of his adult years he had been alone. He had never met anyone who touched his soul like this before. He could feel her loneliness and suffering. He had heard the expression "love at first sight," and now he knew what it meant. Suddenly Liz

shouted, “I’m dead,” and then started reciting a bunch of gibberish.

Joseph stepped back in front of Edmund to calm her down and asked him to leave the room. Edmund and the robot quickly exited and, in the corridor, he asked the robot to explain what just happened. The reply was, “She thinks she is dead.”

Edmund asked, “But what was all that garble after she said I’m dead?”

The robot replied “Undetermined. Cannot decipher.” Edmund knew what he had to do. He knew that if he was dead only the trusted heads of the Great Hall could decrypt his notes. He needed to get Liz’s message to Sibyl, and hoped she would know what to do next. He left the mint and went straight to the secure room. He recorded all the information in a doubly encrypted format and included Liz’s message. He sent everything to Sibyl and waited for a reply. All he got back was “See you at the trial.”

Chapter 38

THE HEARING

On Friday at 10 AM, Edmund went to the coin mint room set aside for the trial. There was a note on the door stating that the trial was moved to the Great Hall Legal Chamber and start time rescheduled to 11:30 AM by order of the Great Hall Managers. He immediately went to see Elizabeth but found both she and Joseph had been removed from the coin mint. No one knew why, but he was told that many others were subpoenaed and at a trial in the legal chamber. He realized Sibyl was now in charge and hurried out of the mint to go to the trial. A large crowd was blocking his path to the door and he had to show his credentials and push his way to the front of the mob. He heard people asking, 'What is this all about?" He recognized hall members from many different chambers by the colors of their badges. Only his credentials got him past security and into the legal chamber. Once inside, he was ushered to a small private room with an image projected on a wall and a chair facing that wall. His escort instructed, "Have a seat and you will be called when it is your turn to testify." The guide left, the door closed, and a green light above the door turned red indicating it was locked. Upon sitting down, Edmund found the armchair very comfortable. There was a small table on the right side of the chair with a polished wooden top. He stared at the picture on the wall and noticed the words below the image read, "Room monitored. Voice requests." Edmund was not hungry but his throat felt dry. There was still a good twenty minutes before the trial was scheduled to start so he said in a loud voice, "I am thirsty. Could I get a limeade with no ice but slightly cool?" A non-gender robotic voice replied, "One

minute to fulfill request." After the minute passed the tabletop on his right slid away from his chair and seemed to fall down and disappear. Another identical top rose from within the table with a glass filled with limeade on it and replaced the original top. Edmund took the glass, tasted the beverage, and said, "It's delicious. Thank you."

The voice replied, "You're welcome."

Edmund returned his attention to the image on the wall. It showed a judge's bench raised high enough to allow a person to see everyone in the room. A robonaut stood on each side and behind the bench. Although they looked very human, Edmund was sure they were the latest design and equipped with all the cutting-edge technology. There was a large gallery, for public seating, on the opposite side of the room with people shuffling in to find their places. An invisible barrier above a short wall barred anyone or anything from passing or going over the short wall to the floor area in front of the gallery. It sparkled and beeped whenever anything touched the gallery side surface of the transparent wall. On the floor in front of the gallery there were two rectangular tables, each with three chairs on one side facing the judge's bench. Between the tables and the judge's bench were two rows of seven chairs facing the judge. These chairs were surrounded on three sides by a six-foot wall with a sign that read "jury box." There was no wall in front of these chairs so the people sitting could see an image displayed on the front of the judge's bench of the two tables behind them, but the people at these tables would not be able to see anyone sitting in the chairs. On the left side of the judge's bench was the witness box, positioned so everyone in the room could see the person in that chair clearly. Because Edmund had been in security for many

years, he had seen this courtroom before, but never from this isolated and fortified area.

The gallery was full and prattle at a maximum when a section of the far wall opened and the prosecution team entered. Edmund recognized Gered, Megotis, and the man who claimed he would be the judge at the trial. They entered and sat at the table on the left of the gallery. On the opposite side of the room, another section of the wall opened and Seymour and Ruby entered and sat at the table on the right of the gallery. Due to Seymour's popularity, the crowd started to cheer, but a loud voice announced, "Silence! Please stand!"

A section of the wall behind the judge's bench opened and six people wearing different colored robes entered. They marched down a short stairway on the right and disappeared into the jury box. The announcement came, "Monitor of this session is Justice Dayot," as an elderly, silvered hair man, in a red robe entered and sat in the judge's chair. Edmund knew the colored robes represented the seven colors in the rainbow and the seven sections of the world that founded the Great Hall. Everyone knew the decisions made here were even more powerful than those made on the surface in the World Court. Dayot announced, "Let it be recorded that this hearing is to determine if the person know as Seymour E. Blox may be guilty of misusing Daori coins made in our mint for personal profit and possibly other crimes against the Great Hall. If there are enough findings to support these claims, then we will proceed with a formal trial. The prosecution may now present their evidence."

Megotis stood and stated, "Because we believe the offender is capable of controlling software and robots with his mind, we demand he not be able to defend himself. We have brought an impartial legal person who

is a judge outside of the Great Hall. If the court permits, we would like this individual to be Seymour's defense lawyer." Dayot smiled and controlled his urge to laugh as he proclaimed, "The prosecution would like to pick the defendant's counsel? I think that would be a first in the history of courtroom procedures. Request denied!"

Megotis asserted, "But his power to control digital software and robots will surely distort many of the facts we wish to present to this hearing. At least put him in a secure box to prevent this and do not let him defend himself!"

The judge's smile vanished as he continued with a serious expression, "Ms. Ipred, Seymour's mind is linked to a chamber in this hall. He never had the power to alter anything, but that link allowed the Great Hall to make the changes he desired. There are people in the gallery behind you that can verify what I just said. Matter of fact, everything is recorded and documented if you need further proof."

With a stunned look she turned and stared at the gallery. She saw many smiles and a few nodding their heads as if to say, "Yes." Turning back to face the bench she muttered softly, "That won't be necessary," and sat down. She knew her whole case had just been destroyed. She also knew anything she presented as a crime would now be against the Great Hall and not just against Seymour. Gered wanted to drop all the charges but she would not agree.

"You may present your findings now," the judge declared, "And Mr. Blox will have the right to explain or refute them."

Gered knew that the people he had paid to lie on the stand would be discovered by eye contact with the

robots alongside the judge. His last hope was Edmund. He knew Edmund always told the truth and thought he would support their position. He leaned over close to Megotis and whispered, “Call Edmund.”

She stood up and stated, “We would like to call detective Edmund Howe from the Great Hall security chamber. He was assigned by the head of his department to investigate Mr. Blox. We believe he will be able to show this court why Mr. Seymour E. Blox should be in jail!”

An opening on the opposite side of the room from which he entered suddenly appeared and a robot entered and stated, “This way please.” Edmund followed the robot into the courtroom to a chair in the witness box and sat down. His body language showed no signs of fear or stress and he smiled at the judge when he took his seat.

The judge pointed at the robonaut behind him on his left, and asserted, “Please look into the eyes of that robot and tell us your full name and profession. In your own words also add that what you say in this courtroom will be the truth.”

Edmund turned slightly to his right, stared at the robot and said, “My name is Edmund Howe. I am a senior investigator from the Great Hall security chamber. I swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth to the best of my ability.”

Turning back to face the judge, he noticed Dayot was looking at an image on his desk that only he could see. There was only one word shown on that display, “TRUTH.” Dayot shifted slightly in his chair, straightened his bright red gown, glanced down at Megotis and decreed, “You may proceed.”

Edmund turned slightly to his left to face Megotis as she announced, “Please Mr. Howe, keep your answers brief and do not elaborate. Most of my questions can be answered with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no.” After a slight pause she continued, “Is it true that you came to the coin mint to investigate counterfeit coins?”

Edmund replied, “Yes.”

She continued, “Is it not also true that you were told by the director of the mint that we knew Seymour E. Blox was responsible for the forgery.”

“Yes,” was Edmund’s response.

“During your investigation did you find anything to disprove this statement?” she added as her confidence level rose.

Edmund simply answered with, “No.”

Megotis felt that she was going to win this case as her confidence level peaked. She raised her voice and almost shouted as she declared, “Is it not also true that during your investigation you found the diamond content of the forged coins came from Seymour E. Blox!” Turning she pointed at Seymour and emphasized with, “The man sitting in that chair, right there, in this courtroom!”

Edmund remained calm and simply answered, “Yes.”

Megotis slammed the fist of her right hand into the palm of her open left hand and shouted, “And is not also true that you set a meeting to talk to someone from the Meta-World chamber and were surprised when a large amount was deposited in your account before that meeting took place. Then when the meeting was about to

begin Seymour also showed up and attended without your knowledge or approval!"

Edmund showed no signs of emotion as once again he simply answered, "Yes."

Turning to face the judge she concluded with, "There is no doubt in my mind that Mr. Seymour E. Blox tried to bribe this witness and is guilty of forgery and many other crimes. I'm done with this witness." She turned, walked back to her table and sat down. Gered patted her hand and whispered, "Good job."

The judge however was staring at his display because when she made her last statement the "eye-detect" robot behind the judge scanned her and sent a message to the judge that read "Totally False." There was a murmur in the gallery as people discussed what had just happened. Banging his gavel on the amplifier block created a very loud crashing sound and produced silence Dayot glanced at Seymour and asked, "Would you like to cross examine the witness?"

Seymour answered as he stood and walked closer to the witness box, "Yes, Your Honor." Standing in front of the bench, Seymour asked, "Since I will not require just simple 'yes' or 'no' answers, could I have your 'eye-detect' robot stand behind me and observe this witness?" Instantly Megotis jumped to her feet and shouted,

"I object! He is trying to make my witness look like a liar!"

The judge shouted, "Ms. Ipred, you will sit down and remain quiet. This is a hearing not a trial. You only allowed the witness to answer yes or no to your questions. There was no need to use eye-detect to determine the truth of his answer. Mr. Blox, however, wants this witness to elaborate freely on his answers.

Eye-detect is a reasonable request for this type of examination. Besides, I am the only one that will see the results of the test." He then turned to face the robot and said, "Stand behind Mr. Blox and determine the truth in the answers given to questions the witness is required to answer."

When the eye-detect android was in place Seymour proceeded, "Mr. Howe will you describe in your own words what you discovered at the coin mint."

Edmund sat up straight in his chair and stared at Seymour as he testified. "The most important thing I discovered was the former director of the mint, a Ms. Elizabeth Van Lew, had been replaced and was under sedation and held in a secure isolation room. I asked key people in the coin making crew about this but everyone seemed afraid to talk. The acting director, Mr. Gered Werop, claimed she got violent and went crazy when they told her about Mr. Blox's crimes."

The judge glanced at his display panel that showed "Truth."

Seymour enquired, "Did you get a chance to visit Ms. Van Lew?"

Edmund simply replied, "Yes."

Seymour continued, "Please tell me in your own words what you saw and what you felt about Ms. Van Lew's condition."

Edmund stared at the eye detecting robot behind Seymour and without even one blink or movement of his eyes declared, "I saw a woman about my age sitting in a chair that was turned around with her arms resting on the back of the chair and her chin resting on her arms. When I looked deeply into her eyes, I saw suffering and fear. I also felt a connection because I know what it is like to

feel isolated and alone. Suddenly she spoke in a strong voice and said, 'I am dead.' She then repeated, over and over, a sequence of letters, numbers, and the names of well-known symbols that seemed to make no sense at all.

When we left her room, the android guard they sent to protect me stated, 'She thinks she is dead.' When I asked what she said after her I-am-dead statement, the robot proclaimed, 'Cannot be deciphered.' Because of my history in security, I realized that if she were dead, and the head of a chamber, her doubly encrypted personal diary would be opened by the directors of the Great Hall. I believed the message she repeated over and over was for these directors, but I was not sure. I turned everything over to Sibyl." Edmund finally looked down at his interlocked fingers in his lap and tried to relax.

The judge was staring at the number of times his display had printed "True" and could not find even one false or question mark. He turned to face Seymour and declared, "You may continue if you have more questions." Seymour turned back to face Edmund and requested, "Mr. Howe, would you tell us, in your own words, everything you know about the coins that were deposited in your account recently."

Edmund paused, then looked straight ahead to allow eye-detection testing and stated, "The morning before we met, I was told by Gered Werop that some very powerful people in the hall were helping put Mr. Blox in jail. He said if I cooperated, I would be promoted and paid enough to make myself the leader in my chamber. That same morning my banker notified me that a large amount of Daori was placed in my account by an unknown source. He said it was programmed for my testimony in a trial and it could only be released by the judge after I give witness in court. Late that night a man

came to my door and told me he would be the judge in the trial against you. He said I needed to make sure you were found guilty or he would proclaim the Daori coins were a bribe from you to get acquitted. He then turned and quickly walked away."

Seymour did not show any anger as he calmly asked, "Did you get this man's name?"

Edmund replied, "No. But he is sitting at that table right next to Gered. The man Ms. Ipred wanted to make your lawyer."

Instantly shouts came from different sections of the gallery. "Put them on trial!" "This is a joke, Seymour is innocent!" "Arrest those people, they are the guilty ones!" The invisible wall sparkled as it blocked objects thrown at the prosecutor's table. Gered said something to Megotis and she stood with her hand in the air, facing the judge. The judge slammed his gavel twice on the amplifier block to produce a deafening crash and shouted, "Quiet. Quiet. I will have silence in this courtroom or I will clear the gallery!" It took a few seconds but the people finally sat down and were silent. Judge Dayot took a long look at his display then looked up at Megotis and said, "Ms. Ipred, do you want to make a statement?"

"Yes, Your Honor. You have just seen the power of Mr. Blox. Everything you view on your desk monitor is controlled by Mr. Blox. That is why he wanted the robot to do the eye-detect on the witness. He controls everything you see. He even has control over these people in the gallery. You are making the same mistake that got him free years ago when REED had him on trial for destroying the environment."

Dayot started to look down when Megotis declared in a strong voice, “Whatever you read it is what Mr. Blox wants you to see. I tell you he can control everything!”

He stared at Megotis and stated, “If that were true, but I do not believe it is, then how do you propose anyone could put Mr. Blox on trial?”

She continued, “He must be locked in an isolation room and not allowed to see or hear anything. A normal person who is not under his control must act as his defense and must have no contact with him until after the trial is over. This is why we wanted Judge Trocrup from outside the Great Hall to be his judge or at least his defense counsel.”

Dayot glared at Megotis as he firmly declared, “You cannot take away Mr. Blox’s right to a fair ….”

Seymour interrupted by looking at the judge, raising his hand, and softly but firmly said, “Your Honor, I would like to prove beyond any doubt that my past and present actions have only been to promote unconditional love for everyone. I must also show people that are trying to stop me that I wish them the best path to follow before they enter the Meta-World. I am willing to submit to being isolated as long as my wife is with me. I will even let Ms. Ipred’s own witness, Edmund Howe, be my defense spokesman, as long as he is given full control to investigate and pick his own assistant.”

A murmur of disapproval started growing in the gallery when the judge slammed his gavel for silence and queried, “Are you sure about this?”

“Yes. Total isolation, and her man as my defense lawyer is exactly what she demanded,” Seymour replied.

The judge turned to face Edmund still sitting in the witness box and enquired, “Mr. Howe would you accept this request?”

Edmund replied, “Only if I am given the authority to investigate every person, no matter how important they are, and every chamber in the Great Hall, no matter how secure it is. This would include even you, Your Honor!” This unexpected reply created an even larger murmur from the gallery that took two slams of the gavel to produce silence. Dayot finally turned to face Megotis and asked, “Do you accept these conditions, Ms. Ipred?”

She replied, “Only if the verdict and sentence is unreversible and there can be no appeal.”

Judge Dayot thought for a moment then pronounced his decision, “OK! But I do not want Mr. Blox isolated from the world more than ten days. Mr. Howe you will only have six days to complete your investigation. The trial will start one week from today and I expect jury to deliver a verdict within four days.” Looking at Edmund he continued, “For the sake of swiftness, do you have an associate I can appoint now to be your co-counsel?”

“Yes, Your Honor. A woman about my age who has a law degree and was the director of a chamber in the Great Hall. Her name is Elizabeth Van Lew.”

“What!” Megotis shouted, “You can’t use her! She is crazy and thinks she is dead!”

The judge created the loud crash sound as once again he struck the amplifier block with his gavel and with a smile that covered his entire face he calmly proclaimed, “I would think that is exactly the kind of defense you would want, Ms. Ipred. Therefore, let the trial begin one week from today at 10AM in this

courtroom. Mr. Blox will be isolated in two hours with his wife. Mr. Howe and Ms. Van Lew will present Mr. Blox's defense. The jury will be the six officials in the jury box. If the jury and I agree on a verdict and any sentence that must be applied it will be binding and irreversible. This hearing is concluded." He gently touched the gavel to the amplifier and produced the sound of a door closing and a lock clicking into place. The judge in the red robe rose and left the room.

Chapter 39

THE TRIAL

After the other six members of the rainbow jury had safely exited the courtroom, the doors on both sides of the main floor slid open. Gered's crew quickly exited and left Seymour, Ruby, and Edmund on the main floor with the two robots and a full gallery. The prattle from the crowd was praising Seymour but booing Edmund. Seymour looked at Edmund and suggested, "You better go back to your secure room before they turn off the barrier wall." Edmund agreed and one of the androids escorted him back to the room from which he came. When he entered and the door closed behind him, he noticed Sybil was sitting on a chair with a drink in her hand. They were alone because the robot had gone back to the courtroom. Her smile was like a cool soft breeze on a hot summer day and she pointed at a chair facing her and said, "Sit, dear Edmund. We have something very important to discuss."

When he sat, she offered him the drink she was holding and continued, "This is the same thing you ordered before the hearing. I hope you like it."

He took a sip then softly proclaimed, "Thank you. I really needed that."

Sybil leaned back in her chair, put her interlocked fingers in her lap, and continued, "After you gave me the message from Elizabeth, I went straight to the directors and had it decrypted. It read, 'Great Hall corrupted. Help. Trust Howe.'"

"What? Did she really say trust me? I only met her for less than five minutes! Why would she say something like that?"

Sybil leaned forward, looked straight into Edmund's eyes, and probed, "Why did you want her for your assistant if you only knew her for a few minutes."

Edmund put his drink on the table next to his chair. He slowly leaned forward and put his hands out with the palms up. Sybil grasped each hand and made penetrating eye contact. Edmund whispered, "When I looked into her eyes, I could see her very soul! No words were necessary. I knew this was the person I needed in my life. I fell in love."

Sybil let go of his hands, fell back into her chair, and with eyes that twinkled, answered back, "And maybe she did too!"

"Do you really think she could? She was the director of the mint, and the most beautiful person both outside and inside. Do you really think she could love a boring investigator like me?"

Sybil tilted her head to look up and past Edmund as she tenderly whispered, "Why don't you ask her."

Edmund turned to see what was behind him and his life changed forever. Elizabeth was standing in a golden silk peplos dress with her arms outstretched. She looked like a Greek goddess beckoning and no words were needed. He quickly jumped to his feet, ran to hold her in an embrace that fused their bodies and souls into one entity. She whispered into his ear, "We are joined, forever." Then she leaned back, and they shared a passionate kiss to seal the bond.

Suddenly Edmund grasped both her hands, took a step back, gazed into her eyes and asked, "Are you alright? Those drugs they were giving you."

Elizabeth grimaced and interrupted, “I am dead!” and added the same gibberish as before. He looked into her eyes and knew she was telling him to be quiet.

Sybil stood and proclaimed, “It is time for Elizabeth to rest. She may never be the person who ran the mint again, but she needs to be calm and take a break. She is under my care now and has been sleeping in my quarters down the hall. I suggest we go there now and let her relax. You may come with Edmund, and we can all have something to eat for lunch.”

Edmund took Elizabeth’s hand and followed Sybil through the door and down a corridor to a very old section of the Great Hall. The passageway ended at what appeared to be a solid wall of granite. When Sybil turned to face the hallway they had just walked through, her appearance changed drastically. Her skin darkened, she looked years younger, she seemed taller and raised her hands as she declared in Greek, “Βγείτε δαίμονες,” which means “go out demons.” Edmund noticed the stale air at that dead end changed and now felt fresh and sweet. Sybil turned back to the granite wall, touched it with her hand to make an opening appear. They followed her into the room and the opening became a granite wall again. Sybil’s appearance changed back to the look of a caring grandmother when she faced Edmund and softly said, “Now you may ask your questions. They were watching us in that room through cameras and demons.”

Before Edmund could speak, Elizabeth excitingly proclaimed, “They were trying to give me drugs, but Joseph worked with me to trick them into believing I was drugged. I would go completely crazy if anyone else tried to inject me, but I let Joseph take their needles and perform the injections. You would be surprised at the sleight of hand magic my old friend can do with

hypodermic needles and pills. Joseph never gave me anything more than saline solution and sugar pills. In fact, Joseph has been my contact with the world outside that room for some time now. He was under constant surveillance so he could only talk to a few of the workers in the mint. You became my first courier that could reach the directors and warn them of the corruption in the Great Hall."

Edmund was surprised at the difference in the energy she displayed but he humbly asked, "Where is Joseph now?"

"After Sybil took me into her custody, they dropped the shadowing on Joseph so he is now gathering information about the counterfeit coins that we can use in the trial. When Gered seized control of the mint, he was using a company outside of the Great Hall called Speculations Incorporated. They are better known as Spec Inc. They blocked the history by stopping the program in the coins and created a fake one on paper to make it look like Seymour is guilty of all kinds of crimes. What they do not know is that each coin still has the history stored up until the clock was stopped. The forged history in writing will mean nothing in a real courtroom. Joseph told me that once we get the program running again, the real history will be available."

Sybil interrupted with, "Slow down, Liz! I have never seen you this excited. I think you just spoke more words in the last two minutes then you have said in the past two years."

"I can't help it! I have never been this excited before in my entire life. We are going to catch those evil doers and teach them not to mess with Edward and Elizabeth. We need a slogan. How about 'Led by Ed and His Liz.'?" She hugged Edward, kissed him, sat down on

a couch, and started drawing on an electronic note pad on the table in front of the couch.

Edward removed his courtroom jacket and sat next to Liz. She had already drawn five different rectangles and had lines with arrows connecting them. They were numbered and had titles with short descriptions below the headings. He quickly realized it was a flow chart for the trial. He also recognized that she was a brilliant strategist. She was planning every step of the trial coming soon. He leaned up next to her, put his arm around her waist, and said, “How about ‘Led by Liz and read by Ed’ for a motto.”

The week passed quickly, and it was time for the trial to begin. The prosecution table had discussed the fact that Elizabeth still looked senseless and Edmund had not once gone to the mint to question anyone. They felt confident and were convinced they could put Seymour away for good. Edmund and Liz showed no expression at all but just sat waiting for the trial to begin. The door behind the bench opened and three women in different colored robes entered followed by three men in other colored robes. They stood in front of their seats in the jury box as the android by the door announced, “Please rise for the Honorable Justice Dayot.” and the red robed judge entered, completing the seven colors of the rainbow. He took his place behind the judge’s desk and sat down. The door behind him closed as he spoke, “Please sit.” When the room had plunged into total silence, he proclaimed, “Members of the jury, your duty today will be to determine whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty based only on facts and evidence provided in this case. The prosecution must prove that the crimes were committed and that the defendant is the person who committed the crimes. Should new evidence show others committed the crimes in question, they will

be put on trial in this court as quickly as possible and be subject to the same penalty proposed for the accused, without appeal. All testimony will be recorded, time stamped, and nothing will be removed, but I reserve the right to instruct the jury as we proceed. This trial in the Rainbow Court of the Great Hall is now underway. Prosecution may now deliver their opening statement."

Megotis stood and walked to the front of her table. She turned to face the completely full gallery and cameras that allowed the jury to see her as she declared, "Let it be known that we will show beyond any doubt that the person known as Seymour E. Blox is guilty of using counterfeit currency to commit crimes against this planet only for his own pleasure and profit. We will also prove that the defendant had to be isolated and removed from these proceedings due to his great power to control digital media and even the minds of organic creatures, such as dogs and even humans. Because of this tremendous power to control everything, we need to never let Mr. Blox out of the secure room where he is now being held. Instead, we must cut off his oxygen supply and quickly insert a deadly gas to eliminate this threat to the universe we live in."

There was an instant roar of disagreement from the gallery. The judge had to bang his gavel twice, and hard against the amplifier pad to be heard above the outburst. Still, the gallery would not be silent. Judge Dayot pressed an area of his desk with his thumb and the invisible barrier wall between the gallery and the main floor became solid and shut out the noise. The gallery could no longer see or hear anything from the main floor. The jury and the judge, however, could still see everything. Both of the androids moved forward and had their lasers pointing at all the entrances from the gallery. Although this was a standard procedure when the wall secured the

main floor, it had the appearance of a possible attack coming.

Megotis unexpectedly felt a pronounced fear. She meekly stated, “I have nothing else to say.”

Dayot smiled and said, “Good! Please sit back down.” He checked the gallery and found it quiet and people were settling down. He placed his hand over a blinking red area of his desk and the wall became transparent again with audio restored. “Another outburst like that and I will clear the gallery and impose everyone in the gallery with a fine and six hours in lockup!” It was so quiet you could hear a feather hit the floor. He continued, “The prosecutions opening comments are over. Would the defense proceed with their opening statement?”

Edmund stood, but did not walk around the table. He took Elizabeth’s hand and made her stand close and they both turned to face the gallery. He put his arm in her arm, and they looked like a couple taking wedding vows. They both smiled as Edmund humbly spoke. “We do not want any of you to suffer because of what might be said in this trial. Please do not let anger or hate control your emotions. These are the tools of those who do not know agape. We want you to see how unconditional love and truth is more powerful than anything else in this universe. That is all we want to say.” Elizabeth had not known what Edmund’s opening statement would be because they had never prepared one, but the look on Elizabeth’s face said it all. The entire gallery got its first taste of agape. They both turned and sat back at the table.

It took the judge a moment to digest such a powerful opening. After a long pause he continued, “The prosecution may now present their evidence or call their first witness.”

Megotis stood and announced, “I would like to call Doctor Margorp from Speculations Incorporated.” The side door opened and a silver-haired lady, dressed in a blue suit and wearing dark sunglasses entered and took the witness chair.

Judge Dayot requested, “Please remove your glasses, turn towards me, and state your name and profession.”

Margorp replied, “I invoke the universal right to deny taking the eye exam by your android because I believe it may damage my optical system and therefore refuse to remove these protective glasses. My name is Doctor Laret Margorp. I received my Degree from the University of Area One in Molecular Programming.” Justice Dayot instructed, “Since there is no eye-detect being performed, the members of the jury must base the validity of this witness’s testimony as true, only if it can be backed by other evidence.” He then turned to face Megotis and declared, “You may proceed.”

She arose, walked over to face her witness, and instructed, “I will keep my questions simple so you will only have to answer yes or no unless otherwise instructed. Doctor Margorp, Is it true that you are the senior director in the programing of Daori coins at Speculations Incorporated? And is it also true that you have been involved in this process for over twenty years?”

“Yes.”

“Did you recently discover that certain coins were made and used by a Seymour E Blox to benefit his children and control the research being done at the university where they worked.?”

“Yes.”

“When I told you about the power that Mr. Blox has over people you were afraid to come and testify because you or your family could be hurt. Is that true?”

“Yes.”

“Did the history in many of these coins also show that they were recently and anonymously deposited in an account for Edmund Howe, a previous witness against Mr. Blox, but is now his defense counsel?”

“Yes.”

“Were you at the coin mint in the Great Hall helping program coins when Elizabeth Van Lew was the director and was told that Seymour E. Blox was using these coins for his own personal gain?”

“Yes.”

“Did you witness Ms. Van Lew’s mental breakdown and violent reaction to this information?”

“Yes.”

“To the best of your knowledge and with your years of experience, is there any way the history in the Daori coins that support these facts can be blocked, erased, changed, or altered?”

“Yes.”

“And if they were altered, would the word counterfeit appear when the coins were deposited in a bank or used on the open market?”

“Yes.”

“Would the origin of the main diamond material still be traceable even in a counterfeit coin?”

“Yes.”

“When you examined some of the coins being used to corrupt people in the Great Hall, were they counterfeit but with an origin of diamond coming from the defendant, Seymour E. Blox?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you. I believe we have heard enough to put Mr. Blox into a coma to keep him out of harming you for your cooperation in this trial. As soon as he is powerless, you will be able to relax.” She turned to glare at Edmund and angerly declared, “Your witness.” She then proceeded to return to the table next to Gered. He tapped her hand and whispered, “Good job.”

Edmund rose slowly and walked over to face Doctor Margorp. He had a loving look on his face as he stated, “They showed me your picture when I was told you would be their witness, and I could not help but be impressed by your beautiful blue eyes and your shiny silver hair. It’s a shame that you need to hide those eyes behind the dark glasses, but I totally understand and agree with your reason. I will never ask you to take them off. I notice, however, that you are very tense and tightly clutching the arms of the chair. I do not want you to be under stress during my questions, so would you tell me what would make you more comfortable right now?”

Megotis stood and shouted, “Could we have a question sometime in the near future that pertains to this trial?” Judge Dayot quickly stood up, banged his gavel so hard that the whole courtroom shook, and shouted, “I warned you about interrupting the defense during this trial! Now you are going to spend a few days in jail and pay the maximum fine I can impose!” The judge noticed Edmund looking at him with both hands up like he needed to say something. So Dayot paused and looking back at Edmund asked, “Do you want to say something?”

Edmund very humbly proclaimed, “I know what it is like to be under the control of false concepts and influenced by wrong ideas. Please let Ms. Ipred stay and forgive her this one time. I’m sure she will not interrupt again.”

“All right. But one more outburst from you, little lady, and I will make you sorry you know me!” The judge sat down and looking at Edmund said, “Please proceed.”

Edmund turned back to face Doctor Margorp and repeated, “Would you tell me what would make you more relaxed right now? I do not want you to be afraid to tell us the truth. What would it take to get rid of your fear?”

She replied, “I would like to know that my son, his wife, and my grandchildren are safe and cannot be harmed due to anything I say.”

Edmund turned to face Liz then the gallery as he smiled and proclaimed, “I should have known. A mother’s love for her offspring is as close to agape as you can get. It is unconditional love and she will suffer tremendous pain to protect them. I am a man and can never be a mother, but I have felt my mother’s love for me and know how powerful it can be.” He turned back to face the witness and gently continued, “You have just seen the control this court has over the prosecution, and you know that Mr. Blox is locked up and cannot hear anything in this trial. If we gathered your son, wife, and grandchildren and put them under android protection in a room near you, would you be able to relax a little?”

“I think it would help.”

“Your Honor, In anticipation of someone using Doctor Margorp’s family to make her follow their orders,

we have her descendants in Witness Room Three. I would like to take a fifteen-minute break to let her visit them and quiz the two androids protecting them. We could then resume our questions with a witness that has less fear for her family."

Megotis quickly stood but one look at the judge's glare with his gavel raised kept her quiet. She sat back down. Dayot declared, "This court will take a fifteen-minute break and then resume." He gently tapped the pad and the sound of a door closing and a lock clicking into place could be heard.

Edmund went back to his table, sat down next to Liz, took her hand and whispered, "You were right. They were going to use her unconditional love of her family to try and control her. I could see the fear in her hands and hear it in her voice. I hope this will help her find some peace in what she must do next."

Chapter 40

THE VERDICT

The break was over and everyone was back in the courtroom. Judge Dayot resumed the trial by announcing, "Trial is back in session. Will the defense please continue."

Edmund rose, walked over to face the witness, and asked, "Are you satisfied that your family is safe?"

"Yes."

"I noticed that you are no longer clutching the chair, but you still have the dark glasses. I want to make you as comfortable as possible. I realize you do not know me, but I was told that you did work with Elizabeth Van Lew. Would you be more at ease if she interviewed you now?"

"Yes, I would. I thought that she had a mental breakdown. I was there when they had to drag her away screaming and shouting. Is she capable of asking defense questions for Mr. Blox?"

Edmund replied, "I will let you be the one to determine the answer to that question." He walked over, sat down next to Liz, patted her on the hand, and said, "Your turn."

She rose from her chair with an enormous smile on her face, making her appear to be the village idiot with no idea of where she was going. Gered whispered to Megotis, "This is going to be a joke." Liz heard the comment as she turned and went to face the witness. She calmly stated, "Hello Doctor Laret. I'm still your good friend, Lizzy Lew. It has been years since our last meeting, but I remember it well. You even told me a joke

that last time we met. You said, ‘What do you get when you meet an egotistical chemist?’ and then gave me the answer, ‘A bad reaction!.’” Liz then turned to face Gered and Megotis with their mouths open in shock proclaiming, “There’s your joke!”

Edmund smiled, the judge giggled, and the gallery filled with laughter. The witness leaned forward in her chair and joyfully queried, “They did not harm you?”

“Oh! They tried. Joseph, however, protected me and cleverly led them to believe they had destroyed my memory. I had to do some crazy acting and take some drugs that made me sleep, but I assure you my memory is perfect.”

Tears of joy were running out from behind the dark glasses as she removed them and asserted, “I want the eye-exam to take place while I answer these questions. I want everyone to know I am telling the truth. I really thought they had destroyed Elizabeth’s mind. After what she has been through to save the Great Hall from destruction, I can no longer remain silent.”

The judge glared down at the prosecution table with his gavel ready, but they only shut their mouths and wrote notes to each other. They knew if they said one word, he was ready to slam that gavel and throw them in jail. The eye-detect android took his place behind Liz and she proceeded, “Doctor Margorp, in all your years of working with Spec. Inc. or the mint in the Great Hall have you ever experienced this control by Seymour Blox that the prosecution claims he possesses?”

“Never.”

“Will you explain, in your own words, how the history in a Daori coin is blocked to make it counterfeit.”

“Long ago we would use chips of silicon that were very pure to make electronic circuits. Eventually we discovered that very pure carbon with the proper crystal structure could also be used because they have a similar atomic configuration. They both have similar valence properties. The difference, however, is that carbon requires very high pressure and temperature to form the right crystal structure that can contain an electronic circuit and memory. The history of the coin is stored in the memory portion of this electronic circuit.” She paused for a moment then asked for a drink of water because her throat was dry. The judge nodded to a robot that brought a glass of water to the Doctor. The image on the judge’s desk had a long list of true statements and not one question mark or false indication. Doctor Margorp took a couple of sips of water and placed the glass on a narrow table next to her chair. She continued, “The name Daori stands for the elements in the coin, namely diamond, astatine, osmium, rhodium, and iridium. Astatine normally has a very short half-life, but when combined with osmium, the densest element known, the half-life is greatly extended. Each atom that decays provides a pulse that is used as the clock to run the electronic circuit in the coin. By heating the coin and placing it in a stream of protons, the astatine can be destroyed and the clock will stop. When the coin is checked it will read as counterfeit because the electronic circuit has stopped. The program and the coins history to that point in time will still be undamaged.”

Elizabeth smiled and commented, “It feels like old times when we worked together on these coins. We sure had fun coming up with crazy ways to make the Daori the safest coin in the universe. Tell me, Doc, is there any way to start the program running again and see the history?”

The doctor laughed and merrily stated, “You should know because you invented it. I will tell the jury, however, so they will know how it is done. You put on a special glove that provides a secret fingerprint and an electronic pulse to replace the stopped clock. The program will recognize the print and dump the history back into a memory built into the glove. We hoped it would help us catch the people making the counterfeit coins. We nicknamed the glove the ‘Catcher’s mitt’ if I remember correctly.”

Liz interjected, “Oh yes, I remember! That was just about the time when Gered interrupted our work and said we had to concentrate all our efforts on putting Mr. Blox in jail. When I refused, well you know what happened. Let’s talk about something else for a minute. The prosecution asked you that when you examined the coins being used to corrupt people in the Great Hall, if some of the coins were counterfeit and you answered, ‘Yes.’ She then asked you to verify that the origin of diamond in those coins came from the defendant, Seymour E. Blox, and you answered, ‘Yes.’ Now we all know that counterfeit only means the program in the coin is not running. Would you explain for the jury how you knew the origin of diamond came from Mr. Blox.”

“That is very simple. All diamond material is inspected, recorded for purity, and marked with a lot number showing the source. I was visiting the mint when everyone was celebrating a donation of a very large amount of the purest diamond ever seen. But they were more excited because the donor was Seymour E. Blox. They were told by the organization, Regulators Ending Environmental Destruction, better known as REED, that Mr. Blox had been executed trying to escape on a ship. I remember how everyone was more excited to hear he was alive then they were in getting the pure diamond.”

“One last question, Doctor. Does the source of the diamond have any control on how the Daori coin is made or what is in the coin’s program?”

“No.”

Liz finished with, “Thank you, Doctor.” She turned and went back to sit next to Edmund.

Judge Dayot enquired, “Does the prosecution wish to cross this witness again?”

Megotis replied, “Yes, Your Honor.” She rose and walked over to face the doctor as she probed, “Were you present in the mint when all the coins were made using the diamond donated by Mr. Blox?”

“No.”

“So, you really do not know if Mr. Blox, the source of the diamond, was controlling everything that was being done, do you.”

“No.”

“We know from your own testimony that Seymour E. Blox made REED think he was dead and he donated the diamond to the mint in the Great Hall. We are done with this witness.” Megotis returned to her chair.

Dayot looked at Edmund and enquired, “Does the defense wish to cross the witness again?”

Edmund replied, “No, Your Honor.”

The judge looked at Doctor Margorp and proclaimed, “You are excused and may return to be with your family. Thank you for allowing the eye-exam during your return.” After she left the courtroom, he glanced at his desktop, looked up to face the jury, and proclaimed, “The eye-exam shows Doctor Margorp’s testimony was one-hundred percent truthful therefore her

answers need not be verified by additional facts." He then turned his attention to the prosecution and sternly stated, "You may call your next witness."

Megotis stood and walked halfway towards the judge's desk. With a heated voice, and a scowl she cried, "I don't know how he is doing it, but you can plainly see that Mr. Blox took control of my best witness. He will probably take control of every witness and the entire jury!" She glared and pointed a shaking finger at the judge screaming, "As far as I know he even has you under his control. This is going to be even worse than the REED fiasco!"

Dayot clenched his teeth and his whole face was bright red. The veins in his forehead were about to explode as he quickly stood and raised his gavel. He was going to slam it hard on the pad and send Megotis to jail but a loud shout from Edmund made him freeze.

"Your Honor, STOP! Please STOP! Do not let anger take control of this trial. Please, let me clear up a few things first."

Megotis turned and noticed Edmund with both hands in the air and a pleading facial expression staring at the judge. Edmund turned to look Megotis in the eyes and lovingly appealed, "Meggie dear, please sit down. I have only one witness to call. Then you can make your summary statement." The only one to ever call her Meggie was her loving grandmother—the one person who had given her unconditional love. Suddenly she was conflicted. She turned and struggled to walk back to her table. It looked like she was injured and walking in pain. She collapsed into her chair with a dazed appearance, stared forward, and was quiet.

The judge slowly lowered his gavel, placed it on the desk, and sat down. He took a cloth from his pocket and wiped the sweat from his face. There was something in the way that Edmund pleaded that drove the anger out and put him at peace. He smiled at Edmund and said, “You may call your witness.”

Still standing, Edmund decreed, “I call Oma Philalethes as my final witness.” After a short pause, the door by the witness chair slid open and an elderly lady with a beautiful smile and silvery hair slowly walked over to the chair by the judge and sat down. Without being asked she turned to face the eye-detect android and stated, “My name is Oma Philalethes. I have been the director of the chamber known as Satellite and Communications for the past twenty-two years. I promise that what I say here will be the truth to the best of my knowledge.” She made a very small turn to face the judge and continued, “Hello Judge Dayot, nice to see you again.”

Dayot responded, “Hello Oma.” They both turned to face Edmund and the judge added, “You may proceed.”

Edmund approached Oma and with a gentle tone requested, “Director Philalethes, I apologize in advance for what I am about to ask but, due to the accusations from the prosecution, would you be willing to take the eye-exam during your testimony?”

The witness giggled slightly and responded, “Please just call me Oma. You’re telling me the position of the prosecutor is that a little bit of trust is all right, but none whatsoever is even better.” The judge giggled and a few laughs could be heard in the gallery. She continued, “I am not offended. You may use your test during my statements.”

The android moved behind Edmund to watch Oma's eyes as Edmund continued. "Oma, please tell us when you first met Seymour E. Blox."

"The day he was born."

Nobody expected that answer, not even Edmund. The judge looked up from reading the exam response and mumbled, "True." Megotis stiffened in her chair. It was so silent in the room, Edmund felt like he had just gone deaf. He stared at Oma and continued, "Please explain that answer in as much detail as possible."

"I was very young and working as a research assistant in the communications chamber of the Great Hall. We had identified a DNA configuration that appeared in the blood of people with high telepathy abilities. I was given the task of getting stem cells from umbilical cord blood. We would then use these cells to reproduce the telepathic blood cells for our experiments. Mr. and Mrs. Blox had a natural birth for Seymour E. Blox on their farm and I was there when he was born. They were poor people and had agreed to sell us the umbilical cord. Because natural births were so rare, I wanted to be there and see the event. "

A few moments passed and then Edmund probed for more. "Did you find anything interesting in Seymour's umbilical cord?"

"Oh, yes! We sure did! Seymour was the only child who had the telepathic DNA sequences already in his cord blood. And most surprisingly, we discovered that his stem cells were already linked to the telepathic molecule. They were generating new ones faster than we had ever seen in the lab. Our first experiment was to put them in the organic part of four biometric android brains. At first, we thought it did nothing, but a few years later

these robots could communicate telepathically. We also discovered that they had a very strong connection to Seymour's brain. By the time he reached sixteen, we were able to 'read his mind' so to speak."

Edmund exclaimed, "Fascinating! Please tell us more about this connection and Seymour's history."

"Perhaps I should side-track here and explain a little about my life during this time period. My name, Oma, originates from Arabic and means 'Giver of Life.' True to my name, I married and gave birth to four children. During Seymour's youth, most of my time was spent with my husband and children. I do remember, however, the development of the Tri-Blade remote controlled crisis helicopter by individuals in the Hall. They wanted to use it to prevent disasters but needed it to look like somebody was controlling it. Because of our connection with Seymour, he was the perfect candidate. So, they put it near his farm for him to find. He learned to use it to propel his boat and later the power source for a helicopter. He never questioned where the power came from that made it run. He just nick-named it TB, and let it control his adventures."

Edmund was perplexed and immediately declared, "You mean to tell me that all those stories about Seymour are really about the Tri-Blade? The saving of the stag? The saving of the ship in the Bermuda Triangle? Saving the diamond market? Saving the baby dolphin? And even the REED trial, were not controlled by Seymour but by people in the Great Hall!."

"Yes, Mr. Howe, that is exactly what I am telling you. And as sure as my last name became Philalethes when I married, it is the truth."

Edmund was astonished. “You mean to tell me that the diamond used in making the coins was not given to the mint by Mr. Blox? Then why were they told that he was the donor?”

“Two reasons. We did not want the source to be known and we wanted to let everyone know he was still alive. In fact, Seymour does not even know exactly where we hid the diamond iceberg during the storm we created.”

Speechless, he turned to face the judge and said, “The prosecution may cross. I believe this witness has said all there needs to be said.” He returned to the table and sat next to Liz. He whispered in her ear, “Did you know what she was going to say when you told me to call her?”

Liz simply responded, “No.”

Judge Dayot eyed Megotis sitting in pain and enquired, “Does the prosecution wish to cross this witness?”

She did not even rise but simple grunted, “No.”

The judge turned to Edmund and added, “Do you have anything else?”

“No, Your Honor. We may proceed to closing arguments if the prosecution is done.”

Dayot looked at his monitor one last time and then glanced at the jury and proclaimed, “Everything this witness has revealed has passed the eye-examine as true. No further facts are needed to verify validity of what was disclosed.” Turning to face the witness he continued, “Thank you Oma. You are excused and may return to your room.”

Oma smiled and humbly replied, “You’re welcome, Your Honor.” She rose and slowly walked out of the room. The only sound during her retreat was a soft murmur of whispers coming from the gallery. The light reflecting off her silver hair seemed to form a ring over her head. Edmund thought to himself, she looks like an angel and even has a halo. Dayot broke the silence with, “The prosecution may present their summary.”

Megotis struggled to her feet but stayed behind the table. Both her hands were clenched to form a fist and rested on the table to steady her posture. With a shaky voice she sobbed, “It’s all lies and everyone here is being deceived. You must immediately put Seymour E. Blox to death or suffer the consequences.” She collapsed back into her chair and put her face into her hands to hide the sweat and tears.

Dayot tapped his gavel lightly on the pad and turned to face Edmund. “You may proceed with your summary now.”

Edmund took Liz by the hand and they both rose and walked over to stand before the judge. Edmund respectfully said, “Your Honor, until a few minutes ago, I was not aware that the Great Hall performed all those glorious adventures using the tri-blade and Mr. Blox was only along for the ride. It seems even the REED trial was under the control of the Great Hall and Mr. Blox was only their link to the hearing. Finally, the fact that Seymour E. Blox does not even know where diamond used in the coins came from makes him completely innocent of all charges. As to the corruption of the Great Hall itself, I would like to have you hear from my co-counsel Elizabeth Van Lew.”

Dayot turned to face Elizabeth and said, “Proceed.”

“Thank you, Your Honor. For the past week my good friend Joseph has been using the Catcher’s Mitt to examine all the counterfeit coins he could find. We now know they all came from Speculations Incorporated through the hands of Gered Werop. We have the names of everyone who took the bribes and the names of those who suffered because they refused. Mr. Werop needs to be removed as Acting Director of the coin mint .Also, the people who took bribes to do his dirty work need to be dealt with. That’s all we have to say.” They turned and went back to sit at their table.

Dayot glanced down at the jury and suggested, “You may retire to a private room to discuss your verdict and let me know when you have a unanimous decision.”

The lady foreman stood and said, “No need to leave, we have our ruling and recommendations.” She walked over to the bench and handed Dayot a small tablet with the verdict and a thumbprint of each juror showing unanimous agreement.

The judge stood and demanded, “All rise while I read the verdict of the court.” When everyone was on their feet and intensely waiting for the ruling, Justice Dayot continued, “It is the unanimous decision by the jurors in the trial against Seymour E. Blox, on the date of this recording, that the charges be dropped and have been proven to be false. Mr. Blox must be released immediately from the secure room and a formal apology made for his inconvenience. We, the jury, also find that the prosecution is guilty of attempting to murder Mr. Seymour E. Blox and should be incarcerated and quickly put on trial for this crime. Finally, we recommend that Gered Werop be removed as Acting Director of the coin mint and Elizabeth Van Lew be reinstated as the director of that operation.”

A gigantic roar of approval rose from the gallery. The ovations were so great that even the slamming of Dayot's gavel could not stop the cheers. Edmund stood, faced the gallery, and raised his hands shouting, "Stop! Please stop!" When the noise lessoned, he turn to face the judge and the jury who were all standing looking over the wall that surrounded their chairs. In a very convincing voice he asserted, "I agree with your verdict, but you need to see the real villain." He turned to face Megotis. She was staring at him with an expression of panic. He pointed at her with both hands and shouted, "Meggie, come out! Creature, be gone!" Liz rose and stood next to Edmund and together they shouted, "Meggie, come out! Creature, be gone!" Soon the gallery joined in and everyone was pointing and shouting, "Meggie come out! Creature, be gone."

Megotis appeared to fall into a seizure with spasms and convulsions. It ended when she sat up, threw her head back, open her mouth and red fire appeared to shoot from her like a flame thrower. The fire went right through the wall and was gone, leaving no trace on its exit area. Megotis fell forward, looked up, and weakly whispered, "Where am I?" The courtroom was extremely quiet and everyone heard her plea. Edmund asked, "What do you remember?"

"I was in a dark cave for a very long time. I could not find my way out and had given up trying. Then I heard my grandmothers voice. I tried to find her but I didn't know where to look. Eventually, I heard her again telling me to come out. The call got stronger and stronger so I climbed out and woke up here. What is this place? Where am I?"

Edmund turned to face the judge and the jury proclaiming, "What you have just seen might be called

an exorcism. The real villain is the Creature that possessed her. He is from the meta-physical world and uses hate, anger, prejudice, and greed as tools to get people to do his bidding. He hates us because we have power over him. He must obey when we use unconditional love, called agape, against him. It was agape that Megotis received from her grandmother, and it was that type of love that drove the Creature from her and this room. When the world learns to love like this, we will start living in peace and joy."

Epilogue

Seymour and Ruby were not in the secured room when it was opened. Everyone agreed it was impossible, but they just vanished. The Great Hall was cleansed and started exploring new telepathic visions from an unknown source. A company called EBLOX, (Enter By Loving Others, Xanadu), started using toy organic bricks to unite people from different cultures. The Creature was exposed as the true enemy of the human race. The universe was uniting and using agape, The Ultimate Weapon, to fight the Creature. But then, that's another story.

The End

About the Author

Arthur F Seymour

Art studied electrical engineering at Christian Brothers University and earned his master's degree at IIT. During college, he authored one of the first patent applications on caller ID. He started his career at Motorola and was one of the first engineers to incorporate integrated circuits in color television. He later managed a group of engineers at Zenith Radio Corporation. Art launched E-Blox Inc. after 44 years of being the President of Elenco Electronics Inc. Presently, he has more than a dozen patents. Greek philosophy is still one of his passions.

Art and his wife, Maryann, were married on August 6, 1966, and have eleven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. They both took joy in telling stories to their grandchildren at bedtime. Art claims these memories inspire all his books. His greatest inspiration in life, however, was his wife, Maryann. Maryann went into the light while holding Art's hand on the morning of 9/11/2019. She was truly Art's Ruby.

"Nothing is impossible, the word itself says I'm possible."

Audrey Hepburn

"Limitless undying love which shines around me like a million suns it calls me on and on across the universe."

John Lennon

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