

He's Back !

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Portions formerly published under the names Reign: We See Him As He Is & Reign: The Millennium (Double Book Edition)

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Introduction

Shortly after hyperspace or “warp” drive was discovered earthlings first visited the “nearby” triple star Centauri system and found an inhabitable planet to colonize revolving around the Proxima Centauri sun. With a minimum of terra-forming needed, the first colony arrived soon and sprouted many other colonies in the coming decades. In about 40 earth years the Parousia Alarm sounded and woke every person in all the colonies immediately.

“He’s Back,” the Watchman screamed into the microphone. But, I am getting ahead of myself here.

You see, the vast majority of colonists from Earth were believing Christians. This was because many of them were forced to leave their home nations during the Great Falling Away because of their faith and most other nations did not want to receive them. But volunteers were needed for the Star Ship settlements and the Christians seemed to have little concern about losing their lives, so nearly all volunteers were ardent believers. Their Christian faith grew as fast as the colonies multiplied both from new immigrants from Earth and from the high birth rate among the colonists. As many as ten children per couple was not unusual as the colonist had brought the very best medicine with them from earth.

The Primate on New Earth – the Primate was the top leader of the Christian Faith – had set up a state-of-the-art communications alarm to notify New Earth that Jesus Christ had returned in His Glorified state to old Earth. The colonists had believed, almost to the last colonist, that this return would happen on old Earth at the ancient city of Jerusalem in the mid-east. And it did.

A week long holiday was declared, scriptures were read, hymns were sung, and there was a lot of feasting. New Earth was ravenous for news from what was called

“home” by the old timers and Old Earth by the younger people. Most of the news was loudly proclaimed on the communicators, almost like every sentence was being delivered with a shout. However, there was not a lot of explanations or continuity in the reports and the transmittal delay was most frustrating to everyone.

It took years for things to calm down and the immigrant flights had come nearly to a stand still due to the poverty and turmoil on old Earth. But the remnant of Christian believers on old Earth were faithful in their attempts to communicate.

At long last, I present here some of the first journals commissioned by the old Earth Immortals and written by the hand of a series of hereditary scribes called Keepers on old Earth.

(signed:) A Believer

He's Back !

Section One

Date: 04.14.103 C.R. My name is Anna. I am the third of four daughters of John Semple of Buckhead. I have two older sisters, a younger sister and two younger brothers. John Jr. is directly below me, then Gracie, then the baby Seth. Vanessa is just older than I and Joan is the oldest. My father is the assistant administrator of Buckhead. My mother, Grace, is ten years younger than my father. He always says that he was fortunate to get her and they had to have children quickly to make up for the time he had wasted.

The year is 103 of the Glorious Reign under the great and righteous rule of His Imperial Majesty who rules from Jerusalem. My family is mortal and we do not despise our mortality although I am definitely the most curious one in my family regarding the Immortals. Our Immortals are especially kind. They never act haughty and are very considerate of us all. As a matter of fact, you might say that I am somewhat of a friend of our local Governor, the Immortal Elaine, who rules Buckhead.

I came to meet her Excellency, Elaine, in an unusual way. I was carrying my little niece, Alice, Joan's little girl, home from school one day as she had turned her ankle playing at school. The teacher said that it would mend if she stayed off of it for a while. She sent for me in the upper school (I have only one more year) so that I could carry her home. I was crossing a road near a turn when I heard the great beast approaching and I could not get myself and little Alice out of the way in time, so I threw us both on the ground and covered her with my body. The horse almost cleared me but I felt one hoof smash down on my left hip and heard it crack. The rider, a mortal like myself, did not stop. Some friends came along and carried

He's Back !

me and little Alice home. I was hurting a lot. The physician was sent for.

Before the physician could arrive, Governor Elaine herself appeared at our home. My parents were shocked. What had we done? The Governor explained that she was there to look after me and they showed her to the room that I share with Vanessa and Gracie. I tried to rise but she motioned with her hand that I should stay still. "Well, young Anna, your hip is broken," she said.

"Yes, Excellency."

"Let's make it well. What do you say?"

"Yes, ah . . . I would be . . . most grateful." My voice trailed off at the end.

The broken hip was on the top side as I laid on my bed. My mother had already expressed a fear that I would always limp and would probably not be able to get a husband. She did not know that I had overheard. The Governor touched my hip lightly with her scepter. At first it felt warm, then it seemed to swell a little for a short time, then it cooled and the pain was gone. She bid me rise. I got up and was as whole as I had been before the accident. I had always known that they had this power but this was my first experience of it.

"There now. You feel fine now," she said.

"Yes, Excellency. Fine, thank you. Thank you so very much." I started to kneel before her but she pulled me up.

"That's fine, girl," she said.

"You threw yourself on the child?" she asked.

"Yes, Excellency."

"A selfless act."

"I, I did not think," I responded.

"Yes," she smiled, "instinctive, and that girl, . . . speaks even better of you."

"Yes, er, I mean, thank you, Excellency." The Immortal Elaine, Governor of Buckhead and Vice-

He's Back !

Metropolitan of Atlanta smiled upon me that day and in the days to come.

“The man who injured you did not stop?”

“No, Excellency.”

“Come with me,” she motioned.

“Mother Semple,” she addressed my mother as we walked towards the door, “your daughter is in no trouble but we have business with the one that injured her. Hold her evening meal for her. I will return her before nightfall.” My parents nodded. They were still in some shock after the healing of my hip.

As soon as we were out of my father's house, the Governor raised her scepter. A portal opened and we found ourselves in front of an impressive house of a mortal. Elaine's daily angelic escort preceded her; the smaller one, not the one used at ceremonial events. This escort was still a daunting sight. I could see a stable at the rear of the house. This man chose to transport himself by horse instead of machine; it was considered more elegant by some.

“Simon Wooster, come out here,” Elaine said in a loud firm voice. A large well dressed man emerged almost immediately from the house along with what must have been most of his family. Some still had napkins tucked in their shirts. They had been interrupted while eating. I knew that this was not the man who had been riding the horse that had broken my hip. He was too old and too heavy.

“Your son, Adrian,” the Governor demanded. She did not raise her voice.

“Excellency, I am so sorry, he is not at home,” the man replied.

“I know, send for him,” she responded.

There was a busy exchange of conversation among the family Wooster. There seemed to be some confusion as to where the son and heir was. Finally, two boys were dispatched in two different directions to find him.

He's Back !

“You would do well, Simon Wooster, to know where your son is and what he is doing,” the Governor said.

“Yes, Excellency,” Mr. Wooster responded, bowing. He was quite frightened. I was frightened for him. Somehow inside I was frightened just because everyone else seemed to be. Elaine looked into my eyes and I was suddenly totally at peace.

The young man Adrian came riding up with one of the boys on behind him. I recognized the animal. He ran over and knelt before the Governor.

“You injured this girl and did not stop,” she said.

“I did not know,” he started to lie, “I, ... I am sorry, Excellency,” his voice quivered. He knew better than to lie to an Immortal. They always knew. I had always thought that my mother was like them in this way.

“You will take the animal away from him,” Elaine said, “and you will restrict his activities to the homestead for three months.”

The boy looked up shocked. His father pushed his head down again.

“Yes, Excellency, it will not happen again.” His fear seemed to be rising.

“This is a turning point, Simon,” the Governor said.

“If I have to deal with him or you again, the punishment will be severe. Do you understand?” This time she did raise her voice slightly.

“Yes, Excellency, yes, yes, quite.”

“Now, young man, you apologize to young Anna here. I have restored her hip which your mount shattered,” Elaine said.

Adrian Wooster apologized profusely to me and I, of course, forgave him.

Elaine raised her scepter again, a portal opened and we stepped through and in an instant we were back at my father's house. I wondered what would happen if young Adrian did not improve. I knew that such sins as murder

He's Back !

were punished with death right on the spot but I was not familiar with lesser infractions. It was later that I marveled at the way the Immortals traveled and were able to take us with them when they wanted to by opening a portal.

“Your daughter, Mother Semple,” Elaine said. My entire family had gathered on the porch to wait.

“Thank you, Excellency,” my mother said. She did not seem to be afraid.

“And you, young Anna, I will be back to take you some places,” the Governor said. She smiled, raised her scepter slightly and she was gone. She and her angels did not need a portal.

I wondered where she was going to take me. I was excited. My family wanted to hear every detail of what had happened. I asked my father what he thought would happen if Adrian Wooster committed another infraction. Father said that he would probably be removed from his family and put under direct supervision if it was a minor offense, worse if it was not. I was afraid for him. He did not seem very sincere in his apology to me.

04.22.103 C.R. Every time I am caught writing in this dairy my family teases me. “What could you think or do that could be important enough to write down?” Mother would say. My brothers and sisters would always tell. “Anna is writing in her dairy,” they would say. I keep on writing. Somehow I feel that it might be important some day. Father never seems to mind. I have written down Father’s account of his grandmother’s memory of the Glorious Return.

My great grandmother said that things had been very hard for all of mankind for a long time. Most people did not believe in the Glorious Return but my great grandmother at least hoped for it. All around there were wars. Some nations were stronger than others. When the stronger nation won, they would treat the losers terribly.

He's Back !

Then when they managed to retaliate, they would be even more horrible to the defeated ones. America was the strongest and tried to do the right thing and keep the peace but eventually even it lost the ability to do so. There did not seem to be much love in the world. It was not peaceful like it is now under The Reign. Even though my great grandmother hoped for the return, she did not truly know God. That is why my family are still mortals. When it happened, those who truly knew God were changed. The rest of us lived on for our lifetimes and left children behind. Great grandmother said that she never really gave her heart to God because her husband would not have liked it. After the Return she wished that she had followed her heart and not her husband. But then it was too late. Anyway, things were pretty bad on the earth in those days. There had been wars and large poisonous dust clouds would hang over large parts of the earth. Food was hard to grow and many people would steal or kill to eat. It looked like mankind would soon wipe itself from the face of the earth.

Then early one morning, they say it was about 4 o'clock, it happened. Everywhere a trumpet sound was heard. Then an enormous releasing angelic shout. The graves of many of the dead opened and their bodies received life and jumped up into the sky. Then those who truly knew God were transformed. They got Immortal bodies and joined the rest in the sky over the earth. Thousands upon thousands of Angels were seen with the Emperor as he descended. The light from His face was so bright that no one could look upon it, brighter than the sun when the dust clouds did not cover the earth. Then and there He established his rule over the earth. He appointed sub-rulers everywhere, like Elaine over Buckhead and Prince Henry Sawyer over the entire Atlanta Metropolis. The angels quickly cleaned up all the mess that the wars and poisons had made and people were able to raise food again. Life for mortals became peaceful. We did not really

He's Back !

know what it was like for the Immortals. They would come and go. We knew that they could go anywhere they wanted on the earth, but they went other places also. Sometimes they were overheard talking about their travels among themselves.

05.07.103 C.R. About three weeks after the incident with my hip the Governor Elaine returned to take me on a trip. I had finished my schooling and was helping mother around the house. I was faintly aware that I should by now have had a suitor, but none was forthcoming. Father's kindness sustained me. The Governor's arrival was, as usual, instantaneous and there was no time to prepare to leave.

"Mother Semple, I have come to take your daughter Anna on a short tour," Elaine said. "I will provide all her needs. We will be gone for several weeks. Please do not worry about anything regarding her." My mother nodded and we were gone. This time I was determined to note how I felt and what happened while we were being transported. I did not feel or see a thing or even remember anything during the transport. Suddenly, we were just there.

We arrived at the Dais of his Excellency Henry Sawyer, Metropolitan of Atlanta. The Dais was on top of a hill overlooking the Metroplex. It was a smooth grassy place with several white chairs and settees arranged in a semicircle overlooking the city. I had heard it said that the hill was actually the product of a terrible bomb used during one of the last wars before the Return of the Emperor, but now it was a most pleasant place. Metropolitan Sawyer is a large and happy Immortal. He sat in the center seat of the semicircle. On either side of him were three sub-rulers of which my Governor Elaine was one. One seat was empty, just to the left of the Metropolitan. This was reserved for the Emperor Himself. I wondered if he ever came here. I

He's Back !

was awestruck and frightened at the same time. Elaine brought me forward to meet the Metropolitan.

“Henry, this is the young mortal I was telling you about,” she said. I knelt before him. He helped me up.

“Hello, young lady,” he said with a smile in his voice. “So you’re the one that Elaine has been so impressed with.” I did not know that she had been impressed with me.

“If you say so, my Lord.”

“Yes, indeed, I do say so; a ‘selfless, sweet girl,’ she says. A mortal that we might want to have around. How would you like to be attached to my court, young lady?”

“Oh, yes, . . . my Lord, a, a great honor,” I managed to reply.

“Then you are. We will keep you with us. Your parents will be informed.” He nodded to an angel that was nearby. I was so rattled I could not remember if the angel had been there when I was introduced or not. But the angel was gone immediately, presumably to tell my folks. I thought that mother might be upset.

“Don’t worry, girl,” the Metropolitan said, “ your parents will be at peace with this.” I was shown to one of several small gatherings to the rear of the Dais by Elaine and she told one of the mortal women to take care of me. I was given a room of my own in a building there and shown where we were to eat. I wondered what was the purpose of my being here. Was I to perform some particular function? The other mortals were quite nice and I knew that I would like it there. I was attached to the court of the Immortal Metropolitan of Atlanta.

- After a few days when no particular duties were assigned to me and I had not seen Elaine – she had gone through a portal to one of those places that Immortals go to from time to time – I asked an older girl, Sheila Jones, what we were to do.

He's Back !

“You will be told when you're needed,” she said. “It will not be too hard and there is nothing to be afraid of, they just seem to want us, to want us . . . , to well, be around, that's all. We do learn a lot about them.” That was enough for me for the time being. In a few more days Elaine returned and sent for me.

They were all seated on the Dais and Elaine motioned for me to sit on the grass beside her. The Immortal on the other side seemed nice although a bit older, if that has any meaning for them. They seemed to be waiting for someone. In a few minutes angels started arriving. I say arriving. They would just suddenly appear a few hundred yards in front of the Dais; then they would move closer and form ranks around the Dais. One particular angel seemed to be in charge. I had seen angels before and I was not afraid of them although these were quite impressive. They look a lot like people, mortals or Immortals, but they were very white and bright and there was something hazy behind their backs although they do not actually have wings with feathers like the birds have. They were always kindly in appearance and moved with a certainty about themselves. After a few minutes several hundred had arrived. The Immortals on the Dais stood, I started to get frightened. Who was it? What would happen? Then suddenly a small dark woman appeared. The Immortals nodded. I got down on my knees.

“Henry, how good to see you,” the new arrival said.

“Janice, and you, welcome, welcome to your city,” Henry Sawyer said. He gave her his seat and another one was brought for him. There was still the empty seat beside them.

The new Prince had a longer scepter than Metropolitan Sawyer. They both had small crowns of golden olive leaves around their heads. I soon learned that our visitor was the Prince Janice Holland, Governor of the East Coast of which Atlanta was only a part. She was the

He's Back !

Over-Lord. I later learned that all governors had a Metropolitan over them and that all Metropolitans had an Over-Lord. That over the many Over-Lord's there were two Viceroys, one in the East and one in the West, and then the Emperor Himself. Among themselves the Immortals all just seemed like old friends, very casual and always happy. Why not? There was nothing that could threaten them.

As they visited and talked about their former lives as mortals I sat spellbound. What must it have been like? Some of them had been killed in the wars. Some of them were killed for their faith in those dark days before the Return of the Emperor.

In a little while an angel appeared at the Dais and spoke quietly to the Metropolitan. A mortal had committed some offence and another Immortal was bringing him for judgment. They appeared and the man was very frightened.

"He has killed his neighbor," the Immortal said. The Metropolitan Sawyer looked at his Over-Lord. She nodded back for him to handle it. He picked up his scepter from the little table beside his chair.

"You have killed your neighbor out of greed and hatred," he said. The man cringed. The Metropolitan pointed his scepter at the man. A look of terror crossed his face.

"That field should have been mine," the man said.

"But it was not. Why did you kill him?"

"As I said, er, Excellency, it should have been mine."

"How do you feel about killing him?" the Metropolitan asked.

"Well, I . . ."

"Never mind," the Metropolitan said. "You are guilty." All of the color left the man's face.

"A life for a life," the Metropolitan said. And the man fell over dead. Another wave of the scepter and two angels whisked the body away.

He's Back !

“Back to his family for burial,” Elaine whispered to me. I had never seen such a thing. I thought everyone was too afraid of judgment to disobey the Ten Laws. They returned to their conversations as if nothing had happened. Well, I thought, that was what they are here for. They judge and keep the peace. I was glad they were here; it gave life the secure feeling that we mortals had become accustomed to over the generations. The mortals at court talked a lot about this judgment over the next several days.

11.12.103 C.R. Elaine had said that I might be interested in reading some of the records of the times when she herself was a mortal. I went to the Metropolitan's library and looked for something interesting. I had learned in school about the general time line back then. I knew that the main difference for them as mortals was the uncertainty; the terrible uncertainty in which they lived not knowing what new power would emerge and overrun the world or what disasters awaited them. Yet those who loved the Emperor had the Helper within their own bodies. But we lived in total peace during the Great Reign.

I looked very hard but could not find any record of Elaine's mortal life. When I asked her about this, she told me that I would do well to concentrate on some of the other Immortals. I wondered what the Metropolitan Henry Sawyer had done to win his reward. And the governor Janice of the East Coast. What had she done? I would be gone for whole days studying these ancient records which were printed on leaves of paper bound into binders in the library near the Metropolitan's residence. I was a ward of Elaine and I had not been assigned any other duties and she seemed content for me to do this. If I had been at home with my own dear mother and father, they would have soon put a stop to it so that I could help around our small garden and with my younger brothers and sisters. I wondered who had written the pages that I was reading. Surely an

He's Back !

Immortal would not have done this menial task. They already knew everything. And they could scarcely have written them while they were still mortal during those hard and cruel times. I finally concluded that they had been written by some mortals during the reign of the Emperor, people like myself. But these writings seemed disorganized and incomplete.

I looked long and hard for references to our Metropolitan. Then I found him. When I did, I sat in shocked silence for a long time. Henry Sawyer had been the primary inquisitor for the people who had abused the believers in the Emperor. As a matter of fact, he had personally done much harm and inflicted great pain on many of them. After many had died under his hand, he seemed to have changed. He started seeking out their friends and they would try to hide because they knew who he was. Nevertheless, he found a few of them and they shared their beliefs in the Emperor with him. To their surprise Henry Sawyer did not torture them. He wanted to know more. One night after a long discussion with one of them Henry Sawyer converted. He tried to keep it a secret from his old companions and succeeded for a long time, about 2 years. Then he could hide no longer. He started releasing prisoners and helping them to escape to the Southwest which had become a haven for these people. The believers had fortified themselves in places like this. But eventually Henry was caught and treated terribly. He managed to escape with the help of some of his own hidden secret converts. He did this again and again. Each time he was caught, he was tortured terribly. He would manage to escape and return for more people. Each time he was tortured he would affirm his belief in this wonderful absent Emperor. He was finally hung up with wires through his hands and died for his faith in this very area. For this he was made Metropolitan of Atlanta upon the Emperor's return and Elaine was one of his local governors. How

He's Back !

could they now be such friends? I was a little confused by these Immortals.

03.19.104 C.R. I started looking for records about Governor Janice. Her full title was Over Lord of the East Coast Of The Americas. Over her was the Viceroy Of The Western Hemisphere. Over him was the Emperor. I wondered what he was like? They often went to Jerusalem to attend the Emperor's court. But mortals were never asked to accompany them.

03.21.103 C.R. It was very difficult to find references to the immortal Janice Holland. I finally found some references to what I believed to be her in a list of the hopelessly insane. There was nothing more.

05.23.103 C.R. The more I read, the more I wanted to compile the most inspiring parts into well organized books. I decided that I wanted to make this my life's work. I told Elaine and she seemed very happy. She said that she would do everything she could to help me. I had found a calling. There had to be a testimony to those days for mortals of my generation and beyond to read. As time went on, I had a growing desire to ask to interview Janice Holland but I was afraid to ask. One day a conversation with Elaine made it possible. I was walking a favorite walking trail near the Metropolitan's residence when Elaine appeared just ahead. This time I was startled even though I was used to such things.

"I'm sorry child," Elaine said.

She hurried to me and hugged me. I always love being hugged by an Immortal. They are so much like us only different in a way that I have vainly tried repeatedly to explain.

"How's our girl?" she asked with her arm still around me.

He's Back !

“Fine.” I knew that I was smiling from ear to ear. She is so dear to me.

“Good! I am sorry that I have not seen you for so long. I have had to be away on matters of the Empire.”

“And how is the Emperor?” I asked foolishly.

Elaine smiled. “The Emperor, my dear, is always fine, much, much more than fine.”

I smiled back weakly, uncertainly.

“How is your research going?” she asked.

“Fine, fine but I need, er, I think I need some information that is not in those pages. Lots more information.” I looked up into her eyes. Elaine is a full 8 inches taller than I am.

“Anna, that is wonderful. I, we, were so hoping that you would really throw yourself into this.” I was glad that I was fulfilling their expectations.

“Elaine, I need more on the Over-Lord Janice.”

“Yes, I image that you do. That is very special.”

I waited. She seemed to read my thoughts.

“However, the only way to get that is from her own mouth,” Elaine said. I shall tell her about your request and have you temporarily attached to her court.” It was so easy and so sensible that I forgot to be nervous.

In a few days as I pouring over the old pages yet again, an angel about my size suddenly appeared. I jumped. They can be quite startling even though we know that they mean us no harm and that they were under the Immortals in rank.

“Mistress Anna,” it said.

I nodded trying to keep my composure.

“Her Excellency, Janice Holland, bids you join her court. I am to deliver you,” the angel said.

“Fine. And what is your name?” I asked. I was getting bolder being attached to a court.

“My name is Lucius.”

He's Back !

“That’s a good name for an angel,” I said. He nodded.

For some reason this time I closed my eyes. I knew that the trip would be instantaneous but I did not want to watch. This time Elaine was not here to hold my hand. I was traveling alone with an angel. “OOOhhhhh! Ahh!” I opened my eyes. I found myself on another Dais, much larger than Henry Sawyer’s, overlooking the ocean on one side and a very large city on the other.

“So, here is my little biographer.”

I turned to see the Over-Lord approaching me. I knelt. She put one hand under my chin and pulled my face gently upward. Some more upward pressure bid me to rise. So I did. I towered over her in height. I had not remembered that she was so tiny.

“So, you want to write my story, child?”

“Yes, Excellency.”

She glanced around at her court. They all smiled back.

“The story of an insane woman.”

They all laughed. I knew that this would be interesting.

07.10.104 C.R. Those who hated the absent Emperor in her area took a different approach than those who had lived farther to the South. After the bombings a group of people there had taken control and persecuted those loyal to the Emperor. Instead of beatings they had resorted to drug injections which some of them had learned from a group across the ocean. If you would not denounce the Emperor, you were declared insane and given these injections. At first you would merely feel disoriented. But if you did not denounce the Emperor, they would increase the dosage until you were in extreme mental and emotional distress and actually forgot most of what you knew. They called this “washing your brain.” Eventually they would get

He's Back !

you to say the words and sign a paper denying the Emperor. But to their surprise Janice would never deny him no matter what they did to her. She said that the Helper lived in her at a much deeper level than her mind or her emotions. Her mind and emotions were just as damaged as any other prisoners. Her behavior was indeed insane. She would know nothing and she would drool constantly. But she would not deny. When the Emperor returned, she had been lying on her bed with nothing but water and gruel for weeks. She knew nothing. The Emperor immediately restored her. She had been a teacher in a religious school for over 30 years before they captured her. It was called being a "Nun." She said that as soon as the Emperor drew her into the air, she was totally restored and the Emperor gave her a coronet for her head and her scepter and told her to deal with her tormentors and to rule for him. This she did.

11.22.111 C.R. For many years now I have kept my study near the Metropolitan's court in a small building that they have provided for me there. I am absorbed in my work. It is known throughout this hemisphere what I am doing and perhaps even in the Eastern one as well. Lucius has never left me from that first time he came and took me to interview Janice. He watches over me day and night. At first I thought I would never get used to being watched continually, but I did. He rarely speaks and when he does it is very softly. He is a gentle creature unless I am threatened, then he grows larger and brighter. When I want to go anywhere, he will take me. If I ask him to take me somewhere and he does not comply, I know that it is forbidden. But, for the most part, we are allowed to go anywhere. I never remember the trip, only the instant before the departure and after the arrival. I quit closing my eyes as it does not make any difference. After Lucius had been with me for some time, it occurred to me to ask Elaine

He's Back !

what he had done before the return of the Emperor. She told me that he had attended her personally; he was her personal guardian. But she had never seen him until all the angels became visible upon the return of the Emperor. Their times as mortals had certainly been different from ours.

01.22.112 C.R. The very special day that I am going to tell you about, reader, began as any other day. It was sunny and a little cool. The earth was beautiful and I was awakened by Lucius who told me that once again Elaine wanted me to join her at the Dais. Lucius never sleeps. I wondered if there would be another visit from the Over-Lord Janice. I dressed quickly and joined my Mistress, Elaine, at the Dais. I sat by her feet on the grass. Several of the other Immortals greeted me and I responded respectfully, aware of my special privileges as a mortal which Elaine has given me. Sure enough before long angels started appearing before the Dais. Elaine had told me that when Janice had come that there was one whole legion of angels that preceded her. Soon I was aware that at least twice as many had appeared. There were so many this time that they spread out after coming through the portal and formed a semi-circle in the air facing the Dais. They just kept coming and coming. I was getting more and more excited and a little frightened. After what must have been six legions had arrived, an enormous angel appeared. He nodded to the immortal princes and they nodded respectfully in return. I heard Elaine say softly, "Gabriel." He was larger in every way than the other angels and had an enormous head which sent forth a beautiful glow. I knew who he was but I had never seen him. He was magnificent. To my surprise the angels kept pouring through the portal. I asked myself, who could be greater than Gabriel? My breath left my chest. The Emperor!

He's Back !

I had been watching the Immortals out of the corner of my eye for some clues. Before I could catch my breath, I saw the Immortals on the Dais fall on their faces and throw their crowns and scepters on the ground in front of them. I was terror stricken. I fell on my face behind Elaine and grabbed her ankle with my left hand and held on for dear life. Suddenly the air was full of a sweet, sweet scent and I felt wonderfully light headed. I remember thinking briefly, good, maybe I will pass out and die right here on this spot of grass. I heard the immortals shout praises to the Emperor. Then I heard his voice. It sounded like a hundred gentle waterfalls. Instantly I was at peace. Elaine had pulled away from my grasp and I was left on my own. I don't know where I got the strength to look up but I lifted my head slightly to get a glimpse of him. I was surprised. Looking at his profile he seemed to be just a man. He was much smaller than the Metropolitan Henry Sawyer. He had medium long hair and a full beard that was not very long. He wore a simple white robe. He was not wearing a crown or coronet or carrying a scepter. He looked my way and before I could divert my eyes, we made eye contact. I felt like a lightning bolt had just passed through my brain but I was not injured and I knew it. I put my face back on the ground.

Everything grew silent and before long I was sure that I could hear footsteps in the grass coming my way. I hoped that it was Elaine but I could tell that it was not. He put his hand on my shoulder and applied some upward pressure so I sat up. I was filled with peace. I sat there on my heels and looked into his eyes. I was lost in them. I swam in his eyes for what seemed forever. I was completely absorbed. Later when I met the man I was to marry, I loved to look into his eyes and I was aware of him and of myself and my own body very strongly. Lost in the emperor's eyes I was only aware of Him. I was drowning in love. It was wonderful. Words fail me to explain it. I can

He's Back !

not to this day describe total joy. But I experienced it then; the absence of every other feeling or emotion or thought except absolute joy, joy abounding and eternal. When I was in the state of love with the Emperor, everything else flew away. Somewhere I must have known that there was a world there. But it would wait, everything and everybody waited for Him.

After a while he smiled and took his hand off of my shoulder. I saw wounds in his hands. He smiled and walked back to the Dais. He sat in the chair to the Metropolitan's left which was always reserved for him. The crowns and scepters remained on the ground and no one seemed to care. These precious things which had been purchased by so much devotion in their mortal lives lay like trash. What an experience! I felt that I could live to a ripe old age on this experience alone, and indeed, I did.

[N.D.] Later I told Elaine how I felt when I looked into the Emperor's eyes. I must have looked very surprised because she said. "Yes, yes, dear Anna. We feel the same way." I could not respond; they were Immortals and these Immortals were princes as well. There were some who weren't actually princes.

"You see, Anna," Elaine continued. "The Emperor is God. We are Immortal by his power only. Someday, who knows, maybe you will be Immortal too. But the Emperor is God, God Himself." I did not understand it, but I accepted it.

[N.D.] One day about three months after I saw the Emperor, Elaine signaled Lucius to bring me to her house.

"Anna, dear, come, come to me," she motioned.

I went and sat next to her.

"I have something for you, dear."

"Yes," I answered.

She motioned and a mortal man entered the room.

He's Back !

“Daniel, this is our Anna,” Elaine said.

This man was gorgeous. He was tall and blond with light gray eyes. As soon as I looked into them, I was his. We stared at each other for a long time. I hoped desperately that he was half as attracted to me as I was to him.

My Governor silently left the room at some point, I was unaware.

Daniel and I exchanged our life stories. We talked for hours, night came and day broke again. Daniel lived nearby in Elaine's own principality. He came to see me often and we would walk in the garden behind the Dais. He told me that he had loved me from the first day. After about three months we asked Elaine for permission to marry. She gave it cheerfully.

07.18.114 C.R. Our wedding was a very public affair. It seems that there is something about weddings that interests the Immortals. Soon after we talked to Elaine, it set off a flurry of activity in the Metropolitan's court. We were honored to have the attention, but we were very surprised. My original intention in talking to Elaine about it was to find out if it would be acceptable to her. After that, we intended to go to my parents for their blessing. I had taken Daniel to eat at my parent's house and they were obviously very happy about him. By now they had abandoned any hope of my marrying. After I received Elaine's blessing, we did go to my parents and they gave us their enthusiastic support. But Elaine quickly informed me that the Metropolitan himself wanted to perform the ceremony at the Dais. We were overcome. We set a date barely two months away and my mother began inviting everyone. Daniel's parents were also subjects of the Over-Lord Janice and they came down with several uncles and aunts and many cousins. It fell to my parents and uncles and aunts and cousins to put them up. Everyone was assigned to someone and the time flew by until suddenly it

He's Back !

was our wedding day. We all went to the Dais and I waited in my small office with my bridesmaids to be called. When it was time, Elaine came for me.

“You may be somewhat surprised, little one,” Elaine said. She often called me by that name when she wanted to express her affection for me although by now we both appeared to be about the same age. I thought that perhaps as I was about to be a married woman, she would find another term for me. As we proceeded to the Dais, I found that there were literally thousands of mortals there and many more Immortals than I had ever seen in one place and quite a large contingent of angels on the outer area around the Dais. These Immortals love weddings. I did not know at the time that the Emperor had performed his first miracle at a wedding and that the relationship between the Emperor and the Immortals was likened in the ancient books to a marriage relationship. In their previous mortal state the entire company of those referred to as “believers” in the world had been known as the bride of the Emperor. I intended to look into this further in my studies after my wedding trip. The ceremony was beautiful. Mother had coordinated all of the details with Lucius. It had taken her a few days to get over her apprehension of dealing directly with an angel on this matter, but once she was accustomed to it, she really liked it. No one knew of any other mortal, even mortal administrators who had been personally assigned an angel. The Metropolitan wished us every happiness and Lucius transported us to a beautiful tropical island for a 10 day wedding trip. My father and uncles had given us some gold to pay for the lodging and food but we were given far more by our hosts than we could have ever paid for.

[N.D.] After we returned from our trip, the Metropolitan gave us a residence not far from the Dais. The house is very nice but not too large. My husband registered

He's Back !

to grow certain food crops on the land since there is considerable land that goes with the house. He feels that this is the way that he can contribute to the overall good of our society and he will receive compensation for his crops. I had never asked for more than my keep in my work so other compensations had never been discussed. I believe that Daniel is doing the right thing. I travel when necessary with Lucius and I have moved all of the study materials from my little study near the Dais to a new study set up in our home. Daniel is a fine husband and in the third year of our marriage I gave birth to the next great love of my life, our son Mark.

[N.D.] After Mark was weaned, I set out to establish an overall plan for my writing. I decided on three primary categories. The first part which I am calling the First Testament is an organization and commentary on the first section of the ancient writings revered by the Immortals. It concerns the creation of the earth and the ancient Empire of the people of God. It covers in summary about 4,000 years. The Second Testament is all about the Emperor including when he came to earth as a humble man and when he died his heroic death and returned from the dead. This is the shortest work although the most important and covers only about 33 years. The Third Testament is about the lives of the Immortals when they were mortal after the Emperor went back to His Father. That is the most difficult part for me because it has not been previously written in a clear form; so I have to do all of the research and organizing and writing myself. This part covers just over 2,000 years although the first and last 200 years seem to be the more important eras. Even Daniel does not attempt to enter into my writing. It seems that it is my task alone. Not too many mortals take much of an interest in what I am doing but the Metropolitan and his court seem to think it is important. I wonder sometimes if there are others

He's Back !

like me in other courts of the Empire that are doing the same kind of work, but I have not found anyone so far in my travels.

01.22.115 C.R. Daniel is allowed to accompany me on my travels and if it is the right season, he will come with me. He never puts himself forward and I must admit that I do not pay him the attention that he deserves. When Mark was very young, I did not travel as much as I do now. We seldom take him with us as there is always a mortal child caregiver assigned to us. I generally take at least one trip a month to the library attached to some court. At first Elaine would arrange these trips but now I just tell Lucius and he takes care of everything. We are always welcomed cordially by a mortal aide. This is, I suppose, because of Lucius. If I need an audience with the Immortal Prince of the area, Lucius arranges that as well. Elaine is always interested in my progress when I return. Once in a while I encounter her at some other court and we are always glad to see each other. Aside from Daniel I think that she is my best friend; a strange thing for a mortal to have.

05.22.115 C.R. We live in a wonderful peace under the Emperor. My research has shown that there are many things that are not the same for us mortals compared to the pre-reign systems, the ones that our Immortals had when they were mortal. They had many nations with many different kinds of rulers and systems.

We use gold as our exchange all over the Empire. It is struck in coins with the symbol of the Emperor on it. It is not permitted to use his image or even his profile. These coins are struck by the Imperial Bank which is staffed by mortals under the oversight of the Imperial Controller who is an Immortal. Many of our needs are supplied by the Imperial Commissary which does not require gold. Like the bank it is staffed by mortals under the Immortal Imperial

He's Back !

Commissioner. Only private exchanges are negotiated with gold. This is permitted so long as it does not compete with the Commissary. The Commissary is funded by the Imperial Bank and the items that they dispense are without charge. Private transactions are not permitted to compete with the Commissary so that people will not be deprived or treated unfairly. All necessary food, clothing, housing and transportation are supplied by the Commissary on the basis of need; there is a continuous supply. Things like jewelry and fancy clothing and specialty foods and drink are sold on the gold basis. We get gold from our work with private mortal organizations or our work for Immortals who maintain homes in this world. Our system is not as complicated as the pre-reign system was. They had many different banks and systems which, near the end, were tied together by an extensive electronic system. There are no electronic communications like there were before the Reign. This has been dictated by the Viceroy as, in the end, it seemed to do more harm than good.

We have published newspapers and books. Those under Imperial license are free. There are also private ones. Writings of rebellion against the Emperor are not permitted. Land travel is by train. There are boats for the sea. They are powered by steam and burn natural fuels to propel them. For lighting we burn oil lamps. Most people live and work locally. There are no airplanes just as there are no electronic communications. As a result, the two hemispheres are somewhat isolated. Mortals can be transported by angels. This does not happen very often. I am the only mortal with a personal angel to assist me. That is because Elaine has provided Lucius to me. Elaine has more authority than any other sub-ruler that I have ever met. This seems strange but I do not question it.

Abuse of chemical substances is not permitted. War is unknown. The killing of unborn children is not permitted. People can marry by obtaining a license from the

He's Back !

local civil administrator. If they conceive outside of marriage, they must then marry. Divorce is permitted on the authority of the civil administrators. Multiple spouses are not permitted. Any couple that conceives a child is responsible for their care; however, if one or both parents die, the children are placed with foster parents. There are many who love to do this.

There are no prisons. Wrong doers are either executed at judgment or put under probation with attending angels until the local ruler deems it appropriate to free them. There is always an abundance of angels. They seem to know when offenses are committed and sometimes an Immortal investigator will be contacted who will take offenders to a ruler judge. Otherwise, the angels take them directly. Because of the knowledge of the Immortals and the angels the facts of a crime are never in doubt.

Many Immortals who are not princes enjoy the natural areas of the earth. Some maintain residences there, but mortals who voluntarily work as servants must be paid in Imperial gold coin and are always treated with respect and fairness. There are no weather related or other natural disasters because the Emperor controls these things and does not allow them. Any Immortal can travel to be with the Emperor in places that we can not go. They do this often. They always return even happier than they were when they departed.

There are no medical care facilities. There is very little sickness among us. Any Immortal can dispense healing to us and we live healthily. We die peacefully in simple old age. We usually live about 70 to 90 years.

Education is simple and provided by the Imperial Education Trust. It is administered by mortal administrators under the Immortal Imperial Principal. The administrators and the teachers are provided with all the necessities of living. For private tutoring they are paid with Imperial coin. Everyone is taught to read and write and to make necessary

He's Back !

calculations. Those who want to serve the Emperor in more advanced ways, like teaching or administration, can pursue further study.

Daniel gives the food he raises to the local food administrator. All of our needs are provided by the Emperor through Elaine. Our lives are good and we are thankful.

03.16.116 C.R. The Viceroy of the Eastern half of the World is John the Beloved. His court is located on Patmos Island which is fairly close to the capital. This is because John spent some years on that island just before his death and because the Viceroy never wants to be far from the Emperor even if he can travel instantaneously to His side. No mortal, including myself, can approach the Imperial Court in Jerusalem without an invitation. However, I can visit a Viceroy's court if I have a suitable reason. I have been considering for years what a suitable reason might be for visiting the Viceroy's court and his substantial library. I now believe that I have collected sufficient reasons. Of course, there is always the Western Viceroy's court which is closer to where I live but it is far from the capital and I suspect, rightly or wrongly, that there are fewer important answers to be found there. Additionally, John the Beloved knew the Emperor when he came as a man and Luis Cepata did not. Before I asked Lucius to arrange the trip, I talked to Daniel to make sure that he could accompany me. Mark is twelve now, but I believe that we shall leave him at the residence with the servants. Lucius disappeared to get permission and returned in about an hour to say that the answer would be forthcoming in a few days. I asked him if I had overstepped my privilege. He said that I had not.

As we were promised, permission came in a few days but we were instructed not to come for another week. I busied myself with more relevant research in case Elaine or

He's Back !

any Immortal, even the Viceroy, should question my reason for the visit.

[N.D.] This morning Elaine came to tell me that she would accompany us to Patmos Island. I was a little taken back but perhaps I had begun to think too highly of myself and my position. I was polite and accepting while she was here but after she departed, I was concerned about my attitude. I asked to see her again at her convenience. She came back to me and I told her that I was sorry. She said that I had done nothing to be sorry about. I hugged her before she left. We arrived at Patmos Island just behind Elaine's full ceremonial escort which now seemed large to me for an under Prince. I have seen quite a lot in the past few years. We would have some time at the Dais before I could begin my research.

[N.D.] The angelic canopy over Patmos Island is magnificent. It is gigantic and beautiful. It is second only to the one over Jerusalem and equal to the one over the Western Viceroy's court in Montevideo. There are always angels visible over the city; the numbers vary but there are always plenty in view. They are very bright and they will produce magnificent choral chords for about a half an hour, and then they will be silent and change their formations in a beautiful coordinated manner. Their formations center on the Dais which is very large. The Viceroy's seat is in the middle of the top tier with three settee's on each side which seat two under governor's each. There are seven settee's on the middle tier and nine on the lower tier. I understand that of all the Dais' in the world only the two Viceroys have a multi-tiered Dais. There is no Dais in Jerusalem as the Emperor holds court in the reconstructed Palace next to the Temple. The construction of the Dais and the surrounding buildings including the Viceroy's massive residence took more space than the small island had to give. So, more

He's Back !

Island was constructed to accommodate all of the structures and the surrounding parks. My research tells me that many mortals volunteered to help in the construction throughout the hemisphere but that the angels were responsible for much of the heavier work.

Elaine was warmly welcomed by the Viceroy himself. She introduced me to the Viceroy. Physically he is much like the Emperor in size and shape and the way he grooms his hair and beard. I am told that they do not actually have to groom themselves; their hair and beards are as they will them to be. The Viceroy is somewhat darker than the Emperor and he wears a coronet on his head and carries a scepter just as the rulers under him do. Only the Emperor does without these accessories. John's coronet is much like the others but his scepter, although no larger than my Metropolitan's or Janice's, is different. It is plainer and has only a small cross on the tip.

John is certainly worthy of the title, "Beloved." Love seems to flow from his person. Having had the honor of meeting the Emperor I can honestly say that John the Beloved stands only under the Emperor in the love and power that radiates from him. Everyone at his court seems to pick up on this radiating love and projects it to everyone around. We were positively drunk in their presence. My dear husband was even more overwhelmed than I. He had never met the Emperor and he has a very dear and sensitive nature. I commented to Elaine about this afterward in our private rooms. Our rooms were next to Elaine's.

"You do sense the love which flows from the Viceroy just as we do?" I asked.

"Yes, it is very strong. He is the apostle of love."

"Daniel is quite overwhelmed," I said. Daniel had retired early.

"Good. He needed this," Elaine replied. "You know Anna, the reason that the Viceroy gives so much love is because he is constantly going to the Emperor."

He's Back !

“Explain, please.”

“He goes to the capital and visits and embraces the Emperor every chance he gets. He has many duties here so he can not stay for long with the Emperor, but he makes many, many short trips. He says that he must do this.”

“So all this love does not originate with the Viceroy?” I asked.

“Darling, all love originates with the Emperor. John just practices constant exposure to the source,” Elaine said.

It took me a while to absorb this but I could understand it because I had been lost in the Emperor's eyes for a few moments myself once years ago. I talked about it with Daniel.

[N.D.] The Viceroy's library is extensive and I have spent many weeks sifting through much of it. I have five mortal aides for the work and even Lucius has helped. Two questions have begun to plague me. The first question is, why did the Emperor and the Immortals set up his rule over us mortals on the earth in the first place? They seem to enjoy being together “away” from the world. I have become convinced that it is not because they simply love to be Lords over us. Many times they seem almost burdened with the task. Perhaps it is because they know what we would do to each other without them and it is an act of love towards us. This may be partially true, but I am convinced that it is not the entire answer. The second question is, will it all end and, if so, when and how? For some reason I believe that the Imperial Reign will come to an end, not because any mortal can defeat the Emperor but because someday he would simply go “away” and the Immortals will go with Him. But the why or when I do not know. I will continue searching. I do not know at this time if these answers, for they must exist, will be appropriate to publish at least in my lifetime. I do keep a private journal and I will

He's Back !

leave these answers or all that I can find about them to Mark. Sooner or later, they must be answered.

02.12.157 C.R. Today I was officially recognized as mortal Compiler Of Histories. Elaine nominated me to Viceroy Cepata and our Metropolitan Henry and Over-Lord Janice endorsed it. I am so honored and Daniel is so happy for me. The Viceroy even indicated that the Emperor is pleased with my work. The award, in the form of a medal on a red ribbon was placed around my neck by Elaine at the Over-Lord's Dais. Lucius took us to the Dais and returned us to our residence afterwards.

03.22.158 C.R. I lost Daniel last week. He was seventy-three years of age. He passed quietly and Elaine was by my side. I have not made any entries in my journals since then until now. It hit me very hard. We were very close and he was always such a dear husband. I am almost as old as Daniel so I have decided to begin training Mark to do my work.

He's Back !

“True, he is her son, her only child. But he does not act like her,” the Metropolitan said.

“He cried for days at her death,” Elaine said. “I had to assure him continually that there was great hope for her resurrection. He has her mind and her heart, Henry. As a child his tenderness was most apparent. You yourself noticed that.”

“Now, however,” Henry Sawyer continued, “he has been reminding me more of the rebellious masses that we are put here to contain.”

“I understand, Henry,” Elaine continued. “But that is just his age. He will grow out of it.”

“And, and my dear Elaine,” Sawyer continued, “he wants to visit beyond the veil, in what they call ‘away’ with the Emperor or the ‘next-door-place.’ Now, Elaine, you know that he can not do that. It is a physical impossibility. His mortal body would perish if he were even able to attempt it.”

“I have told him that, Henry, and he will not ask again. But isn't that very desire a good thing in itself. He wants to be more than he now is.”

“Yes, and didn't we all?” the Metropolitan responded in a softer tone. “None of us could have endured unless we had desired the reward. But he will have to wait for his own transformation, if the Emperor will grant it. I am only concerned that he has become so familiar with being with us that he does not have his mother's gratitude for it all.”

“Yet, Henry,” Elaine said, “yet you do acknowledge that the Emperor has given me the authority to approve Anna's successors?”

“Yes, Elaine, you know that I do. And we all here also do not forget,” he waved his arm to include all the immortals seated at the Dais, “that even though the mortals

He's Back !

do not know it, you are the Imperial Legate here and that your particular mission here has a special significance. However, please bear in mind that once the succession is started, the mortals will see the family of Anna, and indeed Anna herself, as being much more important than the work of Anna alone. Dynasties carry a lot of weight with people."

"But is this not our purpose?"

"Yes, yes it is. But we must be sure of the boy. There are other choices. Anna's younger sister or one of her nieces or nephews. As a personal favor to me, Elaine, deal with the boy, take off the kid gloves."

"Very well, Henry, my dear brother, I will be firmer."

He's Back !

Section Two

Date: 03.19.159 C.R. My name is Mark. I am the son of Anna, the compiler of histories. It is the year 163 of the Glorious Reign. My mother has been gone four years now. For the first year I grieved much. Our blessed Immortal Elaine comforted me but there was only so much that she could do. To tell the truth I had not expected my mother to die. I knew that we were mortals and Elaine and her kind were immortal. I have read my mother's histories about the immortals before the reign so I understood with my mind how things were. But in my heart I could not accept the truth. My mother was the most favored of all mortals and yet she was not spared the ignominy of death. In my heart I was sad and angry at the same time. But I did not show my anger. I have even tried to quiz Lucius about some things. He is a gentle being but would usually refuse to answer. One day I worked up the courage to tell Lucius to transport me to Elaine which he did. Lucius is an angel and he had always done mother's bidding.

I asked Elaine about some things which are important to me.

"Why are you Immortal and I am mortal?"

"Mark, you know the history. I embraced the Emperor before he was visible."

"I understand the time line, Elaine. But why has mankind been divided by it. You were born. I was born. But, just because you were born earlier, you are Immortal and I am not. Is the Emperor unfair?"

"Mark, you delve into things that are too big for you. You must wait for your answers."

"I'll bet that when you go outside this world that you find out answers that you will not tell us."

"If that is true," Elaine paused, "it is for your own good and I am not obliged to tell you. The Emperor owes no one favor. He never has. I was honored to be chosen in

He's Back !

my day. You should be in yours. Think, think of how it was with your mother when she first came to us. You have been with us all along. You forget yourself, Mark.”

I felt that my response would be crucial.

“Yes, Elaine, I, I am grateful. And I will do my best to act like it.”

05.12.159 C.R. Today Elaine took me to another area of the Metropolitan's realm while she inspected the water cleansing areas there. It is always good to travel with Elaine. We are about the same height and at this time we appear to be the same age. Sometimes when I travel with her, I am mistaken for an Immortal myself. On the last trip a man of about my age bowed his head to me. I signaled with a wave of my hand. At first he looked perplexed and then a look of recognition came to his face as he realized that I was as mortal as he. Then the look of recognition changed to a look of spite as if I had intentionally misled him. I am used to traveling with Elaine. I had done so since I was a very small boy. I did not call her “mistress” or “governor.” This she had always allowed, but I did not want her to see me receiving any deference from another mortal. I knew that she would not be pleased. She finished her inspection in this place. It was a beautiful place of running streams and wooded lands. The people that lived there grew food for us like my father had done. When she was ready to depart, she looked in my direction. I ran to her side and was sure to smile. She raised her scepter, a portal opened and we were back by the Dais of the Metropolitan.

“Mark, go back to your house and wait until I send for you,” she said.

I was a little surprised but I did as she commanded. I told myself that she was very busy. A few days went by and I was not summoned. Then more days, then weeks, then a month, then several months. By this time I was consumed with worry. I had been set aside by Elaine. Out

He's Back !

of favor. She was aware of my jealousy of the Immortals. What was I to do?

10.12.159 C.R. It has been many months now. Several times I have started to walk to the Dais to at least look in on Elaine and the others there. But I have suppressed the urge. I do not even know if Elaine is still in the area. She may have been called to Jerusalem or some other place. I have asked, then ordered Lucius to take me to Elaine several times, but he does not respond. I have busied myself with mother's writings and I have a great deal of knowledge now about the pre-reign era. Some who are now Immortals are scarcely better than we are. It is just that they were born before the Reign began. I am not sure that this is fair, but there is nothing that I can do about it. One of the primary advantages that we have is the absence of the evil prince. Since the return of the Emperor, the evil prince has been bound along with all of his angels and taken to some secret prison. The importance of this to us now is that any evil that we mortals commit is strictly from our own nature. That is why it is punished so quickly by the Immortals who rule and judge us.

It has now been just over two years since I have seen Elaine. Many of my fellow mortals no longer come to me for insight into mother's writings so I have much time on my hands. For some reason Lucius remains with me, but we seldom communicate. He stays at my house and is always near when I go out. I hear from some of my close friends that the local mortal assembly is split as to whether I am still the chosen one. Some, the majority, say that since I have not been invited to the Dais for over two years that I am not my mother's heir and that I should find ordinary employment. I have even been offered a few positions by several friends of my family. Then others argue that no one else has been appointed in my place. I am told that Elaine is seen regularly at the Dais now. But she does not send for

He's Back !

me and I will not shame myself by going to her. Besides, she ordered me to wait until she summoned me. Also, the continued presence of Lucius at my side is another argument that I have not been set aside permanently. There is considerable confusion.

11.03.159 C.R. I think that I will travel. Father left me enough gold so that I can travel comfortably for a few years. Then I can come home and accept some kind offer of employment from one of our family friends. At least mother's position will continue to serve me well for many years to come. I have ordered Lucius to remain behind. I want to travel unrecognized.

11.11.159 C.R. I have been gone a week and I am already starting to learn a lot. Lucius has apparently obeyed my order and stayed behind. I have worked my way up the East Coast and nearing New York. I have been traveling on the free public train. Most of the time I have had a private compartment and I have made a few young friends so far on my journey. We go most places together; myself, and John and Martha and Cliff. We are all unmarried and about the same age.

11.29.159 C.R. Today we arrived in New York. What a great city! We will go adventuring. We have stayed up almost continuously for the better part of three days. Martha and John have found a public inn and say that they are going to sleep for a long time. Cliff and I still aren't tired. Night is approaching and we are going to another party. We have been exploring the streets of the city and have decided to walk to this party. It has been much advertised and a popular new poet, Adrian Harnecker, will be reciting some of his new verse.

He's Back !

11.30.159 C. R. We had quite a time last night. We have returned to the inn and I have had a few hours of sleep, but I awoke thinking about last night and I just have to put this in my diary. As Cliff and I walked down a dark and narrow street, it began to rain softly. We were not concerned as we enjoyed the rain and neither of us had ever been afraid of the dark. Suddenly five young men seemed to appear out of nowhere and demanded our gold. I looked at Cliff and we both knew that we would fight them before we would give up our gold. They all seemed much thinner and lighter than we are. Who do they think that are? Bandits in this day and age? Don't they know that they will be swiftly and strictly judged. We were squaring off to begin combat when one of the five spotted something over my shoulder. A look of abject fear crossed his face. I turned to see. It was Lucius. I had never seen Lucius look this big and bright and strong. The mere sight of him froze our opponents in their tracks. They started to flee. Lucius spoke firmly just once.

“Hold your places,” he commanded.

They stopped and turned around. In a few seconds other angels arrived to take them to judgment. They looked very sad and scared. I thought, oh, well, they won't get much, probably just a strong warning. I remembered in my studies that before the reign they would have been taken to a jail. But now since everything is monitored by the angels and judged by the Immortals, such places are not needed. They are either warned or executed or linked to an angel for a probation period. A simple and effective system. As the other angels, four or them, prepared to leave, the last one looked my way and nodded. I looked around quickly for Lucius. Now he was gone. This recognition by the angel clear up here in New York made me wonder. I was still recognized by them. Perhaps I would someday be restored. Or perhaps it was just in deference to my mother. Anna had been much loved by them all, Immortal and angel alike.

He's Back !

We continued to the gathering and listened to the poetry of Adrian Harnecker. Adrian is a man of middle age, about twenty years older than myself. He is tall and bony and blonde. He sits on a stool and strums a small stringed instrument to accompany his poetry. His poetry is unusual. It does not always rhyme as I think it should. It is more the content of the poems that appeals to people of my age.

It is not far but can't seem close,
That place we long to be,
To wait is hard.
But choice is gone,
For those who wish to see.

I wish to see, I wish to hear,
Those great eternal songs,
Who will bring them all down here,
Where soul and heart do long?

Amazing Grace how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.

I did not understand it all, but it still appealed to me.

12.06.159 C.R. A few days later I thought that while we were in the area I might as well visit the Dais of the East Coast Governor Janice. I don't know why I wanted to go, but I thought, why not? All mortals were allowed to the outermost marker around the Dais and I did not expect to be recognized. John and Cliff were not interested but Martha said that she would go. She had once been to the Dais of her Metropolitan to the South. We caught a public train to the area and walked up the hill. There were a fair amount of mortals visiting that day and we moved closer than I had intended. The Governor was there; I had seen her years ago at our Dais with my mother. Mother had talked to

He's Back !

her; I was a young boy at the time. Janice was talking casually with her court as the Immortals so often do. Martha and I sat down on the grass to watch. Occasionally an angel would approach with one or another wrong doer. After about an hour and a half I was shifting my weight to stand and back away from the Dais. I presumed that Martha would follow my lead. It was then that I saw one of the young men who had attempted to take our gold. I told Martha who he was and we crept forward without rising to try to hear better.

“Killed?” Janice asked the angel.

The angel nodded, “Yes.”

“Young man,” the governor addressed the frightened youth, “do you know what you have done?”

The boy nodded. He looked so small and frightened.

Evidently this offender had done something worse just before he had attempted to rob us. I wondered why he had not been apprehended at that time.

Janice talked with the angel briefly. I began to wonder again how much the Immortals knew without the angels. Sometimes they seemed to know everything and sometimes they asked the angels for information. I had never figured it out.

“Young man, what is your name?” the governor asked.

“Bertrum,” the boy muttered.

“Fortunately we were able to revive your intended victim,” Janice said. “So you shall not die. However, you shall serve your victim until all of his strength returns. Then we shall decide what to do. Do not make the mistake of thinking that you can misbehave again or you will be very sorry. You will be tied to this angel. Do you understand?” She raised her voice with that last question. Immediately an angel attached himself to the boy’s arm. The boy seemed terrified. He nodded his head yes

He's Back !

repeatedly. An angel was about to take him away when the governor spoke again.

“Do any of you mortals recognize this man?” she asked. She looked out among us. Many shook their heads no. I had no choice but to respond. To ignore an Immortal was a grave offense. I stood slowly. Martha looked up at me sympathetically.

“Yes, Excellency,” I said clearly.

She looked at me.

“Young Mark?”

Martha was impressed.

“Yes, Excellency.”

“What do you know?”

“Only that he tried to rob us of our gold, my friend and me, six nights ago, with three of his cohorts, Excellency.”

“Multiple crimes. I am afraid young Bertrum, that you will have to serve with very limited vision. I will not take it all as you would then be useless to serve, but you will be limited in your ability to see and to act until and if I see that you have changed your ways.”

The boy looked startled and held his hand in front of his face to see how much he could see.

“Good travels, young Mark,” the governor said to me.

I nodded. She turned away and Bertrum and his escort passed through a portal to who knows where.

I took Martha's hand and we worked our way back and silently left the area of the Dais. So, I am still recognized by the princes of this world. Martha seemed in awe and held my hand for a very long time. She has nice hands and I enjoyed it. When we parted that evening, I did not want her to leave. But I did.. I would meet her in the morning and we would journey on.

He's Back !

[N.D.] When I arrived at Martha's inn the next morning, she was no where to be found. I enquired of the inn keeper vigilantly until I annoyed him.

"I told you, young man, the young woman you are seeking left here just before dawn and did not tell me or any of my staff where she was going. She took her pack with her and I do not expect her to return. Now leave me to my business."

"Yes, sir. Thank you very much."

Where had she gone? She had agreed to meet me. I thought that she liked me as much as I liked her. Perhaps the governor's familiarity had frightened her away. Perhaps she and John already had something going. This was confirmed to me when I could not find John either. I did locate Cliff and we traveled on together. He did not know where they were or even if they were together.

We decided to turn West. We began on the public train, but somewhere in the Dakotas we decided to rent a vehicle and see more of the countryside. There are a few old pre-reign electric models around; it had strong batteries which recharged from the sun. I began to be struck by the fact that travel was so easy because of the peace of the reign, the Pax Regnum. There was little danger and little want in the world. I was young and strong. Perhaps Elaine is right; I am not grateful enough.

[N.D.] After two days of hard driving we got lost. All around there was arid land and low mountains. It was hot. The car ran fine on the power of the sun. But Cliff and I were tired and hungry and rapidly running out of drink. We spotted a cloud of dust ahead of us and we chased it. This led us into a box canyon that could not be easily detected. The entrance was narrow and only visible from one direction. We followed the other vehicle in. We were

He's Back !

soon surrounded. Everyone there was mortal. And they did not seem kind.

“You fellas lost?” A big red haired man asked.

“Yea, we are, as a matter of fact,” I answered.

“Well, climb out and have some grub with us,” he added.

After we ate, I had a question. “Where are your Immortals?”

They all looked at each other and smiled.

“We don't have any here,” a small black haired guy answered.

I was somewhat shocked but in a way I liked that. No Immortals here. Could this place be hidden even from them?

[N.D.] The next day we were invited to take part in the “games.”

We discovered that the men here regularly divided into groups. These groups would spread into the surrounding mountains and seek to defeat each other in physical competition. Cliff and I joined the team of the large red haired man who first greeted us. There seemed to be few rules except that the camp at the base of the valley floor was neutral territory.

We had been out for four nights when we first engaged another team. I was given a heavy stick which was weighted on one end. Some of my other team members had knives and even a few old pre-reign exploding weapons. I began to wonder how serious these games were. We found our opposing team just before sunrise. The battle was furious. Many were seriously wounded and some were killed outright. However, our team had won. I was in a state of shock. I confronted our leader, himself seriously wounded and bleeding from the head and from one side.

“This is wrong,” I said. “What is the point of it?”

“The point, Mark, is to win. We are warriors You don't like it?”

He's Back !

“Like it. It’s barbaric. If the Immortals find out, you will all be executed.”

“Yes, maybe. We are hard to find.”

“Cliff and I are leaving.”

“No, you’re not. No one leaves. You are in for life here, man.”

I reported this conversation to Cliff and we decided to go along with it until we could escape. I started taking long walks in the wilderness by myself when I could and called out for Lucius. He did not appear.

The next battle nine days later did not go as well for us. We were outnumbered and soon realized that we could not win. Many on my team attempted to surrender but were killed. Cliff and I were hiding under a ledge and believed that we had escaped detection. We moved out from our cover seeking a better place to hide and were jumped by over a dozen of the enemy team. I was flat on my back with a huge man sitting on me. He had a long knife poised over my chest. He raised it to strike and I closed my eyes. Surely this was the end of my mortal life. The next second my attacker was gone and I was still alive. I opened my eyes to see Lucius hovering over me.

“Where have you been?” I shouted.

Lucius smiled gently. Good old Lucius.

Cliff and I helped each other up. A very large contingent of angels had arrived. I was so grateful. Suddenly, Elaine appeared in front of me. I was never so glad to see someone in my life. I actually knelt before her.

“Is this the kind of life you want?” she asked calmly.

“No, Ma’am. Man without the government of the Reign is too destructive.”

“Good boy.” She clasped me on the shoulder.

“You knew about this all along.”

“The Over-Lord here allowed it to operate. When you started in this direction, we decided to use it.”

He's Back !

“I renew my loyalty to you and the Metropolitan and the Emperor, Elaine,” I said. “I will be faithful.” Elaine hugged me long and hard. This was indeed a first for me. She is an attractive woman somewhat smaller than I am. I was so glad to see her. I am well aware that a mortal male can not have a personal relationship with an Immortal female. I introduced my new friend, Cliff, to her.

“Cliff, this is my governor, the Immortal Elaine.” She smiled and nodded.

“It is an honor, Excellency,” Cliff answered.

“I want to go home, Elaine, I have work to do,” I said.

“Cliff, do you want to come with me?”

“I believe I will go home too, Mark, thanks.”

Cliff started for home in the old vehicle. I went back with Lucius and Elaine.

05.17.160 C.R. After I had rested from my ordeal, I went to pay my respects to the Metropolitan. He was glad to see me. He said that I have changed. Then I divided mother's writings into groups and started to read them all again. About two months into this task Elaine surprised me with a visit. I had not worried about not seeing her since I returned.

“Elaine, dear mistress,” I almost dashed into her arms.

“You are looking fine, Mark.”

“Take refreshments with me?” I asked.

I brought out some fruit and cheese. Elaine always seemed to enjoy her food. I am not sure myself if they actually need to eat, but they seem to enjoy it.

She seemed to have a secret. After we ate and visited, she smiled.

“I have someone else to see you,” she said. She stepped into a portal for a few seconds and returned with Martha. She was a wonderful sight for my eyes.

He's Back !

“We had to ask Martha to step aside for a while during your travels, Mark. But she has now told us that she would like to see you again.”

I hugged Martha for a long time. She felt so good to me. Elaine had slipped away. I took Martha to my cousins nearby to stay and we have been seeing each other regularly.

09.11.160 C.R. I remember the accounts of my parent's wedding in mother's journal. I wondered what ours would be like. I asked Elaine for permission which she promptly gave and we set a date for three months later. Martha's father is dead but her mother is very supportive. We planned to have the ceremony at my house and sent out the invitations. About two months before the wedding Elaine appeared at my house.

“It is good to see you, Excellency,” I said.

“Excellency? You are formal today, Mark.”

“Sorry, Elaine. It is good to see you. I have missed you.”

“And I have missed you, my young friend.” She took my hand.

Elaine continued, “The Metropolitan wants to do the ceremony.”

“That's great, at the Dais?”

“No, actually. Here at your residence.”

“Residence?”

“Yes, here at your house, your residence.”

Residence sounded rather official. But I was very happy. As far as I know, the Metropolitan had never performed a marriage in the home of a mortal. I am not even sure that he has even visited the home of a mortal. My exclusion must be over.

When the day actually came, I had forgotten that the Metropolitan did not travel anywhere without his angelic escort, even the short distance from the Dais to my house.

He's Back !

This really highlighted our wedding in a way that I had not foreseen. Just as my mother had said, the Immortals truly love weddings.

The ceremony was to begin at ten in the morning. Martha, with her mother's help, had made a beautiful dress. It was in the traditional white but ingeniously designed with an abundance of pre-Reign lace that had been in her family forever. I was just preparing to put on my best clothing when Elaine arrived with a robe such as I have never had before. It was designed similar to the robe of a civil magistrate like my grandfather would have worn on official occasions. However, it was not black but a brilliant shade of blue with white borders. If that was what Elaine wanted me to wear, then I would wear it. The arrival of the Metropolitan's escort captured the attention of our guests. My house and gardens were packed with people. The Metropolitan arrived and took his position at the front of my large room where the ceremony was to take place. I stood beside him and we watched Martha enter. She threw me a quick look of surprise and approval when she saw my new robe. I felt very honored by the entire involvement of the Immortals. I knew that I was now fully accepted as mother's successor which made me both excited and frightened. We took our wedding trip to the tropical islands courtesy of Lucius; another action which caused no little notice from my mortal contemporaries.

[N.D.] A couple of weeks after we returned from our trip, I was deep in my work in my study when Elaine arrived in the study itself. I stood and rushed to her.

“You had a nice trip?”

It was poised as a question, but it may have been a statement. I still do not understand exactly what they know. Elaine, dear Elaine.

“Yes, Ma'am. Wonderful. The islands are beautiful, and my Martha is beautiful and tender.”

He's Back !

“Yes, well, I died a virgin. So some things, my dear Mark, that you understand are beyond my experience.”

All I could do was smile.

“Now to my intentions. Mark, I want to take you and Martha on a tour of some of the primary Dais’ of the world.”

I was surprised and pleased.

She continued, “You are a natural at your research like you mother was. We have no doubt that you will write it well and that your people will appreciate your work. All that lacks is that you become more familiar with the world. From then on Lucius will be permitted to take you to various areas to speak on your research.”

I nodded obediently.

“Good, please prepare to depart in three days. It will take several weeks. Now, if I may visit Martha?” She departed my study. Had she implied that my permission was a factor? I would have to think about this. It also seems that Martha is in considerable favor. This is a new era for my family.

The tour was fabulous and there is certainly more to our beloved Elaine than being Governor of Buckhead in the court of Henry Sawyer, Metropolitan of Atlanta. We went everywhere with an escort of nearly half a legion. I am certainly fortunate to have Lucius alone to precede me, but as under governor, Elaine does not rate a half Legion. Perhaps they are representatives of the Metropolitan, but the more we travel the more I doubt that. Of the many Metropolitans, Governors and Over-Lords that we are meeting, this size of this escort is still extraordinary.

We went from Atlanta to Rio. From there we went to Brasilia, then Bogotá, then Mexico City, then Conception. From there we went West to Tokyo, Bangkok and Seoul, then to Peking and Moscow. By then we were going East and I had hopes for Jerusalem but that was not to happen. I actually let Elaine know that I was

He's Back !

disappointed but there was no response. Perhaps not even she can go to the Imperial capitol without being bidden but I doubt that. Martha is loving it and has a very refined presence. She is certainly the right wife for me. From Moscow we visited the Dais' in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Madrid, Vienna, Budapest, Athens and Rome. I was surprised, due to my familiarity with pre-Reign history, that Rome did not seem to have any special significance during the Reign. Jerusalem is everything pertaining to the Emperor. Then down to New Delhi and Nairobi and Johannesburg but we did not stop at Jerusalem. Then we went West again to Boston, Toronto, New York (this time in my official status) where I greeted the Over-Lord Janice with a special enthusiasm, then on to Philadelphia, Washington then West to Denver, Houston, and Los Angeles. What a spectacular trip. At each Dais Elaine would sit next to the ruler and I would sit on the grass beside her with Lucius behind me. Mostly I would listen to the affairs of that court but sometimes I would be asked about my work. Soon I began to give the same answers at each place.

“Yes, my Lord, the work is going well. . . . Yes, my people in their generations need to know the ancient books and the history of your generations. . . . Yes, sir, there is good response most everywhere. . . . Yes, Ma'am, I am proud to be involved. . . . Yes, Elaine is a wonderful inspiration to me and to my wife.” On and on it went.

As I have mentioned, I was particularly struck with Rome. The Metropolitan there is one Luigi Patroni. He is a stout man with dark black curls, most typical of the people there. His court is no different than most that I visited, no grander or larger. I did discover in my research there that most of the Metropolitans have considerable libraries of pre-Reign books that were salvaged and a few from the Reign itself. I do plan to visit many of them with Lucius' help and Elaine says that I will be welcomed. I also

He's Back !

discovered that the Metropolitan of Rome had actually been a Pope near the end of mortal times and he had stood as a witness for the Emperor and that he had been executed in a terrible manner by the evil authorities. As an ancient martyr for the Emperor he was, therefore, qualified to be Metropolitan, but not because of his status at the time.

02.22.165 C.R. The Over-Lord of Eastern Europe, Perpetua, was martyred at a very young age just after the Emperor had come as a man and accomplished his Glorious work and returned to His Father. After she was captured, she was tortured but was soon seen comforting and praying for the other prisoners. They then hung her upside down from a pole and loosed some lions on her but the lions would not approach as they feared her angels which the Lions could see but the mortals could not see. Finally, they sewed her into a bag and threw her under a stampeding herd of cattle and she died. She was about 13 years of age when she died but now she is said to rule with wisdom. This trip has allowed me to observe Immortals worldwide and I have formed many new certainties about them.

Now all of the Immortals appear to be about the same age. Their bodies show no sign of age no matter what age they were when they died. They all appear to be in their early thirties, the age of the Emperor when He died. Their faces also look about the same age. However, if you look closely, there is sometimes a clue as to the age that they died in their faces. Those who died younger have a certain youthful look in their faces and those who died in old age have a certain appearance of maturity in their faces. They recognize each other by facial features as we do. On this trip I believe that I observed Immortals meeting who have not met as Immortals before. Their present faces bear enough similarity with their mortal faces that they can recognize each other at the first encounter after the change

He's Back !

if they were acquainted as mortals. But there are no signs of injury or the effects of disease on their person in any way. If they lost limbs or were disfigured as mortals, they are always restored. For the most part we do not understand the difference between their bodies and ours. We grow old and die; they do not. We can bleed; they do not. We can be injured; they can not. We can become ill; they can not. When we do become ill, they usually heal us so there is no need for physicians although some mortals still study the mortal body. Their flesh is warm as is ours. They have bones within as we do. They never appear to be overweight as some mortals are. They show no interest in sexual matters and they do not reproduce. As far as we know, they do not sleep, or at least no mortal has ever seen them sleep. We do not know what they do when they are "away." Their greatest joy seems in being "away" with the Emperor. All these things are true for the princes as well as the other Immortals. Those who do not rule seem to spend more time off the earth. We are not sure that their internal parts function as ours do. Their physical being is said to be the same as that of the Emperor except that He has chosen to retain the wounds that He suffered. Also, the Emperor, I am told, always has a subtle divine aura around Him which consists of both a bright but gentle light and various sweet smells.

04.21.166 C.R. Each Dais that I visited on the trip was slightly different but equally beautiful. Always, the site was one of importance in mortal times and often the scene of some persecution of the Immortals who were both servants and siblings of the Emperor. They seemed to rejoice in celebrating their mortal persecutions for the Emperor. In every case the Dais had been naturalized, whatever structure or symbol had existed there was removed or leveled and a grassy Dais was created with the usual white chairs arranged in a semicircle. During the day

He's Back !

the sun always shines if the ruler is on the Dais. That too seems to be under Imperial control.

In Rio the Dais is under the enormous pre-Reign statue of the Emperor. They glory in that. In Moscow it is in the midst of the Kremlin. In London it is in front of Westminster Abbey and in Paris it is in front of Notre Dame. Only in Rome does the Metropolitan seem to have been a person who was well known during his time. But by then he was the head of a persecuted minority. In every other place the ruler was a "nobody" in mortal life. The Emperor sees importance different than we do. The Over-Lord of Western Europe was an unknown, Stefan Heicht, and he reigns from the Dais in Brussels. The Over-Lord in Peking, Li Chen, was a slave as a mortal. He was mistreated by a series of masters for his faith in the Emperor and was killed by being tied hand and foot and thrown to a pack of mad dogs. Now he is a very happy little man who laughs almost constantly. Each court, each Dais, each ruler is unique and equally beautiful. This trip has changed my perspective forever. I have much to consider and to study and to write.

06.22.166 C.R. Upon our return from this world tour Elaine took us directly to the Dais of our Metropolitan, Henry. He asked me about the trip and seemed satisfied with my answers. Even though I traveled with Elaine and Lucius which is immediate and easy, both Martha and I were still tired from the trip. Another thing the Immortals do not experience. The Metropolitan obviously recognized my fatigue and kindly dismissed us early to go to our house, pardon, our residence and rest. It was good to be alone with Martha without so much fear of interruption. Although the trip had been a great learning experience for both of us, it had not done a lot for our relationship.

He's Back !

[N.D.] I had not been to the Dais as often as I should have. I determined to attend more often. Usually I just observed, but I always thought that attendance was expected since Mother attended and watched often.

“It is good to see you at the Dais more often,” Elaine said.

“It is good to be here. I have been too often absent.”

“Why the change?”

“It, it is expected. Isn't it?”

“Perhaps expected but not required.”

“Mother came so often. I practically grew up here.”

“Your Mother came because she loved to be here.”

I looked around. “I grew up with it. But, I will be here more often.”

She took my hand and led me to the Metropolitan.

“Henry, look who's here,” she said.

“Mark, welcome. We see too little of you,” the Metropolitan said.

“You shall see more of me, Excellency,” I responded.

07.01.166 C.R. I began to become interested with the judgments that were passed by the Metropolitan and the others. When the Metropolitan was away, Elaine would usually fill in at the daily court. Sometimes one of the other rulers under Henry Sawyer would have the daily docket. All sorts of cases came before them from high treason against the Emperor to domestic disputes and once in a while even an animal cruelty charge. All of life was under the purview of the Immortal princes.

08.09.166 C.R. On one particularly slow afternoon when Elaine was in charge a certain husband was brought before the Dais. The two angels who brought him were ordinary angels like Lucius.

He's Back !

“This man has been abusing his wife,” they reported.

“What are the particulars?” Elaine asked.

“They have been married for almost two years. He never attends her. He is usually somewhere becoming intoxicated with his male companions. He is 20 years of age and she is 18 years of age. Her mother is their only living parent; she abides with them. This man often comes home and beats his wife.”

“Where is the wife?” Elaine asked.

“Do you require her, Excellency?” one of the angels asked.

“Yes, bring her.” That angel departed.

The accused stood there with a surly look. Occasionally he would glance at Elaine herself in a leering disrespectful manner. She would return his gaze firmly. Still he did not stop.

“Your name,” Elaine demanded.

“Sam,” he shot back.

The angel arrived with the wife. She was an attractive girl. Her clothes were tattered but clean. And older woman, I presumed to be her mother, was with her. She was with child. She was obviously frightened.

“Sit down, child,” Elaine said softly. A female mortal court attendant brought a chair and help her to sit. Another chair was brought for her mother.

“What is your name, child,” Elaine asked.

“Mary,” she answered.

“Oh, such a special name! Does this man abuse you?” Elaine asked.

She looked at him. He leered back a warning. She did not speak.

“Listen to me, girl,” Elaine said, still softly. “You may fear him, but I promise he will hurt you no more. However, it is required that you answer me.”

He's Back !

“Ya, ah er, yes, Excellency. He, . . . beats me.” She did not look back at her husband. Elaine came forward to examine her bruises. Her left eye was swollen shut and badly blackened. There was an older greener bruise on her right cheek. Her arms had several bruises. When Elaine touched her back lightly, she winced.

“Are you bruised here too?” Elaine asked.

The woman shook her head. Elaine pulled up her blouse a little and looked at her back.

“Oh, darling, that is terrible. Where else do you have bruises?”

The woman pointed to most of her body.

“Why did you marry him?” Elaine asked.

“I was told to do so, Excellency.” She glanced toward her mother.

“Why?” Elaine looked directly at the mother.

“We had nothing, Excellency,” the mother answered. “His father gave me some gold. It seemed the best thing to do at the time.”

“Now he is dead?”

“Yes, he drank himself to death.”

“And this man does not provide?”

“No, no, he does not,” the mother answered looking defiantly at the man.

“Why?” Elaine stepped forward a few paces and looked the man in the eyes.

“Well, she, . . . she is no good, mistress,” he said.

“No good? How?”

“She just complains and she doesn't meet my needs since, since she got that way.”

“And just who got her that way?”

He shrugged. “Me, I guess.”

“You know it was you, you slacker,” the mother interjected. “She would never go with anyone else.” Then the mother looked nervously at Elaine for fear that she had spoken out of turn.

He's Back !

“The child is yours and she has many healed fractures of her bones. Come here,” Elaine said to the man.

With this knowledge revealed he shuffled forward. He looked Elaine up and down. I shivered.

“This is your wife,” Elaine continued. “It is your duty to care for her even if you are not capable of loving her. She is carrying your child. Is there no work in your area?”

“Nothing I like to do,” he blurted back.

“And just what would be to your liking?” Elaine asked. “Do not bother to answer. You are a foul man.”

He jerked towards Elaine.

An angel appeared between them faster than I could see him move. I knew that he could not actually harm Elaine, but such actions are not allowed.

Elaine walked over to the girl. They spoke in hushed tones for a short time. The girl would glance in her husband's direction from time to time. The mother strained to hear what was being said. Elaine took the girl's hands in hers and looked into her eyes. Then she stood.

“I find you inexcusable,” she said to Sam. “I judge your character to be hopelessly twisted.”

“I have resources for you, Mary,” Elaine said. “Near my residence. You will stay there until your child is born and then I will see that you are better established.”

The mother moved towards Elaine, but Elaine put her hand out for her to stop.

“As for you,” Elaine addressed the mother, “you are not much of a mother. There are always abundant facilities for the needy. This is the Imperial Reign. You should not have sold your child to this wretched man.”

“Hey,” the man objected.

Elaine picked up her scepter from the table next to her seat. The man recognized this and got quiet.

He's Back !

“You may accompany your daughter, woman. But I will have you watched. Strive to improve.” Elaine commanded. The woman bowed her head.

“Now as for you,” Elaine addressed the man. “I only need one more reason to remove you altogether.”

“Do you think I am afraid of you?” the man challenged.

“You should have been,” Elaine said softly as she raised her scepter. She spun the pointed end towards him. He looked as if he was getting ready to spit on her. But then he grasped his throat and fell to the ground.

“He is dead,” Elaine said. The mother fell to her knees and the girl gasped.

Elaine looked at the girl. She showed no sorrow at the death of her husband.

“I rather think you will do better as a widow,” Elaine said. “There are many good men in this world. But this was not one of them,” she said looking down at the body as if it were some sort of waste. She pointed the scepter again and the body was gone. The girl and her mother were shown away by a mortal aide.

Elaine replaced her scepter on the little table and sat down and everyone was very quiet for a few minutes, mortal and Immortal alike. Elaine crossed her legs and looked out onto the great expanse of park lands that stretched in front of the Dais. Carol, the Prince of Decatur, another under governor, leaned towards Elaine and touched her hand.

“It was the best thing to do,” Carol said.

“I know. And I can remember the time when I could not have done it,” Elaine responded.

“Me too,” Carol said. They grasped each others hands for a moment.

Even at the Dais the taking of a life is no light thing. I believed that this man could have lived if he had been more respectful, but maybe it was not in him. At any rate,

He's Back !

gross disrespect for an Immortal Prince is a dangerous activity. This is when it first came home to me that the Immortals grew in their abilities too. Ruling and judging seemed to come so easily to the Metropolitan. Today I saw my mistress grow in strength and integrity.

“Mark,” Elaine said.

“Yes,” I responded.

She motioned me near so I approached and hunkered down beside her.

She asked me to consider a program where Martha and I would meet with couples, especially the younger ones, and talk of marital duties and the like. I told her we would start planning it immediately. She seemed some happier. After the Metropolitan returned, he affirmed Elaine in her decision and made it clear that such ill treatment would not be allowed in his realm or in any of the realms of the Emperor.

02.19.167 C.R. Martha and I have been speaking all over the world on the joys of married life. It is not difficult to do because she is such a dear wife and I love her very much. I told the men that it was their duty and privilege to honor and protect their wives. I reminded them that many couples fall in love after they marry. Even though Martha and I were in love before our marriage was arranged, my mother Anna fell in love with my father after they were married. I assured them, that in any event, the abuse of a wife would not be permitted under the Reign and I told them the story of poor Mary's husband. I encouraged parents not to force their daughters into marriage but to consult an Immortal instead. It was then that a thought hit me. Could we ask the Emperor for permission to designate certain Immortals who did not have ruling duties to counsel the mortals? I put it at the head of my list to talk to Elaine about at our next regular conference. Martha would tell the women to honor their husbands and that just as a husband

He's Back !

should cover and protect his wife, the wife should cover and protect him against temptation and other women by being supportive and willingly participating in their intimate relationships. We have given many examples about putting your spouse's interests above your own from our own marriage and have asked others to share.

05.12.167 C.R. My request for personal and marriage counselors has been sent to the Emperor. Elaine says that it will be discussed in their private fellowships.

03.23.168 C.R. Something that I noticed on this recent tour is that some Metropolitan's have a Deputy Metropolitan. I have noticed this in the past but I did not deem it important enough to put in my journal. I have decided to include it here. This title may be a little misleading because the Deputy Metropolitan does not rule for the Metropolitan in his absence. Other under governors or Princes like Elaine and Carol do this for every Metropolitan. The Deputy handles many cases in symphony with the Metropolitan himself. There is usually a Deputy in areas where long term hate feuds have existed among the mortals for centuries. Since our mortals are still susceptible to such things, they have to be dealt with in a special way. I noticed several Deputy situations on this tour. The Deputy is highly respected and is almost as an equal to the Metropolitan.

08.11.168 C.R. The Metropolitan of Oklahoma City is Billy Three Feathers. His Deputy is Bill Carson. Their Dais is on top of a mountain where the Sun shines very brightly and almost continuously. They have ordered a small bright cloud to always stay between the Dais and the sun for the benefit of mortals at or around the Dais. The sunlight seems to have no ill effect on the Immortals even those with a fair skin color. They are always happy to tell

He's Back !

their story so I record it here. It seems that Bill Carson was an officer in the famous death march called the "trail of tears" where most of Billy Three Feathers' tribe, men, women and children, were death marched from far in the east by the national army of that day. Three Feathers was not quite a man then, only a boy of 12. Carson required Three Feathers to carry his personal baggage and spoke very roughly to the boy. The boy was a believer in the Emperor as most of his tribe had been for some time.

After several weeks Carson thought that he had worn the boy out so he ordered another young man to carry the heavy baggage. Three Feathers would not have it. He said that he was strong enough and that he would carry it all the way if necessary. This was in obedience to the then invisible Emperor's command. Three Feathers was so helpful and cheerful that he actually won Carson over to being a believer in the Emperor. Three Feathers was a constant witness to the Emperor all of his life for which he suffered considerable persecution. Later Carson went to another tribe not too far away as a missionary to tell them about the Emperor. After only three months he was captured and burned to death by this tribe, but he would not deny the Emperor. At the Return of the Emperor Three Feathers was made Metropolitan and Carson was made his deputy. They both rule in all things and put another Prince in charge when they leave to travel or to be with the Emperor. The Metropolitan and the Deputy are always together. So they are both ruling and judging in any case where their two individual mortal peoples are in conflict, which is quite often. This way this old hate feud is disarmed and the mortals know that they must appear before both of them. Surely the Emperor's wisdom is beyond compare. They even joke around the Dais about "Big Bill" and "Little Billy." "Little Billy" is the Metropolitan. "Big Bill" is his Deputy and they love each other dearly.

He's Back !

The Metropolitan of Johannesburg in South Africa is Joseph Kuboto, his Deputy is Helmut de Klerk. Their mortal peoples are ancient enemies and still tend to be that way even under the Reign. Kuboto and de Klerk are famous in the Empire for their wisdom in healing the divisions. They have declared their peoples all to be brothers and any harm inflicted by either side is atoned for with individual service to the other side. They have even had people tied together with an angelic rope until they learned to help each other. This rope is usually invisible and can not be loosed except by a command of the Metropolitan and his Deputy or the Emperor Himself.

Even though the Emperor has his earthly palace and temple in Jerusalem that city also has a Metropolitan of its own, and a Deputy. The Metropolitan of Jerusalem is Ehud Stein, the Deputy is Abdul Al Ibrahim. They did not live at the same time so they did not know each other then. They both converted to faith in the Emperor and were killed for their faith. They lovingly but firmly require their separate mortal peoples to work in unity and good faith with each other. Mercy is administered by both to mortals on both sides and judgment, sometimes harsh judgment, is dispensed by both the Metropolitan and the Deputy to mortals of both sides equally. There are other Metropolitan and Deputy Metropolitan teams in the world. I am interested in getting all of their stories. There are an unusual number of Deputy Metropolitans along the river Bosrus from Istanbul on the Mediterranean Sea all the way North as there are many ancient feuds along this famous East-West border. Our own Metropolitan of Atlanta does not have a deputy, but Henry Sawyer himself is from the prominent "minority" there.

He's Back !

[N.D.] It has been a long time since my requests for counselors went to the Emperor and Elaine now tells me that there have been many volunteers among the Immortals who do not have ruling responsibilities to do this. Several will be assigned to every Dais in the world. They will be there always and clearly identified as Family Counselors with a silver medallion with two interlocking rings engraved on it on a blue ribbon around their necks. If they are all busy and more are needed, more will be sent for right away. I am very happy about this. I wonder why this has not been thought of before by an Immortal or the Emperor. Martha says it is because it was my place to do so. I feel humbled with the responsibilities of my office.

01.11.169 C.R. When we awoke the day after we returned from our recent trip, I got some food from the kitchen and went directly to my study. Where to start? I reviewed many of the old manuscripts and started to put them in stacks in order of priority. Martha interrupted.

“Look, Mark, who’s here!”

I turned to see the smiling face of our old friend Cliff.

“Cliff, what a treat. Welcome. Welcome.”

We shared a manly embrace.

“Doesn’t he look wonderful, Mark?”

“Yes, indeed, he does.”

“Say, I am really sorry that I missed your wedding. I hear that it was quite something. I just could not get away. My Mom was not doing well at all, and . . . she died last month.”

We both assured him of our sympathies. Death is still always alien to us and we do not know what lies on the other side as the Immortals did. We just concentrate on trusting the Emperor’s judgment in the matter.

“So I thought I would travel some and visit you. You are the only important person that I know, Mark.”

He's Back !

I did not say that I am not important but I brushed it aside by moving on.

“Wonderful, stay as long as you will. We will have a good time together.”

Later I learned that Cliff also had another motive for visiting us.

About that time Cliff saw Lucius standing nearby. He nodded nervously to Lucius. “Ah, you have to go somewhere?” Cliff asked.

“No, not as far as I know.” I looked at Lucius. He indicated nothing. “Don’t mind him,” I said. “He will express himself when he wants to and he would never hurt you.”

Cliff nodded.

01.13.169 C.R. A few days later Cliff and I were sitting in my garden drinking some juice. I could tell that he had something that he wanted to talk about.

“Say, Mark, old man.”

“Yes.”

“I very nearly got into trouble in the months after I left you.”

“How so?”

“Well, I had intended to go home, but I started traveling instead. I traveled alone.”

“I’m listening.”

“I fell in with a group in Canada that don’t really recognize the authority of the Emperor. They don’t actually do anything illegal. But they meet and talk about human rights and are planning to petition the Emperor for more judicial authority at the mortal level. A lot of them have studied some pre-Reign law. At first I thought their arguments were sound. But they started to sound angry and very vocal, so I left.”

“So far nothing too serious,” I said.

“Really?”

He's Back !

“Really, the Emperor is always open to seeing how well we can govern ourselves. That is so long as our self government is still submissive to His appointed Governors.”

“After the way the Immortals and their angels put down that group that we fell in with, I thought that these lawyers might be in real trouble.”

“Not necessarily. Do you think you could find them again?”

“I don't think they would have moved. If they haven't already been disciplined, or something.”

I looked at Lucius. He nodded.

“Lucius will take us to them,” I said.

“Uh, do we need Elaine?”

Not a bad idea I thought.

“Lucius I need to see Elaine,” I said.

Lucius disappeared and we waited for about 5 minutes when he returned with Elaine. I stood and Cliff bowed deeply. I gestured toward a chair for Elaine. I offered her a drink and she accepted. We repeated Cliff's report to her. I started and asked Cliff to join in. She listened and then told me to investigate in my official role which would merely indicate my interest in what they were doing. She did not comment if they were already under scrutiny for anything else. Elaine and I hugged. Cliff bowed and she departed. I was glad that Elaine does not normally bring her angelic retinue with her to my house as she did to my wedding; Cliff might have gone into shock.

Martha said that she would like to remain at home. She has had an upset stomach especially in the mornings. Cliff and I talked for quite a while and departed the next morning.

01.15.169 C.R. The meeting was interrupted by our appearance. Lucius did not change his form, but the appearance of an angel and of us coming through a portal

He's Back !

had a definite effect. Many of the group looked rather sheepish. The one who was speaking and the chairman looked confident. I introduced myself.

“We know who you are,” the chairman said.

“We have come only to listen. I am a mortal just as you are.”

“A mortal perhaps, but not as we are.” The speaker said.

“I am as you are. Prick me, do I not bleed?”

I thought for a moment that they were going to take me literally but they did not.

“Cliff has brought him to us,” one young woman added.

“I bring you no trouble,” Cliff answered.

“And him?” the chairman asked looking at Lucius.

“He does my bidding,” I said boldly but I could not resist glancing toward Lucius after I said it. He showed no change in demeanor so I had gotten away with it.

After several more exchanges we persuaded them to continue their discussion. They even offered us seats. What they now wanted to do was to petition the Emperor to establish a mortal magistrate to judge the more minor civil matters, cases involving non-violent conflict between mortals. To date all judgments are handed down by Immortals. Cliff whispered to me that their discussions had progressed considerably since he had been with them and that some of the angrier ones were no longer there. I replied that they were better off with these absences and that those angry ones would no doubt be dealt with eventually by the Immortal courts. Later I went aside to speak to Lucius then I dispatched him on an errand. I was content that I was safe with these people. They seemed sincere and rational. Cliff began to enter into the discussion and he showed considerable insight and wisdom. When Lucius returned and reported to me, I asked for a chance to be heard. The chair agreed.

He's Back !

“My Governor, Elaine, assures me that when your case is complete, she will take it to the Emperor.”

They were all surprised and very happy. I left Cliff there at his request and returned home. I was concerned about my wife. As it turned out, there was no need for concern. We are to have a child. Martha wanted to know if it was a boy or a girl. She asked Elaine and she said that it was a boy. We plan to name him Carl.

[N.D.] Three months after I met with the lawyers, Cliff contacted me that they were ready. I informed Elaine. Elaine contacted the Metropolitan of Boston and received his blessing to visit the group. She took me and Lucius and her angelic escort. She was welcomed in the most tasteful of fashions. The advocates, Cliff told me that they wanted to be known as advocates, had foreseen Elaine's escort so they set up a large garden for the reception with that in mind. Everyone from several principalities that was interested in this new mortal court was present; several thousand, I estimated. Seats had been set up facing the platform. I arrived with Elaine and Lucius on the platform just behind Elaine's escort. Everyone stood when the portal appeared. The escort passed in front of us and spread themselves out over the platform and the garden in the usual fashion. Elaine followed her escort. Lucius preceded me as I stepped through from my study. I did not see Elaine leave the Metropolitan's Dais. I just waited for Lucius to open my portal as he did not need one and it was all angelically coordinated in perfect timing.

We were welcomed by their chairman and a few others including Cliff. It seemed like Cliff had become quite involved. He had told me that he was studying legal procedure. They explained to Elaine the entire structure that they were petitioning from the Emperor. She assured them that one of her angels had recorded every word and instructed them to meet her at this same platform in two

He's Back !

weeks. In two weeks we returned and the crowd in attendance had more than doubled. It seemed to me that the Metropolitan had added to Elaine's escort with some from his own. It struck me that Elaine does considerably more with mortals than any other governor that I had met.

Elaine proclaimed, "The mortal civil Magistrate is established. You will need to elect your own officers to serve until a larger part of the population is involved. The Imperial publishers have been instructed to give you all necessary aid. As you develop your system and procedures, you will designate a group of three to report and coordinate with me. You will contact me at the Dais of the Metropolitan of Atlanta by letter. All the Immortals will recognize this mortal court as having appropriate jurisdiction over mortal matters. All decisions are subject to review by the Princes of the earth. Capital matters will remain under the authority of the Princes alone."

Everyone stood and applauded and cheered for a very long time. I wondered if they knew what they were getting into. It seemed to me that the Imperial Reign with all the Immortal ruler judges was working just fine. Evidently the Emperor was content to allow these advocates to create and maintain this subordinate system. The entire system took about a decade to spread throughout the earth. By that time Cliff was the Chief Magistrate of the mortal court. The official language of the court was old American, chosen in order to reduce the need for translators. The Immortals spoke all earthly languages innately and Elaine told me that the Emperor's own language in its ancient form is the only one spoken at court.

[N.D.] Cliff married another advocate, Mary, and they visit us often at the residence. There is no conflict between Cliff's office and mine. My work is directly under Imperial control and I confer exclusively with Elaine. My work is to study and inspire and lead, not to settle petty

He's Back !

conflicts. However, I indicated to Cliff that I respect his work which is all consuming to him. A quiet afternoon with Elaine is more to my liking and now Martha is usually with us unless I have some important issues pertaining to my work to discuss. Sometimes the three of us just sit in silence and enjoy the garden with its many flowers and birds. Our gardener is excellent at his work. I once asked Elaine during one of these afternoons if she wouldn't rather be "off world" with the Immortals.

She responded, "Our fellowship is wonderful and the closer a person gets to the Emperor the better it becomes. But there are many of us, more than you mortals. We have many generations revived among us. I love you two and little Carl very much." That was enough for us. We were always honored to be with her and she had such a sweet personality that it was refreshing to be near her.

I asked her, "Elaine, what do you mean when you say that the fellowship gets better the closer one gets to the Emperor. I have never seen the Emperor, but I hear that his presence is often overwhelming."

"It may be difficult to communicate," Elaine answered. "We communicate, fellowship, at a different level. Most of the time we do not have to talk. We either know what each other is thinking or we speak mind to mind, actually more heart to heart. Mostly we enjoy each other much like we three enjoy each other here in the garden. Our hearts meet each other and share the joy of life."

"But your life is different from ours," I interrupted.

"Yes, some different, but all life is given by the Emperor and His Father, and His Presence."

"You have His Presence within you; but we do not."

"We have His Presence internally. We had Him that way as mortals. But He is still among you. He is the essence of love."

He's Back !

“Let me try to understand this,” I continued. “Then you, Immortals . . . commune, is that a good word?” She nodded. I went on, “you commune with each other as living beings, and all life comes from the Emperor and the Father, and His Presence, uh, enhances this communing?”

“Exactly.”

“Then how does being close to the Emperor further enhance your communing?”

“A very perceptive question, Mark. I am so proud of you.”

I suppose if I live to be ninety years old, an expression of pride from this “33 year old” Immortal will always thrill my heart. I know that I was smiling from ear to ear. “Well, how? Dear Elaine?”

“The Emperor has a unique relationship with His Father. Even we can not actually see the Father. I will not expand on that. When we are near the Emperor, this relationship that They have mixes with and overwhelms our relationships, even that which we have in His Presence away from His body, and carries us to an entirely new level. It is ecstasy; it is pure joy; it is indescribable. ”

“ Is what we share here even the tiniest part of that?” I asked.

“Yes, Mark, yes, it is.”

We did not speak for a long time. The garden seemed even more beautiful.

10.16.204 C.R. Carl was ten years old today. Elaine came to his party as did Cliff and all of our local friends and many from other areas of Janice's realm and even a few from other places in the world. Carl is a fine boy. He is big and strong for his age and has beautiful thick blond hair. Sometimes he can be willful, but he is usually obedient. Martha has trained him well and I often wish that I could spend more time with him. I have resolved to do so

He's Back !

from now through his teen years. I asked Elaine if she thought my work would suffer too much for it.

“Absolutely not, Mark,” Elaine answered. “Your duties as a father come before your work.”

“Before?”

“Yes, your work will take care of itself.”

I am confirmed. I will spend a lot more time with Carl. We have not been blessed with other children as yet. Martha tends to worry about this, but I tell her to be at ease.

“Elaine, do you know if we will have any more children? Martha wants them so.”

“Is she concerned?”

“Quite.”

“Are you, how do you say, ‘trying’?”

“Yes, I would say that we are.”

Elaine motioned to Martha and she joined us.

“Do you want more children, dear?”

“Oh, yes, we do so much,” Martha answered taking my hand in hers and looking at me lovingly.

“Then you shall,” Elaine said and she touched Martha’s stomach lightly and briefly.

“When will you two ever learn?” Elaine said. “You of all people. We can grant these things if you will only ask. Mark, as soon as you do your part she will conceive.”

I have been doing my job for some years now and I am still amazed at what I learn. Why didn’t we ask before?

[N.D.] Little Anna was born nine months and one week later. She is beautiful and Martha and I and Carl love her dearly. Carl is wonderful with her and very protective. Even Lucius seems happy when he is around her.

[N.D.] Today is Carl’s wedding. He is 19 and little Anna is 12. She will be a bridesmaid. Carl’s bride is named Toni and she is a beautiful girl, very petite with jet black

He's Back !

hair and alabaster skin. She is very conscientious and helpful. Martha and I like her very much. Carl met her at his advanced school where he has studied human nature. We are quite a happy family and I am honored to serve as I do.

He's Back !

Section Three

Date: 3.21.503 C.R. My name is Patricia the daughter of James the Keeper and Primate. My father died quietly in his sleep last night at the age of 91. I am the daughter of his second wife Jessie. Mother is my closest friend after the Governess Elaine. I am the new Keeper and Primate. I saw the Emperor at my investiture; I have looked into his eyes. I am not the same.

04.02.503 C.R. Since Great Aunt May was so spiritual, she had several assistants to help her perform her duties as the Keeper. The first original was a male and he was in charge of the actual library and research. The second original was a female and was in charge of her ceremonial duties and actually appeared for her on many occasions. She resembled May and was on certain occasions mistaken for May herself. The third original was also a female and was in charge of implementing her spiritual innovations. These three were named Executives of the Keeper or E.K. for short, the E.K. for records and research, the E.K. for ceremonies, and the E.K. for spiritual growth. As the generations have continued, the offspring of these Executives have taken their parent's jobs.

The current E.K. for ceremonies is named Celeste and we have been fast friends since childhood. We grew up together at the residence. The other two Executives now are much older than Celeste, but they are nice and perform their duties very well. All of this structure is good for the Office of Keeper but the problem is that I seldom have enough to do. I have not mentioned this to anybody but I am starting to believe that I do not need these officers. Actually, I plan to find a way to do away with these offices as soon as I can find a way to take care of the people in them. I don't want them to be hurt. When I became keeper, Celeste was only a little over a year into her office and just four months younger than

He's Back !

myself. She is special to me. I have kept her close ever since. Most people think we look a lot alike. Celeste is often taken for me, but she quickly sets the record straight.

I do not want to be a nun like May who was the last female keeper. I love the Emperor. Praise His Name! But I do not feel the call that Aunt May felt. I have told Celeste that I will appear at more ceremonies and she was glad to hear that, but I still have too much idle time. I am not very good at research and at my age I do not feel much like a spiritual leader. You might say that I am still seeking my true calling. I feel that each Keeper has made their own contribution to society and to the Empire and I want to make mine.

06.12.503 C.R. I have decided to go among the people anonymously. Celeste has agreed to accompany me. She has assigned her necessary duties to others on my staff. Elaine has agreed and has supplied us with some common clothing. Lucius will come along but remain invisible.

06.14.503 C.R. “You two look like school girls,” Elaine said when she saw us in the new clothes. “Why does each generation want to “be among the people? You remind me of Mark and his ‘adventure’ except that you two don’t have an ounce of rebellion between you.”

“Great Grandfather Mark was a guy, Elaine,” I responded.

“So?”

“Well, guys are more adventuresome than girls. Most girls.” Celeste and I looked at each other and grinned.

“O.K. Now you two, what exactly are your goals in this thing,” Elaine asked.

“Elaine, I just want to be around some more people our age and . . .”

“And that is?” Elaine asked.

“You know perfectly well that it is twenty.”

He's Back !

“And what are you going to learn from mortal twenty somethings?” Elaine asked.

“I don't know. How they think.. What they feel.”

“Feel about what?”

“Anything, everything. Life, the world, the Emperor, families, Immortals.”

“I can tell you these things. Lucius can tell you.” She spoke with a frank serious look.

“But Elaine, that will not give me a feel for where they are. I have been raised here in the residence. I have been quite sheltered. I want to be a part of my generation and a good Keeper as well. I want . . .”

Elaine raised her hand for me to stop. “Very well, little one, your motives seem good enough. Lucius will keep you safe. Just promise me one thing.”

“Of course, mistress, anything.” I seldom called her ‘mistress’. She took me by the chin and looked directly into my eyes. Her pale blue eyes always made me feel quite peaceful. My eyes are a darker blue. I don't know what she sees in them.

“Promise me, that if Lucius becomes visible and gives you advice, any advice, that you will heed him immediately.”

“Yes, absolutely. I trust Lucius implicitly,” I responded.

“Fine. When will you leave.”

“In the morning, early,” I said. She hugged us both and vanished.

06.15.503 C.R. We arose early. After we ate, we picked up our packs and strolled towards the gate of the residence with Lucius following behind. As we passed

He's Back !

through the gate, Lucius vanished but I knew that he was still there. I had a purse full of gold coin. These were in twenty talent pieces, the newer kind with the Emperor's sign on one side and the Western Viceroy's sign on the other side. They are also good in the Eastern Viceroy's area as were the Eastern ones in the West. In this century the Emperor's sign is a faintly depressed fleur-de-lis with a bold raised cross of St. Andrew or "X". The Western Viceroy presently uses a faintly depressed simple castle design with a raised Viceroy's coronet, or small crown, outlined in the center. The Eastern coin has the same sign of the Emperor with a sacred heart, a human heart with a band of thorns around it, on the Viceroy's side. We intend to pay our way and not to stand out too much. We would tell everyone that we were two students from Metropolitan Sawyer's University and that we are touring as part of a research project on the opinions of those in our age group. This would enable us to ask lots of questions. Celeste and I should fit in as students quite well. And, with the Metropolitan's approval we are to report whatever findings we thought appropriate to the student body when we returned, so we are not telling a lie.

[N.D.] We spent our first night at a youth hostel just a short distance on the North side of Atlanta. We had walked all the way. It is to the credit of the reign of our Glorious Emperor that two young women can walk openly without fear of danger. Angelic patrols are everywhere, seen or unseen. And, of course, my true identity is not known. I use my middle name, Marie, when asked to identify myself and I have not been the Keeper long enough yet to be recognized by sight. Indeed, Celeste could be recognized as easily or more easily as myself. We wore light head scarves to obscure ourselves a little more. We met a lot of people that first day, young and old, most of them friendly and certainly none who seemed too aggressive. At the end of the day we

He's Back !

resolved to take the power train the next day to the North, perhaps staying the next night in the Carolinas.

[N.D.] We talked most of today with some students returning to the Metropolitan's university in Raleigh. Most universities these days are under the patronage of a Metropolitan although a few higher princes have also sponsored some. These students were all friendly and seemed to be impressed with my knowledge of mortal and Immortal history, but they did not seem to venture a guess about my true identity. Celeste has acted as if I were an advanced student, so they just took that at face value. I have, after all, been studying mortal and Immortal history from a child as my father had encouraged me to do so in order to be ready for my responsibilities as Keeper.

[N.D.] In Raleigh Celeste and I went out to eat at an outdoor restaurant. I noticed a group of people, about 15 in all, gathered together there and I became fascinated with them.

"I think I would like to get to know them better," I said gesturing in their direction to Celeste.

"Well, that is what we are doing out here, Ma'am," she said.

"Put away the Ma'am stuff. Remember who we are, or . . . , who we are supposed to be," I said.

"Yes, ... of course."

I don't know why these people fascinated me so. They were attractive although their clothes were very much like our own, loose fitting and colorful. They were certainly mortals, but they seemed to have something, something I could not put my finger on, of the immortal about them. Lucius did not appear in any form to warn me; he could have appeared as a server if he was so inclined so I pushed on. They were polite from the first, but only polite.

He's Back !

“We're from Atlanta, actually Buckhead, I volunteered.”

Most nodded, some offered a hand.

“Do you mind?” Celeste nodded towards two empty chairs.

“No, no, go right ahead,” one of the young men responded.

I noticed that he was particularly strong looking and graceful; all in all very nice indeed. For a while some of them made small talk with us but I got the definite impression that we weren't really welcome. I was about to decide to excuse us and move back to our old table which was still empty. Then something almost undetected passed between several of them and they became genuinely friendly indeed. Celeste gave me a hand sign, the first two fingers tapping the opposite wrist that we had agreed upon if she thought I had been recognized. I nodded back pensively; perhaps she was right. The conversation turned decidedly to history and I got very involved. They were very knowledgeable on the subject and I could barely hold my own. Before long nearly three hours had elapsed and Celeste was pointing towards her wristwatch. She was one of the few people who wore one these days. A very efficient girl. We all exchanged pleasantries and retired for the night to our rooms. I did not notice where these people were lodging.

[N.D.] The next night we met at the same place. After an hour or so of more conversation that agreed very well with me, the same young man that I had noticed at first spoke during a brief lull in the conversation.

“So, ... Miss Keeper, is that what we should call you?”

I was surprised that I was surprised. “Patricia will do,” I answered calmly and managed to smile a little. Actually it was not that difficult to smile at this man although I was a little miffed at being found out. His name is Melcor,

He's Back !

not a name I had heard before. They had mentioned a time or two that they were from the East.

"I guess I am not as smart as I thought," I mentioned after some more silence.

"Smart enough, excellency," a woman named Melodi said softly. She was more respectful.

"No formalities," I said. "We are on a research trip. Help me keep my identity a secret."

They all nodded agreeably.

"There is supposed to be an angel, an escort," another fellow mentioned looking around.

I noticed Lucius over his shoulder in a server's apron and almost laughed out loud remembering my own thoughts of the day before. Sensing no warning from Lucius I went on. "He's there," I said nodding. He turned to look Lucius squarely in the eye and jumped.

"No problem," I said urgently but softly not wanting to draw any attention. I wondered briefly how he knew that what he saw was actually an angel or whether he had merely taken my word for it. No, he know this was an angel. Few mortals do when Lucius intends a disguise. Who were these people?

The conversation did not go well from then on since everyone was obviously thinking of things much different that what we were actually talking about. The old emphasis on history, mortal or not, no longer held up. They drank a little but did not eat. I had not seen them eat at any time. I was not sure that I could actually see them breathing. Then there was that strangely ethereal look about them. Finally I decided to assert my authority.

"Where are you staying," I asked.

"Not far," Melcor said. He turned his head to a building behind them.

"May I see it?" I asked.

There was a short silence. "Of course," several of them said at once.

He's Back !

We got up and made our way quietly out of the restaurant and went back to their rooms. They all seemed to be staying in one very large room on the top floor of the building. It seemed very clear that they had been there for some time. They were not mere tourists, neither were they natives. Knowing that they knew about Lucius and were somewhat afraid of him I pressed on.

“Where exactly are you people from?” I asked.

They looked around at each other. No one answered. Some looked towards the floor rather than meet my gaze.

“Lucius, appear!” I commanded.

He did.

“Who are they?” I asked.

“They will tell you, Keeper. But I do advise discretion on both sides.” He said no more. He remained visible. I felt assured and somewhat bolder.

“We are not from here, Keeper,” Melodi ventured.

“That is obvious,” I said. “I know most all of the Over-Lords and Governor’s. Who is yours?”

“Our Over-Lord is named Satay,” Melcor said.

“I know of no such Over-Lord,” I said.

Silence again. They looked at Lucius who now had a distinctly angelic bearing. He nodded.

“We are from off-world, Keeper,” Melodi said.

“Off-world, are you immortal?” I asked. Perhaps I was in trouble.

“No, we are mortal, Keeper. But, ... different.”

“Do you serve our Emperor?”

“Absolutely. He is Emperor in all places.”

This was truly exciting. I could feel my heart pounding. I looked at Celeste, she looked as amazed as I was and a little confused.

“Another planet?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Named?”

“That is not necessary, Keeper.”

He's Back !

“How long have you been here?”

“A long time.”

“Do you die?”

“Eventually.”

“Do you need, ... redeemed, like we do?”

“Yes, but we are not the children of Adam.”

I felt a rush of excitement. I looked at Celeste. I was afraid she was going to faint. One of them offered her a glass of water. She drank some and looked a little better. Lucius was expressionless.

“Are you related to us?” I asked.

“Only by the same Creator,” Melcor answered.

“How were you redeemed?” I asked.

“The same way your Immortals were,” he answered.

I had a million questions, but I decided to slow down and act more like the Keeper than an excited child. Here were a sort of mortals from another planet who were redeemed the same way Elaine was. Now they were visiting here. I realized that I had been participating in an exchange of information since yesterday and now it was my turn to receive some.

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

“The same as you, excellency, learning.”

“You, of course, have the Emperor’s blessing to be among us,” I said.

“Yes, we came first to the Viceroy John in the East. We are here now by the permission of the Viceroy Luis of the West.” Lucius nodded in agreement so that I would be assured that they were telling the truth.

All seemed to be in order. Fine, now we could really talk. But Celeste interrupted. At first I was aggravated with her.

“Patricia, Keeper, could we get some rest?” she asked.

Rest? Now? I thought. But she really looked pale. I glanced at Lucius. He seemed sympathetic, although I knew

He's Back !

he never needed rest. The off-worlders seemed relieved at the suggestion. So I agreed. They, in turn, agreed to meet the next day.

“You won’t leave?” I asked.

They promised. We went to our rooms once again.

[N.D.] We spent many days with these people. They are a lot like us. As near as I could tell their bodies are nearly identical to ours, male and female. But I was curious about a lot of other things.

“How old are you?” I asked. “In your years,” Melodi answered, “I am 152 years old.”

“152 ?!”

“Yes, that is correct.”

“Are you sure? You look so young. Is this in our years? Like in 365 twenty-four hour days?”

“That is correct.”

“You appear to be so much like us,” I said.

“We are. We eat. We sleep. We breathe. Our bodies look like yours. We have essentially the same internal organs. My heart beats like yours. Here feel my pulse.” She stretched out her hand. I grasped her wrist and felt her heart beat.

“If we live 70 or 80 years, it’s a long time,” I said. “How long do you live?”

“It varies, 400 years or so.”

“How do you do that?”

“I do not know how, we just do.”

“Do you reproduce, like we do?”

“Yes, after conception, we breed like you do, the infants are born in 10 of your months.”

“Ten?”

“Yes, a little longer. The child is considered to be an adult at 18 years, like yours.”

“You said that you acknowledge the Emperor.”

“Of course, he is our Emperor as well.”

He's Back !

“He has been to your world?”

“Yes.”

“What does he do there?”

“Holds court. Rules. Is greatly admired.”

“Are there Immortals on your world?”

“Not yet.”

“Not yet?”

“That is correct. Except those who come with the Emperor. We do hope to become immortal ourselves in time.”

“In time?”

“Yes.”

“Will it, ... er, do you expect it to happen suddenly, like the great cataclysm that happened when our Immortals were changed?”

“We do not know.”

“Have your people ever rebelled against the Emperor? In any way?”

“Yes, that is why we needed to be redeemed.”

I nodded.

“Lately,” Melchor continued. “We have desired to learn and have been given permission to come here.”

“We are only talking to you, Patricia, Keeper,” Melodi interrupted. “because of who you are. We trust that you and your assistant here, Celeste, will keep our confidence. We are not given leave by the Emperor to talk to everyone right now.”

“How did you get here,” I asked. “I mean, how did you travel?”

“We studied and have achieved travel through what you sometimes call portals,” Melchor said.

“You travel like our Immortals?”

“Sort of,” Melchor answered. “But at a much lower and more limited level.”

“This can be learned?” I asked.

He's Back !

“At a certain level,” he answered. “Ours is limited whereas your Immortals travel is not. At least as far as we can tell.”

“You say that our Immortals come to your world?”

“Yes, as members of the court.”

“Your Over-Lord is mortal or immortal?” I asked. I watched him closely.

“The Over-Lords that we can see are mortal as we are. But, we know that there are others.”

“Do your mortal Over-Lords communicate with the Immortal ones?”

“Yes, in the Sacred Place.”

“What is that like?”

“We, none of us here,” Melchor looked around, “have ever seen it. We do not know.”

“How have you communicated with our, . . .the Emperor?” I asked.

“Through a member of his court,” Melchor answered.

“Can you tell me which member? I may know him, or her,” I asked.

Once again Melchor and Melodi exchanged glances. I had another question now but I waited for them to answer the last one.

“Through one named Julia, she is a monitor for our world.” Melchor answered.

“How were your people redeemed?” I asked.

“Through the act of Redemption. As we said, just like your Immortals were redeemed. It was extended to us,” Melcor answered.

“But you have not been transformed like our Immortals,” I added.

“No. We have not,” Melcor admitted.

“How did you receive word of the Redemption? I pressed on.

He's Back !

“We were represented among your mortals, now your Immortals, at the time,” Melcor said.

“There were three, they brought gifts, then more came near the end, ...” Melodi added. Melchor flashed her a warning with his eyes.

“Just one more question,” I said. They waited. “You two, Melchor and Melodi, you are the leaders? You have a special relationship here? What?”

“We are siblings, Keeper. We have the same parents, Father and Mother.” I nodded. There seemed to be more to that than what they actually said, but I let it go for now.

“I know I said just one more question, but I want to say this,” I said. They all looked directly at me. “Since I am on a trip of exploration near the beginning of my service as Keeper, I believe that our meeting was no coincidence. There must be, therefore,” I caught my breath, “some reason for this. There must be something that needs to be learned or done.”

This time they looked at Lucius.

“Lucius,” I said slightly exasperated. “Give!” I found myself sitting with my hands on my hips and looking very demanding. Had my own angel put something over on me? I thought. Then it occurred to me that if he had, Elaine would most likely be at the bottom of it so I calmed down before he could answer.

“Prince Elaine,” Lucius began.

“Yes, of course, please continue,” I said acting somewhat amused. Any lesson set up by Elaine would have to be a good one. I half expected her to arrive.

“This one,” Lucius pointed to one of the men who had been very quiet, “he holds a position similar to yours in his world.”

Ah Ha, I thought. Now the real secret is out. Immediately the young, uh, who knows how old he is? Anyway, this young man stood and extended his hand to me with a big smile and said, “Alexor, Madam Keeper. My

He's Back !

office is called something like 'Documentor' in your language."

I shook his hand and tried to act official. "You, you all speak our language well," I said.

"We have studied it for a long time," Alexor responded.

[N.D.] I spent a lot of time with Alexor over the next several weeks. I started leaving Celeste for long periods of time with Melchor and Melodi and the rest of them. Alexor and I would take long walks in the most beautiful places I could find. I still hesitated to try to travel by transport together as I was not quite sure how that would work out. I was not sure that Lucius would take Alexor with me or if I could go with them. I started calling him 'Alex' and I fell in love with him. He would hold me and kiss me and caress me but anytime we were tempted to go further Lucius would appear. He would just appear. He did not say anything or do anything. About the fourth or fifth time that this happened I got a little angry.

"Lucius! Why, why may I ask . . .?" I was beginning to splutter. Alex looked apprehensive.

"You should consult Elaine," he said.

"Very well. Alex will you wait?" I asked.

"Yes, of course." We had slipped off to a private garden nearby.

"Please take me to her," I said to Lucius calmly.

"No dear, you can not. You can not even continue with this man" Elaine said.

I was shocked, shocked and hurt. I started to tear up. She sat down beside me and put her arm around me.

"I let you go this far to see if you would get your own bearings on this," Elaine said. "But I am afraid that you have strayed somewhat from the path, little one."

"How?"

"You can not have a, a relationship with this man or

He's Back !

any man from their world. You, to put it simply, can not reproduce with them and that would be the natural result of the way in which you are heading," Elaine explained.

"Why not?"

"Because your children would inherit a lot of their traits and they are not the children of Adam. I am sorry, Patsy. That is just not allowed."

She was being very loving and kind. I could sense that she was sharing my pain and really feeling for me so I decided that any form of rebellious behavior was unacceptable although it did seem unfair. Why couldn't we have some more years? But I didn't say anything. Typical of Elaine I did not have to.

"I know it seems unfair. I am Immortal and your mortality is so short while theirs is so long. But it just doesn't, it just doesn't fit into, well, the overall scheme of things. I wish I could explain it to you better," she finished.

I sat there for a few minutes.

"I will find someone really nice for you to marry," Elaine promised. She kissed me on the forehead and I cried for a while. I had to go back to Alex and tell him what could not be. It was very hard for me to do. I was assigned a female named Mairi as my contact with our off-world friends. She was instructed to join my staff at the residence. She seemed a little sad about this.

[N.D.] Back at the residence Mairi and I had a talk. My trip had been temporally interrupted.

"Are you lonely," I asked.

"Yes, Keeper. I am to spend your lifetime here and there are no others of my kind here. Not that I do not appreciate your hospitality and the honor of being liaison here, I do."

She is really a nice girl, I wonder . . .

"How old are you, dear, in my years," I asked.

He's Back !

"92, I am one of the younger ones," she responded. She looked 22.

"Why don't we send for a companion for you?" I said.

She brightened considerably.

"That would be wonderful," she said.

"Do you know who you could ask?"

"Yes, I have a sister who would come."

"How old would she be?"

"92, Keeper."

"Please call me Patsy, always," I said. "The same age. Are you twins?"

"Yes, Patsy, that is very kind of you." She now was considerably lighter.

"How do we, er, get her here, do you suppose?"

"I'm not sure," she answered.

"I'll speak to Elaine," I said.

I told Lucius that I needed to talk to Elaine.

[N.D.] "I'll arrange it right away," Elaine said. She left and returned with Mori in a few hours. The sisters hugged and acted quite excited. They were so excited I actually heard a few words in their own language.

"Remember, Patsy," Elaine told me in front of them, "Mairi is your liaison. Her people insist on this. Mori is her sister and companion."

I agreed. Mori did not seem to care.

"And be sure not to reveal who they are to any other mortals without my permission on a case by case basis. Understood?"

When Elaine asked 'understood', that was always serious.

"Yes, I understand," I said. A spoken response was required for this. Celeste had been sworn to secrecy.

He's Back !

[N.D.] I never saw Alex again. I even asked Lucius if I could visit his world. His immediate answer was, "No, Keeper."

Mairi even let it slip one day years later that Alex had been disciplined for his lack of discretion with me. I was always convinced that he had sincerely loved me. This report, although I hurt for Alex, was a confirmation of his love for me. Evidently the discipline involved only the loss of some privileges and nothing worse.

[N.D.] After Alex I gradually got back to my work. There is the usual researching and writing, the usual speaking and encouraging the people in the areas that they seem to need strengthening. But nothing really catches my attention.

[N.D.] Mairi is very intuitive; she seems to be aware of things and knows many things before I am aware of them. She and Mori seem to be in almost constant communication. I don't think it is mind reading since that has been forbidden to mortals since before the glorious return of the Emperor. So if it is mind reading, then that rule does not apply to them although they are technically mortals no matter how long they live. I have a feeling that it is different. Sometimes it seems almost instinctual, like our animals.

[N.D.] After my grief over Alex started to subside as Elaine said that it would, I started to get curious again about Mairi and Mori's world. I must admit that it did cross my mind once or twice as to why I should trust these aliens. Then I reminded myself that I did love and trust Alex and also that Elaine had placed these aliens in my household. This distrust of strangers must lie deep in my race.

A new relationship with the twins began as I accidentally overheard them one day as I went into my garden.

He's Back !

“Yes, it is quite bright,” Mori was saying. “But then again it has to be since there is only one.” I asked myself do they speak in our language all the time, even when they were alone with each other?

“Hi,” I said revealing myself. I did not want them to think I was spying on them.

“Good day, Keeper,” Mori answered a little surprised.

“She wants us to call her Patsy, sister, you know that,” Mairi said.

I had spent more time with Mairi before Mori joined her and therefore Mairi felt more familiar with me.

“Yes, that’s fine,” I said. “I was just coming into the garden and I did not want you to think that I was spying on you. You have every right to your privacy. After all, you are sort of exiled to our world.” I turned and started to leave because I saw them glance at each other in that knowing way that they have when I said the word ‘exiled.’

“No, please, . . . Patsy, stay,” Mori said. I looked at them and they were both smiling so I decided to stay.

This was the beginning of endless questions from me about their world and culture. They did not seem to mind answering, as a matter of fact, they seemed to enjoy it.

“You always speak to each other in our language?” I asked. “Even when you are alone with each other?”

“Yes,” they chimed in unison. I have noticed that they tend to do this when they are nervous.

“Yes,” Mairi said. If we do not our ability to communicate with you and others here might be compromised and I am charged as Liaison to represent us well to you and any others that I am allowed to talk to. It is a great honor.”

“I see. When I came upon you here, you were talking about there ‘only being one of them’?”

“Yes, your sun. There are two that shine on our world.”

He's Back !

"Fantastic!" I said. "Are they very bright?"

"Yes, much brighter than here," Mori answered.

"Doesn't that hurt your eyes?" I asked.

"No, we have . . ." Mori started to answer then looked at her sister and then continued. She had gotten some sort of permission. "We have another lid," she said. With this she came closer and transparent white lids closed over her eyes. It seemed to be under her normal eyelid.

"Oh, my," I exclaimed. "This is amazing."

"You, you don't think we are . . . freaks, do you?" Mairi asked.

"No, no indeed. You are just wonderfully adapted to your world. You are actually quite attractive." This fear of being thought a freak was probably why Alex never allowed me to see this second pair of eyelids. I thought of some of our animal creatures that have a second lid, I believe they are reptiles, but I did not mention them to the girls as I was afraid of insulting them. Plus, I know they are not cold blooded after snuggling with Alex as much as I did. He was very warm.

"You think we are attractive?" Mori asked.

"Yes. Yes indeed," I answered truthfully. "You are quite attractive." The females are all quite thin but it is not unbecoming and they have nice figures. They are from medium to fair coloring and all have very large luminous pale blue eyes. The males are a little heavier with unusually broad shoulders and similar coloring with the same eyes. They have hair on their heads but no body hair. They are quite sleek and attractive. I imagine that if the girls travel much with me we will have the problem of them attracting many male admirers.

"Most things come in pairs in our world," Mori said. "Even more so than here."

Mairi shot her a glance.

"Then guide me, sister," Mori returned. "Please excuse us," she then said to me apologetically.

He's Back !

"It is fine to be totally honest with the Keeper," Mairi said. "She knows what to share and what not to share."

I asked, "Are you two twins?"

"We are all twins," Mori answered.

"All?"

"Yes, we are all born twins on our world. Unless something goes wrong." This time Mairi answered.

"How interesting," I responded. "Are you what we call maternal twins, I mean from the same seed that splits, or are you fraternal twins from different seeds?" They did look a lot alike, but not completely identical in their facial features.

"We two are what you call maternal," Mairi answered. "All of our mothers bear twin young of some sort."

"All?" I asked again.

"Well, most all."

"But when I first met you and Alexor and the others there did not seem to be any twins in the group," I explained.

"No, we did not travel as twins here. It draws too much attention. Although those of us who are unmatched, er, unmarried do terribly miss our twin."

"Drawing too much attention makes sense," I said. "Our people are often fascinated with twins. Then you are very close as twins?"

"Yes."

"And after you marry?" I asked.

"We usually try to marry twins," she answered.

I didn't say 'amazing' or 'interesting' this time. That had to stop since I had the feeling that I would be continually amazed by these two.

I continued my quiz, "Is the older twin, by whatever margin, a minute or whatever, always the one in charge? I mean Mairi seems to be dominant among you and Mori does not seem to mind at all."

He's Back !

“Not the older. Not every time. But the dominant one is established early and the other is happy to fall in behind. Is it not the same here with twins?” Mairi asked.

“I believe so,” I said.

“Of course, it is not a perfect twin world,” Mori added. “In some cases something goes wrong and twins are not born. In some cases twins do not marry twins. Then another set has to be broken up.”

“Some of our best leaders have been singles,” Mairi added.

“By singles you mean a non twin,” I said. “Not an unmarried person.”

“Yes.”

“But your twin sons, . . .” I began.

“They are perfect,” Mairi said. They share the sky perfectly and they are totally equal in their light.”

“I guess that is what inspires your overall twinness,” I said.

“I guess,” Mairi said. “I had never quite thought of that before.

“Have you visited other worlds like you are visiting mine,” I asked.

“Yes, a few,” Mairi said.

She seemed hesitant. I pushed on.

“Tell me about some of them,” I said.

Again, hesitation and then finally, “We, . . . we would have to ask permission of the Immortal Elaine,” she finally said.

“Elaine won't mind if you tell me,” I insisted.

“I would be afraid to without her permission,” Mairi responded. “Please, Keeper, I must not.”

So now we were back to formal names. I got the feeling that I was on the edge of setting back our new relationship if I pressed on so I quit. “I will talk to Elaine,” I said and indeed I would. I was angry that information had been forbidden me but I could not blame Mairi. I was glad

He's Back !

that I did not see Elaine right away as I might have shown my anger and then I would have had to apologize for that.

Lucius came for me for a meeting in Johannesburg so I had to excuse myself.

“We will talk some more after I return,” I said smiling. I was hoping to continue our good relationship.

[N.D.] On the way back from my meeting I stopped off to see Elaine. Lucius said that she was at the capital and I also welcomed any excuse to visit Jerusalem. For some reason I was determined to speak to Elaine before something happened and I found myself around the Emperor. He has a way of making me forget that I am upset or angry and I wanted satisfaction on this one although I have resolved to be sure to remain respectful.

I found Elaine at the house of her friend Martha. She welcomed me warmly. Martha had food and drinks brought and conveniently found something else to do. After a little small talk I came directly to the point.

“Elaine, why are the twins not permitted to tell me about other worlds?” I asked.

She looked up from pouring her tea. A slight smile crossed her lips. She sat back with her tea and looked at me.

“Well, you can know if you really want to,” she said.

There. I said to myself. I was not cut off here. Mairi is just overly cautious.

“Will you tell the twins that it is O.K.?” I asked.

“Surely, if you want it,” she answered.

“Why shouldn't I?” I answered. “After all I am the Keeper and knowledge is part of my job and I . . .”

She held up one hand and I stopped. “All that is true Patsy,” she said. “But you might want to consider if you really want to know.”

I did not answer.

“It is somewhat complicated how much you can tell others,” she began.

He's Back !

“Yes, I did want to talk to you about that too,” I said.

“We will. But let's finish this first.”

I sat back with my cup and waited. When she saw that I was calm, she continued.

“In the first place, you can not visit any of these worlds. It is simply against policy. Also, even if we could get an exception for you, which I doubt, you would have to be very careful not to talk about them either in public or in your journals, even your private one. That puts considerable weight on you. Almost every member of the entire Annatic line has been compulsive tellers. For the most part that is good, it makes you good at your job. But until there is a change in polity, this tends to be sort of hush-hush stuff. Do you understand?”

We were down to important stuff now; she had asked if I understand.

“Yes, mistress.”

“Don't start that 'mistress' stuff with me, young lady,” she said still smiling.

“I'm sorry,” I said. My bad attitude had already shown itself.

“Patsy, you know that I just don't want to cause you any more anxiety than necessary,” she said. She had won my heart again. This smile was the one that said ‘I love you and you can't stay mad at me.’ What a friend my Elaine is.

I thought out loud. “O.K. so I can not go and I can not tell. That obviously comes straight from the top. I am an obedient subject and I will not question the policy. Can you help me to understand why, other than your concern for my personal comfort. I mean, since the Emperor is the Emperor on all worlds why is the separation necessary. Why, most people aren't even aware that he is Emperor everywhere.”

“True,” Elaine responded. “And that is one place we need to have unity in our understanding.” The Chancellor wants this world to know that the Emperor is loved and respected on all worlds. He made that pretty clear when he

He's Back !

was a mortal King. His desires have not changed. However, and there always seems to be an 'however' in this world, this world, this civilization, is very near the middle of an extended trial. So it must remain relatively isolated until that trial is over. Too much contact with another race, one which is not in exactly the same predicament as this one, would mess up the trial. This is very important to the Emperor, that this trial be completed properly and we all have to abide by that, Patsy.”

There was more involved here than I had expected. I did not want the responsibility.

“O.K., fine, I don't want to go. I would like to know just a little about Mairi and Mori's world since I do know them and maybe some things about other ones. But I'll keep that to a minimum. Now, how much can we tell about Mairi and Mori? After all they do live with me, obviously for some reason.” Elaine said that she would get back to me in a few days.

[N.D.] True to her word Elaine returned in four days. We were both more relaxed now. “The Chancellor now wants the mortal public to know enough about Mairi and Mori so that they will realize that the Emperor is supreme on their world as well. Evidently His Majesty has altered his position because soon you will start introducing them as off-worlders.”

“That will be excellent,” I said. I liked that.

11.21.513 C.R. The public has welcomed the off-worlders with enthusiasm. They have presumed that they were brought to our world by the Immortals. This is actually true as they would not have been granted access without the Emperor's approval and the cooperation of the Princes. The fact that they have developed inter-dimensional travel was not announced. I have not yet learned how their travel is inferior to that of the Immortals, I have just taken Mairi's

He's Back !

word for that. However, in the process I have learned that their name for their planet is unpronounceable in our language so they have begun referring to it as Astride. It is pronounced as-tree-dee. No one is willing to reveal what our name for it is and I am beginning to presume that it does not appear on any mortal star charts. Since they have described their world with two suns there has been much speculation among our researchers as to where it is. I consider these arguments useless. The kind of people they are seems to be more important to me.

[N.D.] There are now almost fifty individuals from Astride on earth that I know about. About twenty of them are twins, ten pairs. This tendency for twins is now known to our people so they are now free to appear in public. There have been several occasions when our visitors have been in danger but this has not been allowed to go beyond mere threat. They seem to be under a strong invisible angelic guard. Obviously the Princes do not intend them to come to any harm. I have come to the conclusion that our off-world friends are somewhat naïve; they have a certain innocence. They tend to always believe that anyone that they are talking to is telling the truth. They have no sense of when someone is trying to cheat them. The women do not sense any danger of sexual assault.

[N.D.] At any one time I have from two to thirty off-worlders at my residence. I have had to ask Henry Sawyer for supplies to help host them. They eat well and like everything. If you set it before them, they will eat it but they do not overeat. None of them is overweight. The married couples sleep together and seek privacy every few days. The unmarried ones all prefer to stay together in one large room. They are very supportive of each other. I have been learning some of their ancient stories.

He's Back !

They believe that they had one set of ancient parents. They are very aware of their genealogy. They believe that everyone should have something productive to do. They have a mortal government on their home world, but it is always subject to the Emperor. Their leaders, or Elders, meet with the Emperor and some angels regularly and about 500 of our years ago Immortals started appearing at Court. I am convinced that these are our Immortals although I do not recognize any of the names that they have mentioned. It was, after all, just over 500 years ago that our Immortals began their resurrection and reign with the Emperor. We usually think that any Immortals that we do not see are on the other side with the Emperor. Now we are beginning to realize that there are any number of places that they can be. However, apparently the Immortals do not hold court on their planet. The government is left to them as mortals under the overall supervision of the Emperor. Their Emperor is our Emperor and they have never heard of another.

Mairi and Mori are my principal 'aliens.' They coordinate all the activity at my residence. They surprised me today. I had just asked them how the supplies were holding out.

"We still have plenty of food, Keeper," Mori said. "But we do need certain items of clothing."

"Fine," I answered. "Can you check with the Metropolitan's supply master on that?"

"Yes, Keeper," she answered. Then, "Keeper, what if there were to be more of us in your world? How would that work?"

"I don't know. Right now those of your people who are not here are spread around at various Dais' studying our world and people. How many more are likely to want to come?"

Mairi and Mori exchanged glances. "Many, Keeper," Mairi answered.

He's Back !

“Sounds like a lot,” I said. “Is that like hundreds?” Again they looked at each other. I had been polishing an article while I talked to them, but now I put the writing down. I was getting the impression that this was a big issue.

“Thousands?”

“Many thousands,” Mairi said.

“I see. Has permission been granted?” I asked.

“The Lord Chancellor has approved it,” she said.

“Then, it's done,” I answered.

“Yes, but he has also said that there must be some effort from your mortals in hosting them,” Mairi said.

I got the feeling that I had been set up. “And the Keeper and Primate should lead in this I suppose?”

“You are the Keeper of the Ancient Books, the primary Interpreter of the books of Anna, the Chronicler of Imperial Truth and the Spiritual Primate of the mortals on the earth,” she recited.

I smiled. “And now Hostess,” I said.

We all laughed together. “I have learned well?” she asked.

“Indeed you have learned well,” I answered.

I asked to see the Chancellor.

01.11.514 C.R. I am now apparently the mortal go-between. I saw the Lord Chancellor just a few hours ago. He was as gracious and decisive as ever. He told me that it was his will and the will of the Emperor that these foreigners be allowed to live among us, but for their own protection they should be established in enclaves in several places. I could start with one enclave in the Over-Lord Janice's area. As this is a large area to consider, I decided to visit Janice next. I kissed the Chancellor's ring and departed. I got the impression that this was the Chancellor's project and that he had obtained the permission of the Emperor. I do not think it was the Emperor's idea. But it had His approval just the same, so I went about preparing for their arrival. I was

He's Back !

somewhat relieved to learn that the primary condition to their living among us was that they swear loyalty to all the Princes and agree to abide by the Imperial Code and our mortal laws. They seemed to have no problem with this.

[N.D.] “Patricia, welcome to my Dais,” Janice welcomed me. “And where should we put our visitors?” She was already ahead of me. We decided to establish the first enclave in the Appalachian mountains. Since they liked to be together, several large dormitories would be built along with a series of cabins for the married couples. This first enclave would support about three thousand off-worlders. There was certainly no one easier to host than these people. I wondered what they hoped to learn from us.

09.12.522 C.R. It was a grand day when Elaine brought me my Robert. I had resigned myself to an arranged wedding. But I was not dreading it because I knew from the journals that Elaine was such a good match maker that I would love him dearly all my life. Robert is a good man, quiet and deliberate. He is tall and dark and usually attracts considerable female attention when he enters a room. He is absolutely loyal to me and helps me a lot. Officially he is a law clerk, but he spends most of his time helping me. He has no problem with a low self image. He says that my job is an important one in the Empire and that the best thing he can do is help me as much as he can. He is a steady and attentive lover and I can honestly say that I lack for nothing. Our wedding was held at the Metropolitan's Dais and it was quite an affair, the Chancellor, our Viceroy, and Janice were there. The Viceroy performed the ceremony. I was relieved when all the ceremonies were over and Robert and I could depart on our wedding trip to the French Alps. We returned to the residence and settled down to as normal a married life as one can have in my position.

He's Back !

03.12.550 C.R. We have been married many years now and I am finally with child. Elaine says it will be a boy so we plan to name him Andrew. I feel like quite an old married woman to be a mother.

03.11.553 C.R. The morning before Andrew's third birthday Lucius wakened us at the residence. I sat bolt upright in bed.

"Yes."

"Keeper, your presence is needed at the off-worlders enclaves," he said.

"Which one?" I asked. There were now nine of them scattered throughout the world.

"Actually all of them, but you can start with the Appalachian enclave," he answered.

"I will need some briefing," I said as I prepared to leave.

"I can brief you, Keeper," he said. "Elaine is occupied on the other side right now."

"Then, brief me," I said.

"Yes, Keeper," Lucius began. "It seems that their Elders of all the enclaves have just revealed to them the reason for their living in this world."

"Good, finally. And it is?"

"The suns of their home world are moving closer to each other and before too long their entire population will be relocated to another world. This in itself is quite an uprooting and the Emperor does not choose to do anything about these suns."

"I can see how they would be shocked," I said as I picked out some knee socks. The Appalachians are chilly to me.

"But that is not all, Keeper."

"And . . ."

"The conditions on their new world although not particularly hard will not lend themselves to such a long

He's Back !

lifespan. They will not live as long there and their offspring born on the new world will live just about as long as our mortals." With that Lucius was quiet.

I stopped in the middle of pulling on a knee sock. I looked at Robert plaintively.

"Will you go with me?" I asked.

"Of course, my dear," he answered. He had already begun to get dressed.

"I imagine that their visit here has had some effect on their lifespan," Robert said.

"Good thinking, my love," I said.

"Lucius, how are they feeling now?" I asked.

"They will, I suppose, be paying more attention to how you mortals handle your mortality from now on."

"Yes, I expect they will, and be wondering about an afterlife as well. Well, my off-world friends, welcome to true mortality," I said. "Lucius, are you quite sure that Elaine can not be interrupted this time?" I asked.

"Quite, Keeper. No angel has ever interrupted a feast on the other side," he answered.

I still could not understand all about their feasts, but I certainly knew better than to go against over 500 years of precedence. Robert and I stood close for the short trip with Lucius to the enclave.

When we arrived they were all in a state of shock. Mairi and Mori and all my residence off-worlders were at the enclave. They had all gone there the week before for what we might call a family reunion. Apparently their Elders had known about this for some time in their meetings with the Emperor, but they had, for some reason, chosen not to announce it until now. They broke the word early in the morning at this enclave but the entire announcement had been coordinated so that all the enclaves heard it at once. Soon shock turned to sadness. I embraced Mairi and Mori for quite some time. Finally we sat down with some more of their family and it was quiet for a long time.

He's Back !

“I guess it is hard for you to have much sympathy with us, Keeper, as we are about to go into something that you have always known,” Mairi finally said.

“Oh no, I can sympathize,” I said. “This will be a big change for you.”

“And just what does your family’s accumulated wisdom have to say about an afterlife?” Mori asked.

“Well,” I began. “For our Immortals there certainly is one. We hope to attain to the same thing.”

“But there is no promise,” one of them asked.

“Have you had a promise?” I asked. “You have always been mortal even though you have lived much longer than we do.”

“Our sacred writings say that the Emperor is capable of giving us Immortality. But we have never seen one of our own in an Immortal state” Mairi said.

“And the implication is?” I asked.

They were all quiet for a while. “The implication is,” our old friend Melchor began. “The implication is that if we are obedient and love the Emperor that it will come to us, immortality that is.”

“We have no more promise than that,” I said. We rely much on the sacred writings that our Immortals had when they were mortal. They were promised Immortality through their relationship with the Emperor. He is the same Emperor. One thing we have learned by living under his glorious rule is that he is always true to Himself. He is not whimsical or cruel in any way. We ended up mortal at the glorious return because our parents had no relationship with him prior to the glorious return. If we choose to have a relationship now, we expect Him to run true to Himself.” When I finished that, I was quite happy with myself. Robert gave me a big smile of approval. I had never thought it through exactly like that. This crisis for my off-worlder friends had helped me to

He's Back !

crystallize my thinking. I made a mental note to write it down. Robert has an excellent memory and will help me do that.

“Of course, your ancestor May was the one with the most real relationship with the Emperor,” Mairi said.

“She was my great, great aunt, I believe,” I said. “And yes, she specialized in a relationship with the Emperor.”

“I guess that is the key,” Mori said quietly.

They all nodded and it was quiet for some time again.

[N.D.] I have not seen my off-world friends for some time as I needed to go on an extended trip in my duties as Keeper. When we returned last evening, Mairi was still here at my residence. We were glad to see each other and she hugged me and Robert robustly. I asked her about her twin and she said that Mori was temporarily visiting the nearby enclave and would return soon. I invited her to join us for breakfast in the garden.

“You look rather sad. Are things not going well? How are things at the enclaves?” I flooded her with questions as I poured her tea.

“No, I don't think things are going well at all,” she answered. Robert and I waited expectantly.

“Most of our people have been cycled out at the enclaves,” she said. “After the announcement about the big move for us the enclaves here were opened to volunteers so that they could come here and learn about how you live with such a short lifespan. We, your original group here, expected that many would want to come. There has not been a great response. We had hoped for a more enthusiastic response. Something more, how can I say ...?”

”Spiritual?” I offered.

“Yes, I suppose that is it,” she answered. “You see, Patsy, many have taken a different attitude at home. They say that since our lives are to be shortened, they might as

He's Back !

well live for all it's worth. I fear that they may offend the Emperor. They don't seem interested in investigating immortality. We don't know what to do."

Robert and I exchanged glances. We had been concerned that this would be the response.

"Who can we get to help?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," Robert replied. Mairi managed to eat some of the food that had been brought to us.

"We mortals don't seem to have enough answers," Robert continued. "But our Immortals seem so much above it all. I don't think that Elaine or Henry Sawyer or even Janice could help much. I don't think Mairi's people could identify much with them."

I thought for a minute. "Maybe an Immortal who lived earlier in time. The ones you just mentioned lived during the Second Testament. Their way to immortality was pretty clear to them. What about those who lived before the Emperor first came?" I asked.

"You may have something there, dear," Robert said.

Then I remembered something that I had read in May's journal. I had been reading May a good bit on the trip because I felt that if my off-world friends needed help she would be the most likely to offer it.

"Robert!"

"Yes, dear."

"I've got it. I think I know who to call on."

"Please tell," Mairi said.

"May says that the Chancellor's second wife Abigail was sure of her immortality because David himself was sure. She gained her confidence from him. And they were from the First Testament period," I said.

"Was immortality known to them?" Mairi asked.

"Yes, it was known but it was not as clear as during the Second Testament period when Elaine lived," I answered.

He's Back !

“The Chancellor was the most spiritual man of his time,” Robert added. “But, will he do it? Can he take the time to instruct the off-worlders?”

“Maybe, maybe not,” I said. “But I’ll bet you that the lady Abigail can and will.”

[N.D.] I have met the Chancellor, but I have not met Abigail. I decided that I should put my case to the Chancellor with the request that Abigail be asked to help. I ran the whole thing by Elaine and she was very supportive. She said that she would arrange another audience with the Chancellor for me.

[N.D.] In a few days Mori came back to the residence. She said that things were still pretty gloomy in the enclaves. The ones that are here are at least the ones that are interested in studying the possibility of immortality, but they are not doing very well at this. The morning after Mori returned Lucius told me that Elaine wanted me to collect all the off-worlders from my original group to stay for a while at the residence. I managed to get all of them except my old flame Alexor. That was probably for the best.

Two days later there was quite a flurry on my front lawn. Even Lucius seemed flustered as he sped into my presence.

“Keeper, in front, the Chancellor comes,” he said.

I nearly collided with Mairi and Mori at the front door. “Is it, . . . is it the Emperor?” they asked.

Despite Lucius’ warning I looked quickly for the angel Gabriel and did not see him. Then I reminded myself of what Lucius had said. Lucius has never been known to make a mistake. The Chancellor’s full escort is quite large, but it is not the Emperor’s. After most of the escort had arrived and positioned themselves just above and in front of the residence, there were about twenty levels of them as far as I could see, one large angel appeared on the ground just

He's Back !

in front of the Chancellor who appeared with several other Immortals. I rushed forward to greet them and gave my best curtsy. David took my hand and then pulled me to his side and gave me a big hug.

“This is Abigail,” he said motioning to a striking looking Immortal with a female appearance. I curtsied to her as well. She smiled a big smile and nodded to me. “And this is my son in mortality, Nathan,” the Chancellor continued. Nathan smiled also and he seemed a genuinely caring person. I was ashamed to admit that I was not aware of who his mother had been or anything else about him. “He is my son by the Lady Bathsheba,” the Chancellor said. I recognized that name. “He is also of the Imperial line,” David added. “yet another generation closer to the Emperor than I.” All of this information was as if David was aware of my lack of knowledge. Obviously, Nathan was also a direct ancestor of the Emperor’s.

“And this is our son Chileab, Abigail’s and mine,” the Chancellor concluded. He did not introduce any of the other Immortals at that time. I recognized our Over-Lord Janice and, of course, Elaine and gave them a quick hug.

“Elaine has advised me of your concerns,” David continued as we stood there. He nodded towards Elaine. He spied my front garden and started walking in that direction and the entire entourage moved with him including the lines of angels just above us. Abigail and I and Nathan and Chileab are willing to do anything that we can to help.” We neared some seats in the garden and he sat in one of them. I waited to see what the Immortals wanted to do. Abigail sat down and motioned for me to sit next to her.

“So you remember what I said to dear May 200 years ago?” she said.

“Yes, mistress. It was hard to forget,” I said. Then just in case she thought too much of me I added, “Of course, I have been reviewing her journals of late.”

He's Back !

“Good,” she responded. “It is true that we did not have the specific promises that they had in the Second Testament.” I was honored that she used mother Anna’s title for that particular record. “And it was David’s conviction that sustained me,” she said.

“Yes, mistress,” I said weakly, I know that this is the most important of subjects.

“Since there will be no Imperial decree on this subject,” David added, “we shall proceed to help people to understand our ancient belief in immortality as we understood it as mortals.”

“That will be wonderful,” I said. Mairi and Mori were sitting on the grass nearby and they were beaming with joy. I had never thought of an Imperial decree on the subject, but apparently the Chancellor had and already had his answer.

“We have a plan,” Elaine said. Dear Elaine, she had really taken my request to heart and was managing a large part of the answer herself. I loved her all the more.

“Yes,” I said expectantly.

“We shall, with your help and the help of your Astridian core group here, organize rallies in the enclaves. His Excellency the Chancellor will share his thoughts and then questions will be entertained by the Lady Abigail and the Lord Nathan. They and others from the Chancellor’s ancient court will be on hand to answer questions and lead discussions of smaller groups within the enclaves until your off-world friends have a better understanding of the issue. Then they will be sent back to their world both before the move and after the move to share with their people. Still then other groups will be brought here to learn the same truths for themselves.” She stopped to see my reaction.

“That is wonderful, Elaine, to all of your excellencies, it is wonderful.” Everyone voiced their agreement.

He's Back !

“And there will be one other,” the Chancellor added looking at Abigail.

“I know that my Redeemer lives,” Abigail said.

“Yes, that one,” the Chancellor said.

“Job himself,” Abigail said.

“He will share occasionally,” David said.

[N.D.] The rallies are turning out to be a great success. The Chancellor has pointed out that in the very oldest book in the First Testament a man named Job affirms his own belief in immortality when he says that he expects to see the Emperor yet many years after his death with his own eyes. He believed in immortality. Since this book was already ancient during the Chancellor's time, these words had been a great comfort to him personally. The man, Job, has even shared once or twice. The Chancellor himself had said, “The Lord has said unto my Lord, I will make your enemies your footstool.” The Chancellor actually worshipped the Emperor in his own heart before anyone really knew about the Emperor. What a wonderful example for us all.

Abigail's talks have also been very helpful. She is less formal than the Chancellor and often meets with smaller groups in which she will sit and entertain questions. She is gracious and beautiful and both men and women enjoy listening to her. She explains that her sureness regarding immortality grew as she lived with David as his wife, and that it was his sureness that helped her to believe.

“Of course, he was not equally sure all of the time,” she said once. “As mortals we were never that constant in our beliefs, especially in the First Testament period. Those in the Second Testament period were surer because they had the Presence living inside of them. But we did see God move on our behalf and our sureness, if nurtured, would grow.”

“Well,” one off-world mortal asked her, “since our conditions are more like the First Testament period than the

He's Back !

Second Testament period, we should try to nurture our faith like you did. Do you agree with that?"

"Yes, I do," Abigail answered.

"How do we do that? How did you do that?" he asked.

The room fell quiet until Abigail formed her answer. "There are a few things that I would suggest," she said thoughtfully. "Our people in those days formed some habits over the centuries that are helpful in nurturing a person's faith. The Second Testament people also used them, so that should be good for all mortal times. First of all, we would recount the faithfulness of the, er... Emperor at all times. Since immortality depends on him alone, his faithfulness is absolutely central to believing it."

Several of the people started taking notes. I knew that she was getting through.

"We also read the sacred writings. You can do this as well. Read the First and Second Testaments and the writings of Anna and the other Keepers. Rely on the Keeper Patricia here to put you in mind of the Emperor's faithfulness."

They all looked at me. I nodded enthusiastically. This put a lot of responsibility on me and it came directly from the mouth of the Lady Abigail, second wife of the ancient King of Israel and the Chancellor of the present Empire. I know that I would have to work long and hard to meet this challenge. However, later, as Robert and I talked, he reminded me that this was no more than what had always been expected of my office and that by holding the very meetings that we were holding I was, in fact, doing this.

"Is there anything else," the same off-world man asked. I noticed that there were as many of our mortals taking notes as off-worlders. I was seeing an interest in Immortal things grow among our own people because of the concern of the off-worlders for their shortened mortality. This is wonderful. The wisdom of the Emperor and the Chancellor is also wonderful.

He's Back !

Abigail answered. "Yes, you need to gather together and share what you learn and what you feel," she said. Our people did. They had the Temple and later they formed local schools called synagogues. We also shared around the family table a lot."

"We called it 'church'," Elaine chimed in. I had almost forgotten that Elaine was there because Abigail's presence seemed to fill the room.

We had many meetings in many places both in and outside the enclaves for several years running. Gradually the off-worlders became more and more sure that immortality for them was possible and many of them believed that they personally would achieve immortality one day. Much of this spread to our own people and Robert and I were deeply affected and rejoiced in this.

"There is something else," Abigail said. This time she was showing a big smile. "This may take some, shall we say, arranging. But I am sure that the Chancellor can help us on this."

Everyone waited expectantly for her next words.

"The Emperor himself is the vital key. Any true seeker would be immeasurably strengthened by attending an audience with him."

Many showed a visible fear at this suggestion. Most have never been in the presence of the Emperor.

"There is nothing to be afraid of," I said. "If you are not a wrongdoer, you have nothing to fear."

"How do we know if we are not a wrongdoer?" one of our own young mortal men asked.

"If you are a sincere seeker you will not be a wrongdoer," I answered. "You may not be perfect in thought or deed, but you can not be a seeker and a true wrongdoer at the same time."

There, I had said it. Based on Abigail's comment I had coined the term 'seeker' and given an official opinion about seekers. This term caught on immediately and spread

He's Back !

the world over. I was finally beginning to live up to my office. It felt good.

[N.D.] Before long there were groups of Seekers everywhere. There were great increases for permission to attend Imperial audiences. The Chancellor arranged for Seeker Audiences on a regular basis with the Emperor. No Seeker ever left his presence unchanged.

[N.D.] This morning Elaine arrived unexpectedly.

“Good morning, Patsy.”

I got up from my work immediately and went to her side. I motioned that we move from the musty library to the kitchen garden and she went in that direction. We sat and I waited for her to talk.

“You suspect that something is up, don't you?” she said with an impish smile.

“Yes, why shouldn't I?”

“Well, there has been a change,” she said acting very pleased with herself.

“Tell, please,” I said. She obviously wanted me to act a little excited.

“You have been given permission to go to Astride with Mairi and Mori and the lady Abigail to speak on the subject of the afterlife,” Elaine announced proudly.

“That is wonderful! I am so excited. Why the change? That is, if it is all right for me to know.”

“Just that the Chancellor is so pleased with the grasp that you have obtained on the subject as a mortal and the Keeper. You have, after all, started a world wide Seeker movement. Due to the Astridian seekers who have returned to their world this movement is also growing there. Their leaders are actually considering petitioning the Emperor for Seeker Audiences so that their people can get the encouragement and strengthening that earth mortals can get. But he wants you to go and help.”

He's Back !

“He? The Emperor himself?” I asked.

“Yes, the Emperor and the Chancellor,” Elaine answered.

“When can I go?” I asked.

“Soon, Patsy. I will get back to you soon.”

“Will you go with me?”

“I am not sure about that just yet.”

As usual, we had tea together and she departed.

[N.D.] Today I had a surprise visitor. Since he was unknown to me, Lucius rushed to tell me.

“An Immortal at the front to see you, Keeper,” he said.

I went to the front to meet this person. I found a smallish blond man who had the slight appearance of having died at an older age. I do not know how to explain this appearance, but you can tell if you look closely. None of the Immortals actually look old in the sense of being wrinkled or injured or deformed in any way. But in their ageless faces you can detect a certain level of natural maturity if they lived a long time as a mortal. At the same time those who died young seem slightly less wise in their present state. It takes a while to learn to see these things.

“Hello,” this Immortal greeted me cheerfully as I held the door opened for him to enter. “My name is Jack,” he said.

“Hello Jack,” I answered. He seemed so informal that I did not resort to the usual formality when first meeting an Immortal such as calling his ‘sir’ or ‘excellency.’

“It is good to meet you, Keeper Patricia,” he said. “Let’s talk.”

I showed him into my reception room and he picked a chair with a certain amount of care. This is obviously an old habit as no Immortal would have any aches or pains that would require such a careful selection. He must have had such pains as a mortal.

He's Back !

“I do not want to shock or upset you,” he said. “But Elaine has been called to the other side for an extended period of time and I have been chosen to help you with the Astridian project. There is nothing to be concerned about and you will find me to be quite helpful,” he said.

I wondered about so long an absence on Elaine's part but I was not upset. There is no accounting for Imperial matters and I have learned not to tax my mortal mind over their affairs. If I did, I would be stressed often. This Jack seemed like a very likable person.

“May I call you Jack?” I asked in order to fulfill all protocol.

“Certainly,” he responded. “And I will call you Patsy in private and Patricia or Keeper in public.”

“Fine, great,” I said and I offered him a big smile which he returned readily. I am quite excited about going off-world and I know that Jack and I will get along fabulously.

“We need to do a little planning,” Jack said, “And then we can be off for Astride.”

I was more than ready. Since the first trip would involve the Chancellor and the lady Abigail we had to coordinate our plans with them. Jack said that after that we could go on our own as much as I wanted to. I learned that since the initial appearance about 500 earth years ago of Immortals on Astride that the Chancellor was know there as the Chancellor. Before that the angel Gabriel had served in that function. He was not called the Chancellor, but he had done the job of the Chancellor. The Astridians are aware that something monumental happened 500 earth years ago.

[N.D.] The Chancellor informed Jack of the dates for our first visit to Astride and he was at my door before I was out of bed. I told Lucius to beg his pardon for me and hurried to see him. He had breakfast with me in the kitchen garden. Jack is one Immortal who really likes to eat whether he needs

He's Back !

to or not. We had already made our plans flexible so we just altered them to match the Chancellor's schedule. I was nervous as we prepared to depart but Lucius took it in his stride. Jack and I and Mori left from my residence with Lucius and we arrived ahead of the Chancellor and his party and escort. Mairi was waiting for us there in an open field with a large stone Dais. At first I had to look around, my first time on another world.

The sky was more purple than on earth and the two suns together did not seem to shed as much light as our one. I could understand the coming problem. Mairi and Mori were anxious to show me around. There were many Astridians loosely lined up around the field. Actually it was more like a meadow. Most of these Astridians were dressed in a sort of robe. I presumed that it was some sort of formal attire. I walked on their grass towards the Dais. The grass was more dark blue than green; the blades were very fine and spongy. Some of these officials greeted me in front of the Dais. They addressed me as Keeper and were very polite. They spoke to me first in my language. I found that they also spoke the Emperor's native language as some then greeted me in that language. That is how they learn if you can speak it as well. I returned their greetings in that language as well as I am quite fluent in that language. Lucius was visible with me, but he moved across the ground with me as if he were walking. All of the Astridians noticed Lucius and when they were forced to pass by him they nodded respectfully. Evidently no one here had a personal angel. Some of those who had greeted me moved onto the Dais with some others. They stayed to the side and awaited the arrival of the Chancellor. Mori then told me that this was the sacred meeting ground and that only the leaders, or elders, came to this place to meet with the Chancellor and the Emperor. This was about to change.

He's Back !

[N.D.] I have now been on Astride for over a week. It is a very interesting place. It is too bad that everyone must now leave. The first special Imperial audience was held yesterday and it took most of the day. I stayed from beginning to end. About 500 Astridians were there plus a number of the elders. Most of these people had never seen the Emperor before. They had all been to Seekers classes and this group consisted of some of their builders and record keepers. They are the first to go to Astride Two, as they are now calling their new home. These people leave today under the supervision of some of our Immortals. At the audience they listened to the Emperor speak for a few minutes and then any who wished could approach him for a blessing. The Emperor can speak in more than one voice. His normal conversational voice is quite calm and pleasant. He can also speak in what I call his 'waterfall voice.' He usually speaks in this voice when he is speaking to a crowd. The only way that I can describe it is that it sounds like a lot of little waterfalls. He is easy to understand in this voice and he can speak many languages although the court language is the ancient language of His natural people. Yesterday he spoke in Astridian. Their people seemed a little shy to approach him at first. I knew that they did not want to miss this opportunity to approach him. Since there were so few going up, I decided that I would go for a blessing to show them the way. As I approached, he looked my way and spoke my name. I can not express how I feel when he speaks my name. He spoke quietly and in his normal human voice.

"Patricia." That was all he said. I felt that my name and my person had just been affirmed throughout all of time and into eternity. He knows me. He KNOWS me. HE knows me. He knows ME. I already had my blessing, but I knelt before him just the same. I felt his hand touch the top of my head. I was flooded with peace and warmth. I did not feel any tendency to pass out. I wondered how many different kinds of blessings he could give. I felt greedy. I wanted them

He's Back !

all. After a short time he touched both of my shoulders and indicated that I should stand. I stood and accidentally looked into his eyes. Just as at my investiture I then lost all track of time. All I knew was that there was not a particle of doubt or fear in me while I was locked in his gaze. When I came out of it, I was surrounded by Astridians. Evidently I had accomplished my purpose because no one left that day who did not get their blessing. I thought later that their mental questions would still have to be answered at the Seeker groups, but their inner affirmations were supplied by seeing the Emperor. Jack has been a big help all along. Apparently he had been a missionary after being a sea sailor in his mortal life, so he fit well into this role in his Immortality.

[N.D.] I have had to return to my residence on earth to take care of a few matters. I have missed Robert as he was not asked to go with me. I intend to ask Elaine quite clearly if he can go when I go again.

“Yes, he may go,” Elaine said. “What’s the matter, dear? You look absolutely green?”

“I don’t know. My breakfast has not agreed with me for several weeks,” I answered.

“Are you sure that Andrew is not about to have a little sister?” Elaine asked.

“I never felt like this with him,” I said.

She came and touch my stomach. “Yes, and it is a girl,” she said.

“That’s wonderful,” I said.

“You don’t sound pleased,” Elaine answered.

“I am, really. But I have been away from Astride for longer than I expected now. I do hope that this child is not going to hold me back. I want to get back there for a while very soon.

“Here, let me help,” Elaine said. She touched me again. My nausea vanished. “There, Patsy, you will hardly know that you are pregnant,” she said. “You and Rob can

He's Back !

leave today if you wish.” That sounded good to me. We prepared to leave.

[N.D.] When we arrived back on Astride things were changing fast. The Emperor was still holding audiences and the word had spread about the blessing, so everyone wanted a touch from him. He would appear from who knows where just on time and depart just as quickly. He might have come from the capital on earth or from the other side. Some people were saying that there were more than one of him; that he had somehow duplicated himself so he could do more things at one time. I asked Elaine about this, she had come with Robert and Lucius and I, and she said ‘absolutely not!’ There is only one Emperor and he goes where he will. If a presence is needed in many places at once, then The Presence takes care of that, but that usually requires some explanation from some Immortals since he can not be seen.

I found that almost one half of the Astridians had already moved to Astride Two. Elaine said that we could go there. At first the Astridians had been determined to move their people through their own mechanical movers. But they soon found out that they did not have the capacity for that. It was then that the Chancellor insisted that his people provide the transportation. A small group of angels would take the Astridians several thousand at a time. At first when they arrived, there was housing for them all. But now that they were arriving so fast they had to camp out until they finished their homes. All the archives from the old planet have been moved and a new sacred place has been dedicated. The Emperor is now meeting with them on both the old and the new planets. This new world also has two suns and it is quite beautiful. The bluish grass is just as beautiful as their old world and the green seas are also quite nice. The night is different but breath taking. There are two moons here but they are eclipsed by a breathtaking nebula of purple and blue and green which takes up almost a fourth of the night sky. It

He's Back !

really doesn't get very dark here. The children love it. They seem to be less afraid of the night. The adults are quite fond of it as well. If it were not for the shorted life spans, I am sure that they would like their new world better than the old one.

There are some small animals here. They are small and furry and quite friendly. They come in many colors and sizes. They seem to be mammals. But there aren't any insects or reptiles here. There are fish in the seas and they all look different than any we have on earth or on old Astride. All in all it is quite a beautiful world. Mairi and Mori greeted us warmly and showed us their new home. The native trees are quite good for building and we are told that the buildings will not deteriorate much over time. They should all be quite thankful.

06.14.555 C.R. We came back to our residence today and I promptly went into labor. Little Marissa was born at supertime. I ate a few grapes while I nursed her. I shall have to leave the Astridians on their own for a while. After I recuperate from this baby, I have much to do on my own world.

03.12.566 C.R. It has now been many years since I first met Alexor, Melchor, Melodi, Mairi and Mori and the other Astridians. They are all gone now. Their enclaves, and indeed they themselves, are now but a faint memory among our people. I remember now how their presence among us was first a secret and then the enclaves came and they became public knowledge. Then, surprisingly, I was allowed to visit both their old and new worlds. Then Robert was allowed to go with me. I am sure that our contact with them and the changes in the rules as we went along was all the work of the Chancellor. As far as I know we were the only mortals that ever went there. Elaine has put no restrictions on what I can write about them in my journals. I am honored

He's Back !

to have been helpful to them during their time of great change. Meanwhile our own people's problems do not seem to change much.

04.17.567 C.R. My dear Celeste died yesterday. Although she left my service to start her own family many years ago, we still kept in touch and this world will be a poorer place without her.

01.11.568 C.R. Today Andrew became a man. We had an eighteenth birthday party for him at the Dais of Metropolitan Henry Sawyer of Atlanta. The Over-Lord Janice declared him to be the Keeper Heir. He is a fine man, if I do say so myself, and he will make a wonderful Keeper.

11.12.568 CR. My name is Andrew. Mother died last night in her sleep. Father is doing well under the circumstance. I am the new Keeper and Primate. May the Emperor help me.

He's Back !

Section Four

Date: 05.05.948 C.R. I was in a deep sleep after a long and difficult evening. I had substituted for my Aunt Kathryn at the Dais reception. The Metropolitan holds a reception twice a year at the Dais for many of the mortal leaders in his principality and from time to time he will give an award for outstanding community service to some deserving mortal. Aunt Kathryn was not feeling well the day of the reception so she went back to the residence and asked me to substitute for her. If she had asked Elaine for help, she could have been healed but she did not choose to do so. Since I have been her understudy for over a year now, it was not thought unusual when I took her place. I presented the outstanding subject for his award and the Metropolitan was, as usual, very congenial in presenting it. It was a way to involve mortals in the leadership of the community and to keep down any unrest that might be tempted to raise its ugly head.

At first I was not aware what had awakened me. The crickets and night birds were still chirping softly under the half moon over the surrounding park and meadows. Then I noticed that Lucius was in my room. This could only mean one thing. Aunt Kathryn had died. I made my way to the reception room and was crossing it to Aunt Kathryn's bedroom when a portal opened and Elaine arrived.

"Bless your heart, Tim. I had not expected it," Elaine said taking my arm.

I squeezed her hand and we went into Aunt Kathryn's room. She looked like she was still sleeping. Lucius was always with her and he knew immediately when she departed. He went directly to tell Elaine and then came to my side. I like Lucius very much, but I will have to get used to his constant presence. Before long many mortal

He's Back !

officials and friends arrived and Aunt Kathryn's body was removed for preparation for the memorial service.

05.07.948 C.R. My name is Tim. I am the 15th generation from Mother Anna by direct succession. It is the year 948 C.R., almost a thousand years of the Emperor's reign. When I was born, it was expected within the Annatic family that I would be her spiritual heir. I was born late in the 14th generation and the Immortals had not shown favor on any of the other children. Elaine herself, still vice-regent of Atlanta, is still our family's overseer. She had always favored one child in each generation since Anna. Kathryn, my aunt, has raised me as my mother Elizabeth died in childbirth. It was generally believed that I was the hope of the family. Elaine confirmed this before I was 2 years old. I was allowed free access on a first name basis to Elaine and her household from the time I could walk. I walked in the same favor that Anna had enjoyed. I am the Keeper of the Ancient Books, the Primary Interpreter of the books of Anna, the Chronicler of Imperial truth, and the Spiritual Primate of the mortals on the earth. I was recognized as the Keeper and Primary Interpreter of the ancient books and as the Spiritual Primate at the age of 20. The title of Chronicler of Imperial Truth can only be bestowed by the Immortals. They bestowed it two years later when I was 22.

09.19.948 C.R. Today I have just finished entering the dates for the beginning of office as Keeper and the date of death for each of my predecessors in the public and private journals. I feel that this is appropriate and helpful for any who may read them as it will provide a context for the services of all the Keepers during the Glorious Reign of the Emperor. I began in 948 C.R. at the age of 18. I must admit that I am curious about the end. What will happen by the year 1,000 C.R.? I will be 69 years of age then.

He's Back !

10.01.948 C.R. My investiture as the Chronicler of Imperial Truth was quite an affair. It was held at the court of the Over-Lord Janice and the Metropolitan and Elaine were there with full ceremonial escorts. Janice's own escort turned out for the event even though it was at her home Dais. There were some visitors from other principalities, but they were not the chief princes like the Metropolitan. The Immortal council assembled and overran the Dais. Thousands of mortals were assembled facing the Dais. I walked down the center aisle just behind Elaine with Lucius just over my head. Everyone mortal or Immortal was standing. When I arrived at the Dais, Janice put the cord of office for the Chronicler around my neck and proclaimed my offices. The Immortals clapped and the mortals cheered. Just as Janice was stepping back and about to bid everyone sit for my acceptance remarks, an unprecedented thing happened. A very large angel appeared at Janice's side. Janice turned and nodded respectfully.

"We are honored to have Gabriel, at our court," she said. "You have something for us?"

The immense angel nodded. His head seemed very large today. He stands at nearly 8 feet and the Over-Lord Janice is so tiny. But height is not the measure of authority. He would have followed any instruction that Janice had given him so long as it did not disrespect the Emperor. He is respected as one of the great angels created with a total freedom of the will just like a human. Another is Michael and another is imprisoned during this Reign for the crime of rebellion against the Emperor and His Father. Also, Gabriel is respected because he speaks for the Emperor.

Janice gestured at the angel. He spoke directly to me in a normal conversational volume.

"The Emperor bids you well, Tim, son of Anna. He wishes you to know that your work is very important to Him and to the Empire. Be diligent, be faithful, be true. Your efforts will not be forgotten."

He's Back !

I was overwhelmed. Why me? This had never happened to any of my predecessors. I was quiet for several seconds at the Dais. As I remained speechless, I looked to Janice. She thanked the angel who stood to one side and remained with us. She bid me bring my acceptance remarks. Fortunately, I had memorized them. I believe that I did a credible job of delivering them.. Afterward Janice praised the Glorious Name of the Emperor and everyone was dismissed to share and to visit. Gabriel then blinked out of sight. I have always wondered at this unusual event, but it has also been proven to be a source of strength and encouragement to me during difficult times.

[N.D.] Mark's blue matrimonial robe looks somewhat worn now. It is over eight hundred years old. It is frayed on the white edges and I have long since quit wearing Joan's red belt. I do not have the recognition that Joan had. I still wear the robe in my annual report to the Over-Lord. This is my day to give my fifth report. I have had the old robe carefully cleaned and mended again. I can not imagine what else I could wear for my annual report. Elaine arrived right on time and along with Lucius and her entourage we went to the Over-Lord's Dais. Janice is as delightful as ever and looks no different than I have ever seen her or as Anna described her.

She accepted my report immediately which consisted mostly with a review of my studies and publication for the past year. I am not a very original writer but I try to keep a variety of works before the public either by republishing some of my predecessors works or presenting them in summary form. I am pretty good at summaries. I also publish a devotional guide each month and make it readily available. I try to avoid reporting on the responses to my work. There are always a faithful few who will say what the work has meant to them and I gather up

He's Back !

the best of their comments and present them at the end of my report.

After I finished, Janice bid me to sit behind her. Since I have never been asked to do this before, I was glad to oblige although I would have done it anyway. The business of the court seemed pretty routine but I was attentive for several hours. There were mortal jurisdictional disputes that had been referred to local Metropolitans and a few mortal appeals for trading or transport rights which had been passed up to the Over-Lord because they crossed the boundaries of the Metropolitans under her. As usual she showed great wisdom and compassion in every detail. About mid-day there was a lull in the proceedings and someone sent for refreshments and I was included. The cakes and drink that the Immortals like to eat are similar to the ones we like and I was glad to join in. About an hour after the refreshments a single angel arrived with a communication for Janice and her court. I was not asked to leave but I did not receive the communication which apparently went directly to their minds. As the angel departed without the need of a portal I overheard one of the Immortals on the Dais comment that he knew that angel as one from the Throne Room.

The Immortal to Janice's right spoke first. "How long do you think this will take, Janice?"

"I think we should plan to accomplish it in about six months."

They all nodded.

Janice continued, "Do not begin any new processes among the mortals. Just try to get them as firmly established as possible in the necessary functions and then concentrate on spiritual issues."

They all nodded.

Then Janice turned to me. "Tim, I have something very important that I want you to concentrate all your energies on for the next half year."

He's Back !

“Yes, Ma'am.” I waited for more.

“I want you to publish a series of booklets about spiritual issues; things like personal love and loyalty to the Emperor and the need to get together and share this love and loyalty. It is fine if these writings are repetitive. We will publish them and spread them everywhere. Keep them fairly short, 5 to 6 pages in length. Use all of your titles and be very sure and firm.”

“Yes, absolutely.”

“Start as soon as you can.”

“Yes. Perhaps I should go back to the residence and get started.”

Janice kissed me on the cheek and touched my shoulder. Lucius stepped in front of me and opened a portal and I stepped through into my study at the residence. Elaine stayed with the Over-Lord. For the first time in years I felt needed and encouraged. I finished what I thought would be considered a good pamphlet before I went to bed in the early morning hours. I used a lot of material from the writings of May as she has always been a spiritual favorite and several of Merle's proclamations and, of course, some from Mother Anna herself with a brief commentary and admonition from myself at the end encouraging all mortals to renew their commitment to the Emperor for His righteous government and generous blessings. I signed it using all of my titles. Something special was going to happen on the earth and my work was to be a key ingredient. Perhaps many would answer the call and there would be a new day for my work.

[N.D.] I saw that young woman again today, Victoria, the daughter of the administrator Horace Maxwell. I had met her again at the Metropolitan's annual dinner last month. She had grown up since the previous time I had seen her. She is special, beautiful and still humble, not like most young women these days. Elaine has

He's Back !

not expressed any interest in my marrying. Over the generations she has usually had a hand in the mating of the Keeper either male or female. It passed through my mind that perhaps I should ask Elaine. Then I had an idea for another pamphlet and busied myself with that.

I presented my first set of four publications today. I walked over to the Metropolitan's Dais, – I love the walk over. Almost all of the footpath is constantly abloom with many varieties of flowers – and got Elaine's attention. She motioned me forward. I tried not to attract the attention of the Metropolitan but was unsuccessful.

“Young Tim.” He always called me “young Tim.”

“Excellency,” I responded respectfully but firmly.

“You have some publications?”

I was surprised and pleased that my work was known as important to all the Immortals.

“Yes, here. . . “ I held them out and he took them from my hands.

The Metropolitan glanced through my work.

“Excellent! Elaine, let's get these to the printers right away.” Elaine took them from his hand and gave them to one of her angel aides who promptly vanished to deliver them to the Metropolitan's mortal printing offices. The Metropolitan began conversing with someone else and I must have looked somewhat perplexed as to what to do next; so Elaine came over and took my arm and we took a stroll together. I thought ‘if only she were still mortal, what a wonderful mate she would make.’ I was suddenly afraid that she would know what I was thinking so I cleared my mind. She smiled up at me very sweetly. I waited.

“Tim. I am proud of you. Is there anything that you need to ask.”

I should have known. “Yes, Elaine, actually there is. There is a young woman, Victoria Maxwell.”

“You find her attractive?”

“Yes. Is there any reason . . .”

He's Back !

Elaine interrupted. "No, if you are attracted to her you may proceed. But, perhaps it would be best to wait until this special project is farther along." She looked up gently again.

"Good, I will delay."

She smiled in approval.

I made it a goal to produce four compelling pamphlets every two weeks. I would research and summarize every inspiring source that I could find and polish my writing to a high shine.

[N.D.] The semiautonomous civil magistrate had been dissolved due to corruption during Merle's time. About 14 years before Aunt Kathryn died a new civil assistant program had been put in place by the Metropolitans. These assistants are little more than message carriers for the local under-governors who actually do the judging in the world. I do not know why the Metropolitans have instituted such a program. Perhaps they are considering allowing a civil magistrate once again, or perhaps they are not. I yield to their wisdom.

I suppose my closest mortal friend is Aubrey McKinnon. He is the son of the civil assistant in Metropolitan Henry Sawyer's principality. Aubrey is a student of human nature and is a help to his father. This is not merely because he is his son. Aubrey is quite accomplished in his studies. My other close friends are James Warton, Matthew Anderson and Mary McDaniels. Mary is about the same age as I and also unmarried but we are only friends.

Aubrey doesn't miss anything. James is always joking. Matthew is very loyal. Mary is always fair. I am most often seen in public with them. They show a respectful deference to me in public. In private we are simply friends and equals. We can be found in various

He's Back !

eating establishments more than once a week. Matthew will always get the table using my name.

"This place for himself," Matthew will hold my chair.

We order our food and talk quietly. Occasionally someone will notice me and look in my direction. I try to be responsive and nod to them. Lately, we have begun to notice a changing attitude. One evening several young men a few tables away had obviously had too much wine. My friends and I take only unfermented drinks in public or private.

"To the Emperor." One raised his glass.

"Yes, the Emperor. What good is he?"

"Shhhh, don't be a fool."

"The Emperor, Emperor Useless."

"Not you too? Be quiet!"

"The Emperor, who needs him."

"Shame to the Emperor."

Matthew started to rise. I touched his arm.

The manager came with some large helpers and put them out.

We all sat in silence.

Not only had they said these things in a public place but they had said them in my presence, knowing my office. Things are changing. No wonder the concern at court. I wondered why no angels appeared. Why didn't the Metropolitan deal with this treason? We left early that evening.

The next morning I sent Lucius to fetch Aubrey. I thought that I could enlist his help in understanding the current attitude. I thought of going to Elaine and I am not quite sure why I did not. For one thing I thought that surely she must know what was going on and she would tell me what she could if she wanted to. Also, this was a mortal problem and I wanted an informed mortal opinion of what,

He's Back !

if anything, I could do to help. Aubrey and his father would know whatever a mortal could know.

“Wa. . .oh!” Aubrey exclaimed when he arrived at the residence. “Now that is some way to travel. I have never done that before.”

In my concern I had sent Lucius without thinking that this would be a new experience to Aubrey.

“Yes, sorry old man. I didn’t think. I need your help concerning this rebellion, you and your father.”

“I talked to Dad about it last night. He says that this kind of thing has been going on for some time now.”

“How long?”

“Several months.”

“Can I get with him?”

“Yes, send Lucius. I want to see his reaction.”

“No, he is the assistant. I will go to him.”

“That will set a precedent.”

“I know. But this is important. Will you get me an appointment with him?”

“Sure. How do I get back?”

“Lucius will take you,” I conceded.

Lucius returned with a message. The assistant was waiting to see me. I returned with him immediately to his private office.

“Sir, I am honored.” Assistant McKinnon said. He rose when I arrived and bowed his head briefly. Aubrey stood next to him looking quite serious. The assistant was tall and slim, much taller and slimmer than Aubrey. His blonde hair was graying and he had penetrating eyes. I could see a lot of him in Aubrey, especially around the eyes.

“It is my pleasure, sir,” I answered. “We need to talk. We need to be very frank with each other.” He nodded in agreement.

I learned from the assistant that he had been dealing with countless cases of disrespect and even sedition among

He's Back !

the mortal populace. It apparently had begun about seven months ago. At first there was just a subtle lack of enthusiasm for the Emperor. Then people started acting like they did not care about his benevolent rule. Then there were semi-secret meetings to discuss living apart from his sovereign rule. Assistants were approached for help in this. Some assistants were going over to this rebellion saying that the arrangement brokered by my ancestor Mark was too weak. Why should we be in bondage to the Princes of this world? Mortals had put up with this long enough. Assistant McKinnon assured me that he was totally opposed to this rebellion, that he loves the Emperor and is totally loyal. He is himself meeting with other assistants who remain loyal.

“If you have been reporting to the Metropolitan, I doubt that the disloyal assistants have done the same. Or they are presenting false reports,” I said.

“Yes, probably false reports.”

“How can they imagine that the Immortals won't know the truth?”

“I don't know. The greater question is, why has there been no response from the Princes?”

“True, that is the important question.” I resolved then and there that I would have to go to Elaine.

We talked some more and ate together. I liked the assistant almost as much as I liked Aubrey and I was convinced that they were absolutely loyal to the Emperor. As soon as I was back to my residence, I sent Lucius to ask for an appointment with Elaine. He was gone a long time, nearly four hours. By the time he returned I was anxious and had done little on my current pamphlets. Lucius took me to her.

“Dear Tim.” She hugged me. When she saw the expression on my face, she bid me sit down and she sat opposite.

He's Back !

“Elaine, it is so upsetting. Surely you know. The McKinnons are totally loyal.”

“Mark, just do what you can. Intensify your efforts to communicate the goodness of the Emperor to the people.”

“I will, but surely He has not lost control. That would be impossible. I mean, what . . .”

She raised her hand. I stopped talking. “Of course He has not. We have not. However, we want to see just how far they will go. This is important.”

“So I just continue?”

“Yes, work very hard. Lucius will give some extra help. And,” She paused. “another Immortal has been assigned to work with you and me on this. I know that this is quite unusual. I am still the Legate, but Joseph has a good deal of experience in such things.”

“Fine,” I said.

“He will come to you,” Elaine said. “He is off world right now but he will return shortly.”

“Beyond the veil?”

“No, off world.”

“I see.” At least I thought I understood. He was on another world as William had indicated they could do to Joan.

“Lucius will know when he is coming.”

“Good. What do I tell McKinnon?” I asked.

“Tell him to just keep doing the right thing and not to worry.”

“Fine. I feel much better having talked to you, Elaine.”

She took my hand with both of hers and pressed firmly. I was reassured but not happy. I had never expected such things to come to pass.

09.13.951 C.R. Lucius did not have to inform me the next morning when the Immortal Joseph arrived. I was

He's Back !

sitting near my study window when out of the corner of my eye I noticed a very large escort. No sooner had I turned to take a better look when they winked out of sight. I estimate that it was at least as large as an escort of an Over Lord, maybe larger. I hurried to my reception room as my private study is so small and cluttered. In the reception room stood a small man and an angel who is not at all like Lucius. He was at least as great as Raphael. Lucius stood beside him. I was once again thankful that they are on our side. I greeted Joseph with the utmost respect. Looking into his eyes I was aware of a gentle man who knew exactly what he was doing. He was no doubt capable of considerable sternness as well as great gentleness. He wore the same white garment that most Immortals wear. He had an unusual broad necklace which seemed to be attached like a collar to his robe. It was made of many flat yellow, blue, red and orange stones which are not transparent. There was some writing on it that resembled some hieroglyphs that I have seen in books, a definite Egyptian appearance. It hit me within the first few seconds who he was. I had researched every Joseph who was a ruler at any level during this Reign and found their pictures as well. I quickly eliminated these possibilities. The Joseph before me was not a ruler anywhere in the Reign of the Emperor on earth. This Joseph had to be the ancient son of Jacob who ruled in First Testament times under Pharaoh in ancient Egypt. His father, Jacob, was the father of the Emperor's ancestor Judah. I could not tell if his necklace referred to those ancient times or if it had something to do with his present off world position or some combination of both. I was definitely curious, but I would proceed slowly.

‘It is such a great honor to have your Excellency at my residence,’ I said. I always started with the utmost of respect and formality and waited for the Immortals to give me leave to be less formal. This had the effect that I had hoped for.

He's Back !

“Please call me Joseph, Keeper Tim. I am here to help.”

“Thank you, Joseph. I welcome your help and wisdom.” I motioned towards some chairs and sent for refreshment through my steward, a mortal who stood very cautiously just outside the doorway.

On his way to the seat Joseph looked towards his magnificent angel and pointed to the corner of the room.

“Zebuleon,” Joseph said. The angel repositioned and Lucius followed like a puppy. I was tempted to give Lucius an order but quickly decided to pass on that.

“I am sure you are fully aware of what has been happening,” I said.

“I have been briefed,” Joseph answered.

“I never dreamed that things could get so far out of line,” I said. I am concerned for the dignity of my office, but more importantly, the Emperor is being disrespected.”

“He knows this, Tim.”

I shook my head in unbelief.

“I am going to tell you something that I believe you need to know,” Joseph said.

“Mankind’s final testing is about to take place. For almost a thousand years various rebellions, some of which have been reported, have occurred. This has proven that mortals still have a rebellious tendency, at least some of them. But now the ancient rebellious cherub will be loosed again for a short season. Many mortals will follow him and prove the righteousness of the Emperor, His Father and The Presence. You will need to walk this out with wisdom and patience so we can see those who will follow you and not the evil cherub.”

I was overwhelmed. Why me?

“Your whole line has existed for this time, Tim. You are the man for your time. You will know what to do, Tim. Do not be afraid. I bring you the ‘Presence’.”

He's Back !

He touched my forehead. I felt the "Presence." It is awesome.

"And I will stay with you as long as I can." Joseph said.

Truthfully, I did not want to know right now what "as long as" really meant. I worked day and night and Lucius somehow got every pamphlet published almost immediately and distributed. There must have been angels involved in the process. The mortal organization could not have accomplished this so fast. In my new found fervor I write like I have never written before. I present my research and explain everything very clearly sometimes changing a single word or phrase eight or nine times before I am satisfied. Then I urge and implore all to listen and act accordingly. I feel that my writing has moved to a whole new level. My friends agree. I am making every effort to bring about change. Perhaps this is the sole reason for my being in this position. My feeling of calling is very high and I stay very busy. I have been thankful many times that I do not have family responsibilities to take me away from my work. But there is no way to really tell what effect my work is having.

I have asked Elaine if I can travel with Lucius and speak in many places in a continuing effort to convince my fellow mortals to increase their loyalty to our wonderful Emperor. Elaine said that she would have to ask the Over-Lord and would get back to me. The next day Elaine arrived at my residence without her escort. The portal opened in my study and I hastened to greet her. She took my hand right away and led me to sit next to her. There was a look in her eyes that I had never seen before.

"Tim, you have permission to make your trip."

"Thank you, Mistress. . . Elaine."

"Lucius will take you anywhere you wish to go and help you in any way that is needed."

He's Back !

“Good. I have been studying Mark’s world tour. I believe that I would like to follow that pattern.”

“That should work well.”

“What should I do about the arrangements? Leave them to Lucius?”

“ I will help. Give us a day or so and we will get it all set for you.”

“Yes, thank you, thank you so much, dear Elaine.”

I had never been sure if Immortals could cry, but I saw tears in Elaine’s eyes and her brow was furrowed.

“What is it?” I asked.

She took my right hand in both of hers again.

“Tim, always, always know that I love you dearly.”

“I do mistress. And I love you.”

One more squeeze of my hand and she stood to leave. Lucius opened a portal for her and went with her. It seemed that my world was falling apart.

I soon learned that every Governor, Metropolitan, Over-Lord, and Viceroy along the extent of my trip had issued a general call for an assembly upon my arrival. There were enormous crowds. If I had not been aware of the extent of the problem, I would have shrunk from the task.

I wore Mark’s robe and I even got a new red belt to wear with it as it symbolized my position as the mortal Spiritual Primate of the Empire. I used every honest device to make my case. I referred to the history of the Emperor from the time that he came as a man through the Glorious Return up to the present day. I reminded everyone that we have all lived in peace and prosperity under his righteous Reign. I spent hours talking of the wonderful lives we are all privileged to live. Violence and wrong doing are almost non-existent. There is always enough food and good accommodations for everyone since the Glorious Return. I told them how things had been before the present Reign and stressed that we should be thankful for every benefit. I

He's Back !

reminded all that the Immortals healed our injuries and the few diseases that occurred among us. I expressed my own loyalty to the Emperor and briefly recited the history of my family from Anna to myself. Everywhere there was much applause and cheering. I began to wonder if there really was a problem.

I learned little from the Immortals that I encountered along the way. One of the few things that I found out was that the Emperor was seldom seen outside of Jerusalem in recent times. And even in Jerusalem he was more often on the Immortal side of the portal around the Throne than the mortal side. Was He withdrawing? Why? I soldiered on.

After about two months we returned home and I slept for three days. Since Lucius did not require sleep, he would just hang around. I remember during the few times that I was awake seeing him standing there. After I recovered, I wanted to see Aubrey and Assistant McKinnon. I sent Lucius for them. Next I intended to see Elaine.

Assistant McKinnon said that according to reports that he had heard my trip had had a generally positive effect. However, the number of cases of disloyalty to the Emperor had not declined greatly. Aubrey said that he did not understand this behavior. As a behaviorist it did not make sense for people to rebel when everything is so good. They both shook their heads. I had Lucius return them to their home. Aubrey was excited about that again. I was very sleepy so I retired early.

That night I had the most wonderful dream. In this dream I could see myself lying in my bed at the residence, my mouth wide open and snoring as I usually do. Sometimes, I even wake myself. At the same time I was standing in one of the side chambers of the Temple in Jerusalem. These chambers seemed to be used for meetings, sometimes meetings between mortals and

He's Back !

Immortals or between mortals and angels. A magnificent angel appeared before me. He was very tall with the same large head that Gabriel has. He also had those same piercing eyes. I presumed him to be a member of the Powers Choir and I addressed him with respect but not fear. I do not fear the Emperor's angels.

"An Angelic Power." I said certainly.

"No, Keeper, I am a Vicar. My name is Aker. You must come and confer with me."

"Confer?"

"Yes, we must talk."

"Good, fine. In the morning I will come to you."

"I await," he answered.

Then the dream was over. I slept through the rest of the night but when I awakened, I remembered the dream clearly.

I sent Lucius immediately to ask Elaine if I could talk to her as soon as possible. She came to me. I told her about my dream and she smiled.

"Is it alright to go?" I asked. "Does this constitute a summons to the capital?"

"Yes, I believe that it does," she said.

"Will you go?" I asked.

"That is not necessary. Lucius will take you. Tell him when you are ready and brief me when you return." She smiled and touched my shoulder and was gone.

Lucius and I found ourselves in that same side chamber in the Temple in Jerusalem. I had never actually been inside the Temple although there were likenesses of it around the residence at home as well as ones of the Palace and other parts of the Imperial city undoubtedly put there by May generations ago. Lucius remained with me and visible. In a few minutes Aker arrived. He was more impressive in person than in the dream. My heart did skip a beat. Lucius bowed deeply.

He's Back !

“We were obliged to meet here,” he said, “because no one from my rank has appeared in this world before. Your residence is not secure.”

What did he mean by that?

He continued. “The Temple is always a safe place. It is the blessed duty of my Rank to increase loyalty among mortals. We are seldom visible. We attempt to inspire and promote loyalty in every way possible.”

I nodded.

“Your time as Keeper will be the most difficult that any Keeper has ever had.”

I gulped.

“All mortals who have loyalty are going to need much encouragement. Those who desire loyalty will need help to grow into it. All those without it will be marked for judgment. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” I answered. “How do we proceed?”

“My Lord, the great Raphael, has instructed me according to the directions given him by the Worshipper Seth.”

I suddenly realized that we had just jumped another two Ranks neither of which had ever been seen on earth. I also knew from my studies in the writings of May and Merle that the Seraphs and Cherubs never left the presence of the Emperor's Father. The Worshippers were the connection between things which were totally heavenly and the things that have earthly or mortal consequences. My heart had jumped at the thought of a Prince. Now a Worshipper was in the picture.

Aker continued, “We are instructed to do all that we can to encourage all mortals to grow in loyalty at this crucial time.”

“I have sensed that it is crucial,” I interrupted, “can you tell me more?”

“Only that time is growing short, very short. Enormous changes are in store not only for the mortals but

He's Back !

for the earth and the heavens as well. Even we are not told everything. Check your ancient writings.”

I nodded.

“Your traveling has just begun. You are to travel again to as many cities and territories as you can. This angel will transport you as usual. You are to study the ancient writings, especially those of your predecessor, the Keeper May. This time you are to speak to the mortals about increasing in virtue as well as in loyalty to the Emperor. Of course, the Emperor is the supreme example of virtue, but you must illustrate from the lives of others as well so that your hearers will be more able to identify with your examples. Tell them that this may be their last chance to change. Tell them to make haste to change and to pray to the Emperor for help. Do you understand, Keeper Tim?”

“Yes, I understand.” I could not explain why, but it all made perfect sense to me.

“I will work with you from beyond the veil,” Aker continued. Do not be timid to push your agenda. I will remove obstacles and prepare the way for you. Be strong, Tim. Be courageous.” He paused. “Now,” he continued, “look around the Temple with me. Draw strength from it.”

We walked together. The Temple is very special. There is a presence of the Emperor about it even when he is not there. Mortals are usually not allowed beyond the outer court so I was especially curious about being inside. A powerful yet gentle glow emanated from the back. Aker reminded me that that very light had once been used to lead the followers of the Emperor. But the “Presence,” yes, “the Presence” was what was so overpowering. Yes, that was it.

“Aker,” I asked anxiously.

“Yes.”

He was a very grand and tall angel, but his voice had much kindness and patience in it. He was a Vicar after all.

He's Back !

“The ‘Presence’”. Keeper Joan was once allowed the ‘Presence’ for several years. Is my mission now important enough for me to have the ‘Presence’ as well?”

He stopped. “Yes, Tim. It is. But you had to ask on your own initiative. The ‘Presence’ will be with you in this and you will be guided by him. He is the Brother of the Emperor.”

All of Joan’s report came flooding back into my mind.

“Come, walk with me towards the light,” he said.

As we approached the wondrous light at the back of the Temple, it reflected more and more off of the golden walls and furniture. It became heavier and heavier, wonderful but heavy. I was determined to get as close as possible but I soon realized that I could not stand up under it for very long. Finally, I dropped to my knees and crawled for a short distance, then I completely collapsed under its glorious weight. I lay there for an undetermined amount of time. I saw Aker walk ahead deep into the glow and then he was gone. After what could have been hours or days I came to myself. I retraced my route crawling until I could stand and then I slowly backed away from the glow. I felt the “Presence” with me. I had never imagined how wonderful it could be.

Lucius took me directly home and I slept for days. Then one morning I awoke quite refreshed and sent Lucius to inquire of Elaine. She bid me come to her this time. We arrived in her receiving hall.

“Tim, welcome back. You got your commission?”

By that I presumed that she knew what Aker had wanted.

“Yes, it looks like I’m on the road again.”

“Only this time, little brother, I will be with you.”

“We will travel together?”

“Yes. You will be the speaker. But I will be with you to assure that everything goes as well as possible. This

He's Back !

is no lack of confidence in you, Tim. It is the condition of the world and the mission itself. As a matter of fact, we will travel with my full escort.”

“Wow. I guess that is about the highest priority mission that any Keeper has ever been given. It is a heavy load, Elaine.”

“Yes, but you are up to it and I am behind you all the way. Tim, I have been the Imperial Legate responsible for the Keepers from Anna until you. I have loved each one of them as I love you. Their work has been my work. Your work is my work. Go back to your residence and instruct your staff that you will be gone almost constantly from now. Take a day or so. See your friends. Have Lucius bring you here when you are ready to go.”

“Yes, Elaine. I will not be long. Lucius, to the residence.”

01.16.954 C.R. We visited every Dais in the world over the next two years. From each Dais we roamed the countryside speaking at gatherings. Every arrival at a Dais was a great event. Elaine's escort combined with that of each ruler giving almost the appearance of a Viceroy's canopy. Every gathering away from a Dais was attended with Elaine's escort which is sizable in her capacity as Imperial Legate. Elaine introduced me every time and encouraged everyone to listen intently. Attendance was high and people seemed to respond. I urged the seeking of all the virtues and loyalty to the Emperor. I told them “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; think on these things and do only these. This is a day of testing. Your very lives and futures hang in the balance.” I felt the “Presence” in all that I said and did. That part was wonderful.

He's Back !

11.19.954 C.R. Then I received instructions from Elaine that if they had not come from her I would have not been able to believe them.

“Tell them, Tim, that the Emperor has promised openly that all those who seek virtue and are loyal to him will be eligible for the afterlife. This is something that has not been promised to mortals since the glorious return and the beginning of the reign.”

I did as she told me, but I had one burning question on my mind. When we were back at the ruler's residence that evening, I asked her.

“Elaine.”

“Yes, Tim.”

“What if we do all of this and things keep getting worse. I will have failed. You people know a lot. The Emperor knows everything. Sometimes I am a little confused.”

“First of all, Tim,” she touched my arm. “You are not responsible for the success or failure of this mission. Neither am I. Ours is only to obey. If we are faithful, that is all that we can do. And yes, the Emperor does know everything. Mortal humanity itself is being tested in your generation. Left to their own, with the evil Cherub and his minions out of the way, mortals will show their true motives. That is the Emperor's purpose in this. It is important to Him and to His Father and to the ‘Presence’. After it is all over, and it will be over, Tim, believe me, everything will change and I believe that you will see it all.”

That was good enough for me.

10.09.983 C.R. I awoke this morning to something most disturbing. Lucius is gone. At first I presumed that this was temporary. I have become so used to him and he has always conducted my affairs as Keeper. Generally if he is away for a short time, it is on an errand

He's Back !

for me. I have never awakened to find him gone. After an hour I started to be genuinely concerned. After two hours I knew that it was serious.

[N.D.] I made my way to the Dais just as I had every morning for years. I knew that I was privileged to be a member of the court but I always felt at home nearest the Dais. When I arrived, there were about a dozen mortals there. There were no Immortals. Some of my fellow mortals seemed concerned. Such children, I thought. The Immortals are always in charge. They are all simply busy or "away" right now. Some more mortals arrived. An then some more. Hours passed. Soon it was evening. I joined the others in real concern. How could they all be away for so long? They did not require sleep. No angels were evident either. All of us began to feel a little lost. We had never known a time when the Immortals were all absent. This could not be their annual banquet because there was not even one Immortal at the Dais and it was not spring time. It was late in the summer. There were no angels anywhere. People started to come to the Dais to ask for help on one matter or another. We court mortals tried to assure them that the Immortals would be back soon and that all would be well. But still they did not come.

[N.D.] Weeks went by. The court mortals kept the Dais area clean and tidy. They checked with mortals in other jurisdictions. There did not seem to be any Immortals left on the continent. They wanted to check with mortals near Jerusalem but they did not have the means to do so. The Immortals and the angels had always handled distance communication. Many communities started sending pilgrims to Jerusalem to find out what was going on. Was the Emperor still on the throne? Aubrey believed that this was a test to see if people would follow the good things taught to mortals over the now almost 1,000 years of the

He's Back !

Reign. People from different regions started not trusting each other and borders were guarded by mortals organizing themselves into guard groups. What was the world coming to?

[N.D.] Then one morning in the distance angels could be seen approaching our Dais. Later we learned that they had appeared on every Dais in the world at the same time. These angels were mighty and impressive but they were different than the ones that had always served the Immortals. The angels had always had a lingering aroma about them, something like that of the Immortals when they returned to sight. Elaine had always said it was like the smell of jasmine only better, stronger and sweeter. These angels did not smell like that. They smelled like sulfur fumes.

[N.D.] I remember my ancestress, Anna, writing in her personal dairy about seeing the Emperor. When this being appeared with so many angels, I wanted to see him. None of us had seen angels for so long and we were hungry to see someone who was not mortal like ourselves. We had all been confused for quite a long time.

Was this the emperor? An angel? Or at least a form of one? I did not want to see his eyes. From my place behind the chair I pulled back. Was this the light that Grandmother Anna had seen. She said that the light around the Emperor was bright and shinny but it did not hurt her eyes. She said that there was a sweet, sweet smell. This light was red, it was harsh and the air smelled of coals and sulfur. Who was this come back to us now? He did not stay long. He appointed one of his assistants to sit in the seat of the Metropolitan and left.

He's Back !

[N.D.] These new princes do not punish wicked acts, they seem to actually encouraged them. Also, there seems to be little agreement among the territorial princes. They seem to vie for power between themselves. Our new prince, one Gaol as he is named, sits proudly in the Metropolitan's seat and occasionally growls orders to those around him. There are five assistants seated on the Dais with him. The seat always reserved for the Emperor has been removed. All the angels have been replaced. Occasionally one of these angels appears with some poor mortal that has been caught in a wrong doing of some kind. The punishment seems to be meted out more on the basis of having been caught in the deed rather than in the fact that the deed was wrong. These princes have the power to execute as the old ones did, but they enjoy it more. They also enjoy tormenting the accused before they carry out the sentence. Sometimes a plaintiff is given charge of an area instead of being disciplined. Other princes visit from time to time and they use this time to brag about how they are expanding their territories. The ones that lose authority seem to move down in the ranks where they attempt to move up again by getting an advantage over a fellow prince and gaining the attention of their emperor. Mortal leaders under the influence of these dark leaders are raising armies and warring against each other. Everywhere there is misery and anarchy.

[N.D.] Along with these cruel angels have come the shadow people. They seem to have some relationship to the angels, but I do not understand how or why. The shadow people are not angels; they move across the earth as we do. They have a faint form. They form a distortion against a background that shimmers and presents an outline to the eye. They are almost transparent. At night they can be almost impossible to see. During the day it is easier, but they do not prefer to come out then. We do not know where

He's Back !

they stay. They do like to hang around the Dais and be in contact with the cruel angels. They are of various sizes. Lately they have been seen around places where humans congregate to engage in unsavory activities, orgies and such. The angels do not seem to gather here. They are more into raw power. Some mortals who have come to us for help have been in places where these shadow people are commonly seen. They will cover the body of a mortal who is engaged in immortal activity with their own form; they seem to get a lot of enjoyment out of it. They are seen often at fights or battles. They examine every wound and seem gleeful when someone cries out in pain.

[N.D.] I have examined some of the more uncommon ancient texts from the First Testament era and I believe I may have come up with a possible answer about the shadow people. It seems that some ancients believed that what we see as the shadow people were the offspring of the cruel angels. They believe that in very ancient times the cruel angels mated with evil mortal females who brought forth children who were giants in their day. Then there was a great flood of water that covered the entire earth and only eight people chosen by God escaped in a great ship with many pairs of animals. All the other mortals died and their souls went to the waiting place to await the appearance of the Emperor on the earth. The Emperor visited the waiting place and led the righteous out. The souls of the giants, however, did not go to the waiting place. Instead, the Prince Michael condemned these souls, our shadow people, to roam the earth until the end of all things. I believe that this must be the true account about these creatures. The only way that we have found to repel the shadow creatures when they come near us or our homes is to call on the name of the Emperor, our Emperor. They can not bear to hear the name of the Emperor in the

He's Back !

familiar. So they run away and do not return for a long time.

[N.D.] I do not know why I have not been signaled out. After all, I am the heir of Anna. Maybe it is because I am seen as powerless and of no importance or influence these days with so little interest in the ancient texts.

Some of us mortals have started meeting in secret. We know that the punishment will most probably be death if we are caught but we care little about this. This new regime is corrupt and selfish. And they do not seem to be aware of everything that is happening like the good princes were. We get together and long for the return to better days. We share memories about the benevolent reign. There is even a renewed interest in the ancient texts and I am being asked to interpret in various groups. One young girl last week actually called me "your Excellency." We study the writings of Anna and the entire line down to myself.

Last evening we had a new visitor at the secret meeting. One of our most trusted members brought him. He is a man named Paul who has recently arrived from the western wars. He is the cousin of Kirk Feldon who has been meeting with us from the beginning. Because of this we were inclined to accept him at once. We have gotten overly cautious recently because some of our group has been detained by the local assistant. This judge is loyal to the local dark angel prince and is not friendly to our interests. Paul tells us that the new dark angel prince Metropolitan of Dallas is a great rival of the new dark angel Metropolitan of Houston. They have each promoted mortal generals to raise an army for battle. The generals hate each other and each rival prince. The army is gathered to satisfy the lust of the dark angel princes to see mortals kill each other in battle. It is a terrible sight. Men are challenged to fight bravely and may die in hand to hand combat. The dark angel princes on both side watch from the air and rally their

He's Back !

generals to battle. The main problem is that nothing is offered the mortals for their bravery and effort. Many die to no promise of an afterlife and the battles never seem to end. The dark angel princes are never satisfied.

01.12.999 C.R. In an effort to keep ahead of my disciples, I have been studying the ancient texts again and I discovered a possible answer to our situation. In the Second Testament of the Emperor which Anna preserved and commented on, an evil prince is mentioned. There is a reference that could be interpreted to fit our predicament. It seems that this prince is very old and evil. After the return of the Emperor he was bound away from mortals and from his power over territories on the earth that he should "deceive the nations no more." But after a thousand years of benevolent reign he is spoken about as being "loosed for a little season." Could this be it? If so, this evil reign can only last so long. Then what will come? I must study and meditate more to be as sure as I can. Others are counting on me to interpret correctly and to give them help and comfort. Oh, mother Anna, Joan, Aunt Kathryn, I wish you could help me be sure now. What I wouldn't give for just a few minutes right now with Elaine or even Lucius.

12.29.999 C.R. About four in the morning I was awakened by a bright light coming through my window so I went outside. To the East I saw a glow and first thought that the sun was rising early. As we watched it began to grow, it was coming towards us. I looked up to see an enormous ball of fire rolling across the land towards us. It was almost as wide as the Eastern horizon and almost as high as the clouds. I knew that none of us could survive this. As it rolled closer and closer, I fell to my knees thanking the Emperor that along with us this evil government would be destroyed. Instinctively I put my hands up to shield myself from this inferno. I could feel the

He's Back !

heat on my face and hands as it approached. Then I felt the touch of a gentle hand on my back. I hoped that it was Elaine and it was. She smiled at me.

“Be at peace, Tim,” she said, “this fire can not hurt you.”

I wanted to believe that and I suddenly felt a strange tingle all over my body. I looked down at my hands. They looked the same. By then the fireball was upon us. We were totally immersed in it. Elaine was on my right and Lucius appeared on my left. I was so glad to see them I almost forgot to be afraid. The flames did not burn us although it consumed every natural thing around us even the rocks.

“This fire will consume the old earth and all the evil,” Elaine said. This is the beginning of the new earth and the new heavens.”

He's Back !

He's Back !