

The Pardon

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He Is and Reign II: A Story Of The Seventh Millennium

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Introduction

03.11.997 C.R. My name is Timothy. I hold the titles 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. These titles have come into my family since my ancestress Anna was chosen as the first Keeper of the Ancient Books almost one thousand years ago. Therefore, I am the Keeper Tim, probably the last of the line. I am the 15th generation from Mother Anna by direct succession. It is the year 997 C.R. C.R. stands for Christus Regnus otherwise known as The Glorious Reign. This Reign began at the return of the King from the heavenly realm. He was worshipped by millions as the unseen King for over two thousand years

The old book says, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,” and “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” and “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” From this we understand that our Immortals can and do indeed rule the earth under the Glorious leadership of His Imperial Majesty in Jerusalem. He is the first born from the dead of the ancient mortals.

When the Emperor returned after his long absence in the other realm, he immediately subdued the entire earth by his glorious power. He established his capital at the ancient city of Jerusalem and appointed rulers over the earth. The earth was divided into two halves, the eastern and the western. Over each of these was appointed a Viceroy who reported directly to the Emperor Himself. The Viceroy of the Eastern half of the world is John the

Beloved who rules from the Isle of Patmos where he was martyred in the 1st century of the Emperor's absence. The island was not big enough for the Viceroy's palace, so it has been entirely enlarged and rebuilt to hold his palace and his court. Both mortal and Immortal resources were used to accomplish this. Many mortal construction firms were employed and the finishing touches were put on by the Viceroy's angelic legions. The Western half of the world is under the rule of Viceroy Luis Cepata. He rules from his palace in Montevideo where he was martyred in the 21st century of the Emperor's absence. Cepata is not as well known or remembered by the Immortals, but the Emperor's judgment in making him Viceroy has never been questioned by them. It has been questioned by some of us mortals, but mortals question a lot of things. We have no real authority so it doesn't make much difference. The Viceroys, like all other Immortals were resurrected at the Emperor's Glorious Return. Under the Viceroys are Territorial Governors or Over-Lords who are over large portions of the world. Under these Over-Lords are Metropolitans who rule over large cities and their surrounding areas. Under the Metropolitans are various local governors. These rulers are all Immortals who won their places by faithful service and often martyrdom for the Emperor during their mortal lives when the Emperor was not seen in this world.

Each Immortal, regardless of rank, rules from a Dais, a raised platform or out-door terrace which is always large enough to hold the entire local court. There is always an empty chair just to the ruler's left reserved for the Emperor who visits every Dais regularly. He arrives with a full angelic escort and everyone, Immortal and mortal alike, falls on their faces. The Emperor always bids the Immortals

to rise immediately. One of the lesser Immortal Princes signals the mortals attached to the court when they may rise. The magnificence of each Dais depends on the greatness of the ruler, whether he or she be a Viceroy, An Over-Lord, A Metropolitan or a lesser Prince. The size and glory of the angelic canopy over the Dais also depends on the rank of the Prince. There are some Princes in Jerusalem with the Emperor, the primary ones being Peter, the Master of the Feast, and David, the Lord Chancellor of the Empire.

The angels of the Emperor are numerous and many are now visible in the world. They have their own hierarchy and they serve the Emperor and his Governors throughout the earth. The Immortals are often not found in this world but are with the Emperor on “the other side” or “beyond the veil” where mortals are not able to go. They fellowship and feast with Him there and come and go as they please. The Immortals and angels travel by means known only to them and appear and disappear throughout the earth at will. They are able to take a mortal with them to any place in this world, on this side of the “great veil.” Our special Immortal is the Governor Elaine, a sub-governor of the Metropolitan Henry Sawyer of Atlanta. Elaine is also the Imperial Legate in charge of the house of Anna. Anna and her descendants have been designated the Keepers of the Sacred records of the Empire. The Keeper is the only mortal with an angel assistant, his name is Lucius, and he serves each generation of Keepers. All mortals including the Keepers are born and live and die just as the Immortals did during their mortality when the Emperor was not seen on the earth.

The Story

04.14.214 C.R. My name is Carl. I am now the Keeper. Mark was my father, Anna my grandmother. I take up my pen to tell you something of my time in this unique family office that began with Anna. The first memory that I wish to relate happened when I was about 7 years old.

I was always excited when I got to see my father. This was very seldom as he was almost always busy with his many duties. I would frequent my father's study often in the hopes of finding him there, but I was usually disappointed. When I did find him, there was always time for a hug. He would stop his work and hold out his arms to me. I would run into them and we would make many hugging noises. Then he would put me back down and turn back to his work. Usually, my mother Martha would discover me by that time and come to fetch me away.

"Come now, Carl, leave your father to his duties," she would say. "He has a lot of important work to do." At that I would leave the room.

On one occasion my mother was busy elsewhere for some reason. Father's angel, Lucius, was usually in the same room with father, but today father had a visitor and most mortals are somewhat afraid of angels in the Empire as they often carry out the discipline of the Immortals and the Emperor. I knew that when Lucius was standing in the hall with his back to the wall, that he had been expelled from the study because father was meeting with another mortal who would have been inhibited by Lucius' presence. I got up from my nap and passed Lucius as I headed for the study. I peeked in very slowly and father saw me. He asked his guest to wait and came out.

“Now Carl, I have to finish speaking with this man and your mother is on an errand so Lucius is going to watch you for a while.”

I nodded thinking, ‘now this will be fun.’ Lucius had never been my baby sitter before, but I knew that he would do whatever father told him to do and that he would not hurt me. I knew that father was the only mortal to have a helping angel. Many had angels watching them, but no one else had one serving them.

On father’s order the angel floated down beside me and with outstretched palms shepherded me to the back garden. Then he gently patted a section of grass and seemed to smile at me, at least I sensed a smile. I quickly sat down where he had indicated. He then began to audibly count to ten in my language. Then ten fingers seemed to form on his hands as he held up a finger for each number. I repeated these numbers a couple of times. Then he showed me a picture of some foreign looking people and said,

“Germany.”

Then he began to count again, “Ein, Zwei, Drei, . . .” As he counted, one of the figures in the picture would jump to the count. I watched the people in the picture which seemed to stay just before my eyes and counted in that language. After I did this three times in a row correctly, Lucius would swoop around behind me and grasping me by the waist would take me on a low altitude flight around the garden. I squealed in delight. What a wonderful reward! Then Lucius would show me another group of strange people and we would start all over again.

“Africa.”

“Moja, mbili, tatu, . . .”

Then, “Spain.”

“Uno, duo, tres, . . .”

Each time I got all ten right for three times in a row, I would get my free ride around the garden. Each time was better than the last. I learned to count in many languages that day. I thought it was wonderful that the family of Anna should have their own personal angel. I had hoped that this would happen often, but it never happened again. Once, when I discovered Lucius in the hallway, I walked up and boldly said,

“Spain.”

He motioned with his hand to stop and I gave it up quickly. Father had to instruct him. Later when he began serving me, we did not play games at all. He was always obedient and helpful but in adulthood I actually find him to be quit boring. He is, after all, rather dull, efficient but dull. Come to think of it every angel that I have ever seen is rather efficient but dull. No sense of humor, even though they know how to care for children. Lucius was the governor Elaine’s invisible guardian when she was a mortal.

[No Date] Although my mother did not command Lucius, we were both protected by him on many occasions. Once we were in a town in the mountains of Spain and my father had gone aside to meet with some officials there. I must have been about 11 by then. I thought of myself as quite a young man and was very protective of mother. The people of the village were having a street festival. There were many colorful costumes and a lot of dancing in the streets. Normally, we are not concerned about safety in our surroundings because of the Great Peace of the Glorious Reign which provides safety for everyone. In this situation mother and I were very relaxed. Father was at the ‘proceedings’ and we presumed that Lucius was with him.

As all of the colorful costumes passed before us in the parade, I pressed further and further out into the street. Mother kept a firm grip on the back of my coat and I strained against the pull. Suddenly a man dressed as a clown snatched me from my mother's grasp and ran very quickly through the crowd heading for the opening of a side street just ahead. Lucius appeared suddenly directly in front of the man hovering about 6 feet in the air. He had made himself very large and very bright. The man caught his breath and screamed. I was actually frightened by the scream. The man dropped me right away and soon my breathless mother arrived and I was back in her arms. Three other angels arrived almost immediately behind Lucius, also appearing very large. The entire celebration halted for several blocks until a local Immortal arrived to judge the situation. As I talked to mother and father several times thereafter, this is how I remember the details.

It seems that there was a secret dark cult operating in the area which had been there for years, even generations. When they found out through a mortal government informer that we were there, they quickly put together a plan to kidnap the son of the son of Anna. This was the first time I really understood how important our family is. As usual these types of wrong doers underestimated the power of the angelic patrol and perhaps even of the Emperor Himself. These cultists were under the observation of the local patrol who instantly signaled Lucius to come. He took the forefront in the confrontation and soon the local Immortal Judge arrived and my father was with her. Father came and put his arms around mother and me.

The Immortal, the local governor named Juanita Rodriguez, immediately took authority. Her angels moved

to the front and Lucius fell back to be with us. Several of my abductor's partners were brought forward. Governor Juanita asked them a few questions which they did not answer well. Then she passed sentence against them and they died on the spot. Their crime, as are all crimes, was a crime against the Emperor. The Imperial Code is very clear. These rebels were descendents of an ancient hate group who have existed since before the return of the Emperor. Almost strangely, the entire parade and celebration continued as soon as the bodies of these offenders were removed. It is clear that the mortals of the earth accept and appreciate the Imperial rule. It gives us all peace and safety.

[N.D.] As I grew older, I developed an interest in studying the Imperial Code and the various mortal laws and regulations that had developed from it.

I present the articles of the Imperial Code here. It is very simple.

The Imperial Code

1. All crimes are against the Emperor Himself personally.
2. All peoples will live in peace and harmony throughout the earth.
3. All of creation is to be respected.
4. Any disrespect for the Emperor, any Immortal governor or the Imperial government is a crime.
5. Lying to an Immortal is a crime.

6. All crimes will be judged by the Emperor or one of his Immortal governors.
7. All mortals are to honor authority, Immortal and mortal, civil and familiar.
8. Punishment for all crimes shall be either death or continual supervision by an angel at the judges' discretion.
9. Any physical harm by one mortal to another is a crime.
10. Illicit sexual actions towards any mortal or animal, or any other perverted action is a crime.
11. The taking of another's goods is a crime.
12. The Imperial Code takes precedence and guidance over all mortal laws or ordinances.

05.20.217 C.R. My research and my journaling have been halted by the death of my dear wife, Toni. I will write more later as I am able.

06.18.217 C.R. I am doing a little better today. It has been almost a month. I still dread waking in the morning. I wish I could sleep forever.

08.01.217 C.R. I write because Elaine has urged me to get back to work. First, I feel that I must give an account of Toni's passing. Of course, it was a great shock to me as it was totally unexpected. We had been married for five years of which I have been Keeper for three. One morning almost three months ago now I left Toni in the

library at the residence to visit some mortal friends in a nearby town. I had been in school with them and we have continued our friendships as time has allowed. After a few hours Lucius placed himself directly in front of me, so I immediately gave him my attention. My first thought was that there was something of importance happening at a Dais somewhere and that I would have to go.

“Keeper, you must return home at once,” he said. He took me there right away. We arrived in the library. Toni was lying on a daybed there that we use for short rests. I thought she was asleep or perhaps ill. Elaine arrived with me. It almost seemed that we collided in transit; at the end of the transit there seemed to be a jolt and we both arrived in the library simultaneously. I resolved mentally to follow up on this but when I saw Toni this thought left my mind.

“I am so sorry, Carl,” Elaine said immediately. She took my arm. Of course, at first I could not believe it. I spoke to Toni and then shook her. When the reality of it hit me, I started to cry. Elaine put her arm around me.

“Elaine,” I said. “Do something, please!” I cried out.

“I can not,” she answered. “There is a block against it. I am so sorry, my dear Carl.”

“The Emperor wills it?” I asked in unbelief.

“For some reason. It can not be appealed,” she said softly.

She took me to the parlor and told me to lie down. She stroked my forehead and I slept for a long time. I know that this sleep was of her doing. It was not a natural sleep, but it was long and relatively peaceful.

[N.D.] The funeral was small and quiet. Toni was buried in our private plot near the residence. I started crying again and cried for days. It has gone from pain to numbness. Now I believe that the numbness is starting to fade. Elaine has given me that wonderful gift of sleep several times. It has helped a lot. I have not asked for an audience with the Emperor over this; I don't think I want to know the reasons.

07.12.218 C.R. As a part of my continuing grief therapy I have started an informal study based on the vast resources of my father's office. I am still fascinated with the Imperial Code and other laws, both Immortal and mortal which are based on it. After about 4 months of my studying Elaine appeared at the residence and I put down the book I was reading on the top of a great pile of books to greet her. She hugged me.

“Reading?” she asked.

“Yes, law actually. I find it very interesting.”

She sat down.

“Carl, dear, ...” she began. I knew that this was moderately serious.

“Yes, Ma'am.” I responded with a smile.

She made a fake pass at my nose. She had always been playful with me. Father said that she had never been this way with him. I enjoyed it but I also understood that since I am a mortal, it can never amount to anything romantic. It is just that she is always so young and beautiful. Then again, the Immortals do not involve themselves with romance. They say that they have something better.

“You'll not distract me with that 'Ma'am' talk,” she said smiling.

I put on a more serious look.

“Carl, the point that I want to make is this: your duties are far more, shall we say ‘lofty,’ than the law.”

I looked her squarely in the eye.

“Your duties are inspirational. You need to inspire love and admiration for the Emperor. Your knowledge of things both before and after His return will enable you to do this. Anna’s descendents have a great honor in doing this. The Imperial law will be enforced by Immortals and angels and the mortal code is barely a shadow of the Imperial law. To be totally frank with you, Carl, the mortal law is only allowed because it inspires some additional loyalty to the Imperial Code. Do you understand?”

I sat quiet for a minute. “Yes, Elaine, I understand.”

“Good,” she patted my hand. “Then don’t spend too much time in the law, all right?”

“Yes, Elaine. Of course.” She rose to leave. We hugged and she was gone.

01.11.219 C.R. I am reviewing that incident in Spain when I was a child that I wrote about earlier. As I have grown older, I have developed a fuller understanding of such matters and what lies behind them. In the end it always comes down to the time before the Great Reign. The mortals lived back then under other governments and certain regional traits developed along with certain beliefs and habits and patterns of living. The people of one area would often think that they were better than those of another area and they often felt that they had been wronged by another area and sought to get revenge. Invisible dark princes held sway over the hearts and minds of mortals and mortal groups. When the Emperor returned, these dark princes were imprisoned somewhere away from our world

so that they no longer hold this influence to cause hatred and harm and death among mortals. However, these hatreds were often pushed deep into the group consciousness of various peoples and they can still express themselves even today during the Reign. In this particular case where I was briefly abducted, a certain border people in the mountains had always held certain hateful views. The Emperor has ordered everyone to live in peace. But they could not obey this order. People are allowed to continue their cultural customs and traditions so long as they did not conflict with Imperial law. Those who disobey are punished.

Some groups, like this one, actually believe that they can somehow gain some leverage with the Emperor which will cause Him to allow them to be self governing. They say that they have 'an historical right.' That is why they seized me as a boy. They thought that by threatening my life they could gain a concession from the Emperor. They were wrong. Imperial rule is absolute; it is benign and giving, but it is absolute and total. People must learn to accept this. These people had been observed from the beginning. They were only allowed to proceed as far as they did to make a point. That point being that all is seen by the angelic patrols and by the Presence, and that all crimes are immediately judged and punished. When their rebellion became ripe, their treason was ripe. They were executed but not for my kidnapping. They were executed for treason against the Emperor. As the first Imperial law says, all crimes are against the Emperor personally. Even before the Reign this was true, but then the Emperor waited to pass judgment. Mortal law did its best to keep order during that time. But at His Return all crimes against the Emperor were judged.

I once asked Elaine why the dark princes persevered in causing hatred and hurt among mortals before the return. Surely they knew that they could not get away with it in the end.

“They knew, “ she said. “They always knew that their days were numbered. But you see, Carl, the dark princes actually feed on human pain and misery. They do it to feed their own twisted appetite. All they hoped to do was to delay the inevitable end.”

I understood.

“During this Reign,” Elaine continued. “you have the Immortals and the angels to watch and the Immortals to judge. This is their reward for being faithful to the Emperor when he could not be seen. Governor Juanita Rodriguez was exercising her right to act for the Emperor which she earned during her mortal lifetime.”

I wondered what was to become of mortals of my day. That was not talked about much and I was hesitant to ask even Elaine about this. I guess all that we can do is serve faithfully and trust the Emperor to do the right thing. Perhaps one of my descendents can further explore the heart of the Emperor in this regard.

04.19.228 C.R. I remember reading in my grandmother’s crude journals about her impression of the Emperor. She was absolutely caught up in her enthusiasm for Him. From that first time on the lawn at the Dais of Metropolitan Henry Sawyer when she was so surprised and terrified at the appearance of the Emperor until her death, she thought about the Emperor daily. Grandfather did not seem to be quite as involved, but we have no journals from him to read. My father Mark had a healthy respect and awe for the Emperor but nothing like that which his mother had.

Anna would go on and on in her private journal about being “lost in the Emperor’s eyes” and about the peace and sweet smell that accompanied his person. She also talked a lot about his invisible Presence. I am now thirty five years old and I have never met the Emperor. I think that it is high time that I did.

01.18.229 C.R Today I called on Elaine at her residence without an appointment. There is no rule against this; it is just that you run the risk of her not being there since she is gone so much of the time. Lucius deposited me in her reception room. No one was there except her receiving angel, they rotate so I did not know the name of this one.

“I am called Kobiël by mortals, Keeper,” he said immediately. By now I have become accustomed to being recognized by angels as the Keeper. I have also become accustomed, perhaps I should say spoiled, to being transported at my will to any place on this earth by Lucius which is a great luxury afforded only to the Keeper.

“Where is your mistress, Kobiël?” I asked somewhat bluntly. In truth I was so expectant about the possibility of meeting the Emperor that I surprised myself with my impatience. Fortunately, angels do not suffer from moods or pride so Kobiël answered quickly without offense.

“She is at the Capital, Keeper. May I send a message for you?” he asked obligingly.

“Yes, please tell her that I would, er . . . like to see her at her earliest convenience,” I said.

“May I tell her why?” he asked.

“Yes, of course, I would like to meet, . . . have an audience with the Emperor.” There, it was out.

“Which one, sir?” the angel continued.

“I don’t understand,” I replied. “There is only one Emperor.”

“No, Keeper. Please forgive. I meant do you want to meet him or do you want an audience?” he asked.

“Uh,... either,” I answered. I did not know there was a difference. Sensing my ignorance the angel continued. “You can meet him at any time, Keeper. At least you yourself can as the Keeper. Most any time, that is, if He is not otherwise involved. However, formal audiences are scheduled by the Lord Chancellor, King David of Israel, and you have to wait for them.”

“I see. Then I guess that I just want to meet him,” I said.

The angel nodded and stood there for a minute or so. At least it seemed like several minutes to me. Then he spoke again.

“My Mistress instructs me to bring you and your angel to the Capital immediately.”

“Well, I am not quite dressed,” I started to say.

“Is that better?” the angel asked.

I looked down and found that I was dressed in a beautiful blue satin robe and that my father’s medallion was hanging around my neck. I kept it in a safe and secret place at my residence. I caught my breath but said nothing for a few seconds. I thought about how I would respond. Both Kobiell and Lucius waited patiently without a trace of humor or superiority on their faces.

“Yes, well then, let’s be off,” I said softly.

They opened a portal for me, they don’t need one, and we were instantly at the Capital. We stood in a small but elegant room with large open windows overlooking the city of Jerusalem as it was now rebuilt for the Victorious

Emperor. After a few moments I sat on a seat by the window and looked out. I could see the magnificent Canopy of angels over the Capital. It dwarfed the canopy of Metropolitan Henry Sawyer of Atlanta and even that of the Over-Lord Janice Holland of the East Coast. I have seen the Canopy of Luis Cepata in Montevideo and it is almost as grand as this one at the Capital. The choruses seemed to be humming a haunting melody which blended easily into the background if you wanted it to. After a while Elaine entered the room by herself. I was startled because I thought that the Emperor might be with her.

“Carl, my dear, I am so glad that you are here. I thought you would never ask,” she said as she stood on her tiptoes to kiss my forehead. I bent down to help as I was used to this ritual from childhood. Elaine is a dear and so human for an Immortal. But then again she was once mortal like me.

“I did not know that you were waiting for me to ask,” I answered.

“We are always thrilled when a mortal wants to meet the Emperor. Most are afraid of him, but some have learned to love him like we do.”

“Grandmother loved him,” I added.

“That she did, Carl. And I am so proud of her.” Elaine always spoke of grandmother in the present even though she has been dead for years.

“Now,” Elaine began, she sat down on a large divan and motioned for me to sit next to her. I obeyed her as a child. I now looked older that she does, but she has looked that way since my first childhood memory of her. I must admit that I do not really understand Immortals and now I am about to meet the most Immortal One of all. I sensed a little fear. “No need for fear, Carl,” she patted my hand.

‘How does she do that?’ I thought.

Elaine continued, “The Emperor is out walking in the Palace parklands,” she said. “Come here.” She motioned to the window and waved her hand at the surrounding city and countryside.

“You see the Palace parklands now extend out about 300 kilometers in all directions. All the Emperor’s favorite places and boyhood haunts are included, places like Bethany, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and the others, and a good deal of water,” she said.

“Right now he is just over there, near Bethany. Do you want to go now?” she asked.

“Yes, of course,” I said taking a deep breath.

“Let’s see,” Elaine continued, “I think that Kobiel overdressed you for hiking. So hiking gear please, Kobiel.” I was now dressed in a nice hiking suit. That made twice today that I was dressed by an angel. I wondered if Lucius will do this for me from now on.

“Lucius can do that for you if you want,” Elaine said. I would have to think about it. I have always kept my own clothes.

We appeared alongside a group of about 15 men who were walking up the road to Bethany. The angels were not with us. This was a very informal meeting. All around things were blooming. The path consisted of a fine smooth gravel. I had thought that this area would be dry and dusty but then, of course, it had been changed at the Emperor’s wishes. I wondered which one was His Majesty.

One of the men spoke to Elaine. “Sister Elaine, I have not seen you since the last feast,” he said. “And this is the mortal Keeper?”

“You know that it is, Nathanael,” Elaine answered smiling. “I thought you were the one with no guile,” she teased.

“He still is, Elaine,” one of them said. Then they all stopped and cleared a path between me and the speaker. I thought, this must be him. I walked towards him but I did not meet his eyes. He looked little different from the others in height and coloring and dress. I knew that I would have to meet his gaze so I did. It was Him. It is Him. The God-Man Himself. The eyes never lie. His eyes are incapable of it. I was flooded by the peace that grandmother Anna described but I was not overwhelmed, no doubt, because he did not wish it. Very deliberately I got down on one knee. “Your Majesty,” was all I could say. He motioned for me to stand.

“Carl, it is good to see you,” he said.

“And I you, Sire.” I just looked at him. I got up the courage to glance at his hands. He held them out for me to see. Yes, the scars were still there. He wore them like a prize. The same for His feet. I could not see His side.

“Come, let us walk,” he said.

We walked to Bethany and had some sweet wine and then we all walked some more. He liked to walk. I listened to them talk and finally asked some questions of my own. Not every answer was as complete as I hoped it would be but it was enough. Each answer was perfect. Before long I got the impression that I was asking questions that were, shall we say, too big. The others seemed to chat about small things. I seemed to want answers to the meaning of life and things like that. Finally, as I fell back for a time to think, Nathanael said softly to me, “You see, Carl, He Is the meaning of life.” I dared not think too loudly around these Immortals. If they know what they

know, how much does the Emperor know. I settled into the group, just enjoying His company. Elaine was still with us. Overall my impressions were not anything like I had expected. There was little of the grand or showy here. Perhaps that was reserved for an audience or, worse still, a judgment. I can not say that I actually saw Him sweat. But I could hear Him breathe. He touched me on the shoulder once and I nearly passed out. But he is really human, human and then a whole lot more. That walk that afternoon was fantastic. He walked casually, as if He had nothing else to do. That night there was an audience and it was, as I suspected, quite different. Lucius re-dressed me in the blue robe that I arrived in for the audience. It was a general audience and I went with Elaine.

The Palace Throne Room was packed. There must have been ten thousand people there. Most of them were Immortals but there were some mortals. I could tell the difference but I can not explain how. The mortals, like myself, seemed less confident somehow although we all looked a lot like the Immortals who were all dressed in simple but handsome attire here. Some of the angelic Canopy had moved inside so the ceiling was covered with them. Their harmonizing was exquisitely beautiful and profound. When they all stood, I did too. The Emperor entered from behind the throne from the 'other side.' Mortals can't go there, but this is a permanent sort of portal to the throne on the other side. He was simply dressed in a white robe and he walked casually to the throne on this side.

For a long time we all just sang praises to the Emperor, Immortals, angels and mortals together. It was unbelievable. The sound was fantastic and the Presence in the Throne room was overwhelming. The Emperor sat

calmly on the throne and smiled. It was as if we were all singing out our love to Him at once. I shall never be the same again and I will want to come to an Imperial audience as often as possible. I intend to tell Lucius not to let me miss even one.

09.10.240 C.R. This morning at the Dais of Henry Sawyer, Metropolitan of Atlanta, I saw a young mortal woman that looked so much like Toni that I found myself staring. Her name is Eva.

Eva and her family are in trouble. They have been caught stealing and someone has been hurt in the process. The family seems to consist of Eva and her three brothers, two sisters, her mother and father, two married uncles on her mother's side, a single uncle and three married uncles on her father's side, and eight cousins. Her father seems to be the leader of the group. He is actually no more than a highwayman. They post detour signs for the large transport vehicles on the roads to lure them into a remote area where the road is blocked. Then they force the driver from the vehicle and steal all the goods which they sell to various people who can resell them. They were allowed to do this several times in order to expose the entire ring. The driver in the last incident was injured as they pulled him out of the vehicle and hit him. At this point the patrol intervened. Immortals arrived and healed the driver's wounds on the spot. And the entire ring was taken into custody. The distributors had been dealt with before I arrived at the Dais. Eva helped handle and transport the goods. She said that she did only as her father instructed her. This alone is not a sufficient defense. I am fascinated with this woman. She is about six years younger than I am.

Prince Henry sentenced Eva's entire family to supervision and they were each attached to an angel. Some of them pulled against the attachment. This attachment can not be seen. The one used here acts like a belt around the waist with an invisible cord about 10 feet long attached to the angel. They can not move any further away at any time. Their sentence can last for years depending on how fast their attitude changes. The angels will not harm them, but neither will they allow them to harm anyone else. The angel can move closer and completely subdue the mortal at any time and there is no privacy in the life of the mortal until the supervision is lifted. This punishment is, of course, much lighter than a death penalty, so many are thankful to receive it. They will have work assignments which may not be too pleasant, like working at garbage removal. And although their housing will be clean and they will have good clothing and enough to eat, it will not be luxurious.

When Eva was attached to her supervisor, such a sad look came over her face. I could not help myself. I approached the Metropolitan. Elaine was present at the time but I did not check with her first.

"Excellency," I blurted.

Henry Sawyer turned to look at me. His expression was kindly.

"Sir," I said as I walked quickly to his side.

"Yes, Keeper Carl. What do you want?" he asked softly.

"Sir, can that one," I pointed to Eva, "can she be appointed to my staff? I will watch her carefully and treat her with the utmost respect," I said.

It seemed like a long time to me before he answered, but it probably was not so long.

“What is it about her,” the Metropolitan asked still speaking softly as if to me alone.

“I am not sure, sir.” I answered. “Perhaps it just seems like she is more of a victim here under her father’s wrongdoing. I know that she has no excuse before the law. But she seems less malicious than the rest. Less . . .” I stopped because the Metropolitan’s look seemed to indicate that I was not being completely honest.

“Yes, sir,” I continued. “I am attracted to her. She is so beautiful and seems to be so gentle. But I will not use my position to unfair advantage. I promise.”

A quick smile passed between Henry Sawyer and Elaine. He thought for a minute.

“What position would she hold in your house?” he asked.

“I don’t know yet. I would have to talk to her first, I guess.” I did not sound very sure.

“You, girl, young Eva,” the Metropolitan said. She looked straight at him terrified. “Don’t be afraid girl, come up here,” he commanded.

She came carefully up the steps of the Dais. Her supervisor followed quietly; the connection between them seemed to stretch this time. When she arrived at the top, she knelt before the Metropolitan. He put two fingers under her chin and raised her face so he could look into her eyes which he did for some time. “Um, hmm,” he said. “This is the Keeper, Carl,” he said motioning to me.

“Sir,” she replied softly.

“He is willing to let you work for him, under his supervision and this angel here,” he pointed to Lucius nearby. “What can you do? Ah, can you cook? Can you read and write? Garden? Anything else?”

She answered slowly, deliberately. "I can read and write well. I have helped others in my family that way. I can cook fairly well. I have grown flowers, but I could learn to grow food. I can speak in front of people. I am a quick learner." She finished and lowered her eyes again.

"Good," the Metropolitan responded.

He looked at me. She glanced up at me. She was still on her knees. I wanted desperately to help her up. She was even beautiful on her knees. She has large luminous dark eyes, a fine shape and small hands and feet. Her hair is jet black and falls just below her shoulder blades. I was in love again. How many men get such a second chance? The Metropolitan leaned forward and I moved in closer.

"Are you a virgin?" he asked her very softly. I was certain that only he and I and possibly the female undergovernor to his left were the only ones who heard the question.

"Yes, my lord," she answered. She blushed as she glanced at me. "On that my father has been very insistent. He is not all bad, my lord."

"I know." Then Henry Sawyer smiled gently at her. "Do you accept this assignment in lieu of the other punishment? The Keeper will treat you with respect."

"Yes, my lord," she answered. She looked only at the Metropolitan.

"Fine, then. Off with you," he said.

I extended a hand to help her up. She took it and looked directly at me with a questioning look on her face which seemed to ask why I was doing this. I smiled in return. I fear that smile gave away too much. So I will proceed slowly.

She walked behind me back to my residence. Her sandals are worn and her long skirt and shirt are shabby.

But to me she still looks like a queen. She carries herself with self respect although she is not presuming. Once near the residence she stumbled over a root in the path and I almost leaped to help her but I restrained myself. I wanted so to touch her. I must be very careful. When we got to the residence, I introduced her to one of my librarians, an older woman named Doreen, who is very kind. I told Eva to do as Doreen said and then I introduced her to our cook, Lorice.

“She may help you as well, Lorice,” I said. “I trust that between you she will not be idle,” I said sounding very official.

“We’ll take care of her, Keeper,” Lorice said.

“Put her in the room next to yours, Lorice. And get her some more clothes,” I said. They nodded and went off.

I sat down and took a deep breath. What a morning! I had arisen wondering if anything interesting would happen today. Now I realized that I had challenged the Metropolitan, made an unprecedented request, fallen in love, and actually brought this woman to my home. Then a terrible thought crossed my mind. What if she does not fall in love with me? I ate some lunch and got busy with some research.

[N.D.] For the next few weeks I saw Eva around the residence. She was always polite and I tried not to act too interested. I told Doreen to include her in the weekly staff meetings which we held in the garden. With the three librarians, Lorice and her assistant, two gardeners and three security men and Eva and myself we number twelve mortals. Lorice is married to Jon the head gardener, has been as long as I can remember.

[N.D.] For the first two weeks Eva didn't say anything at the meetings. I asked Doreen and Lorice how she was doing and they said that she was cooperative and helpful and that she had a positive attitude.

"I think the attitude is real, Keeper," Doreen said. "I mean not just to satisfy her sentence." I nodded.

At the third meeting Eva asked permission to reorganize the newspaper section. Doreen recommended it. So I agreed. I felt like I was about to go insane. How could I proceed with her? I did not feel like I could go to Elaine for advice as somehow I felt that this was as big a test for me as it was for Eva. After all, I had started it.

The next week everyone except Doreen and Eva left the meeting quickly. I summoned up my courage.

"Doreen, can you leave Eva here at the table with me for a few minutes? I would like to talk to her about how she is settling in," I said.

"Certainly, Keeper," she said. She left quietly.

Then I could not think of anything to say. Eva sat two seats away looking into her tea cup.

"So, are you comfortable? I asked.

"Yes, Keeper. I am very comfortable. Everyone has been so kind to me. They do not treat me as a lawbreaker. I am most thankful for your kindness." She looked up from her tea cup and looked me directly in the eyes. I felt my pulse quicken.

"Fine, good," I said. "I want you to be comfortable. I do not think of you as a lawbreaker, not at all."

"You are kind." She was still looking into my eyes. It took all my strength not to declare myself then. But it was too soon.

"I have one request, sir," she said looking down again.

“Yes, er, I mean. What is it?” I managed to answer.

“I wonder, . . . I wonder if it would be possible, once in a while, for me to see my family. I know they are a rascally lot, but I do love them and I miss them. We have always been together, you see?” She looked at me pleadingly.

“I will look into it,” I responded.

“Thank you, sir,” she said. When she looked away, I told her that we were pleased with her work and that she could get back to whatever she had to do. I watched her as she got up and got in a few glimpses as she walked away. What a woman! I am hopelessly in love.

[N.D.] For the past several weeks the entire staff seemed to leave us alone after the staff meeting. I had gotten permission from Elaine for Eva to visit her family for a couple of hours under Lucius’ watchful eye and she came back grateful but sad. I told her that she could see them monthly if she wanted to. At first we talked about her duties and then we branched off onto other subjects. She was very interested in my travels as Keeper. And she told me a few funny stories about her family. One story was about her cousin Juan who is a very clumsy and unsuccessful thief. I knew that soon I would have to tell her how I feel.

[N.D.] At today’s staff meeting many issues came up and I found myself meeting afterwards with Doreen for a long time.

[N.D.] I have waited another long week. The day before this meeting I was checking with Doreen on some

research. She had come to my office. She gathered up her papers to leave and paused.

“Keeper,” she said. “Carl.” I looked up. She sometimes called me Carl, she is much older. “She loves you. You know that don’t you?” Doreen said. I was awestruck.

“Really?”

“Yes. I don’t know if I will ever understand men,” she said.

“I have been being, . . . careful,” I said.

“Then you do care for her?”

“Care for her? I adore her, Doreen.”

“Good,” she smiled. “Then find a way to tell her,” she answered.

[N.D.] After the next staff meeting they all vanished quickly. I looked at Eva and she looked at me. She was still two seats away. I hoped that Doreen had been as candid with her as she had been with me.

“May I?” I asked moving over to sit next to her.

“Sure,” she answered.

I casually rested my elbow in the table and propped my chin on my hand. I decided to jump.

“I’m in love with you, Eva,” I said quietly and deliberately. I was relieved even if she did not respond like I wanted her to. I had held it in so long. She answered right away.

“I have loved you since the first day,” she said looking deep into my eyes as tears came to hers. I didn’t know what to do next. I knew what I wanted to do. But I felt like I needed to remember my place. Finally, I kissed her gently on the mouth. She received it with great tenderness. When I pulled away, I saw a smile I have never

seen before. We had made a good beginning. Now I must talk to Elaine.

[N.D.] “Overall, it’s no problem,” Elaine said. “So far nothing more than a kiss?”

“So far,” I responded.

“You want to marry her?”

“Of course I want to marry her.”

“When?”

“Yesterday,” I answered.

“It may take a little longer than that,” Elaine said. “Henry will have to set aside her sentence. That is a technicality. And the Emperor will have to pardon her if she is to marry the Keeper.”

“How difficult is that?” I asked.

“I will take care of that,” Elaine said. “Meanwhile, take it easy at the residence”

“O.K. Get back to me soon, please,” I asked.

“A day or so, Carl. Just a day or so,” she said.

[N.D.] Lucius brought word that Henry Sawyer had dropped the charges against Eva that afternoon. Eva was relieved by this but it was nothing compared to what was to follow.

[N.D.] My meeting with Elaine was on a Wednesday; she returned to my front door on Friday after luncheon. Eva and I had just finished eating in the back garden and we were sitting together quietly. I had my arm around her and she had just snuggled in. Lucius appeared in front of us so I got to my feet. I don’t know why Elaine appears at the front door of my residence and then walks through to the garden; she could just appear in the garden.

“Just wanted to give you two lovebirds a few seconds to compose yourselves,” she said as she entered. She was waving some sort of a document. She extended it to me. So I took it and read it immediately.

JERUSALEM

The Imperial Palace

IMPERIAL PARDON 12.23.240 C.R.

KNOW ALL BY THIS DOCUMENT THAT ONE EVA CONCEPTION GONZALES, A MORTAL, IS HEREBY PARDONED OF ALL PAST CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS AGAINST THE EMPEROR AS OF THIS DATE. ANY AND ALL SUCH CRIMES OR MISDEMEANORS THAT SHE HAS COMMITTED OR PARTICIPATED IN ARE CHARGED TO THE EMPEROR'S OWN ACCOUNT. ALL RECORDS PERTAINING TO THIS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM EVERY PLACE, BOTH MORTAL AND IMPERIAL. IT IS AS IF THEY NEVER EXISTED. HER CRIMES ARE FORGOTTEN BY THE EMPEROR HIMSELF AS HE CHOOSES TO EXERCISE HIS POWER OF FORGETFULNESS IN HER REGARD. SHE IS, THEREFORE, FOUND TO BE IN FAVOR WITH HIS MAJESTY AND WILL BE

**CONSIDERED INNOCENT IF SHE STANDS
BEFORE HIM.**

**SIGNED IN THE NAME OF THE EMPEROR
AND FOR THE IMPERIAL HIGH COURT BY:**

**DAVID, THE LORD CHANCELLOR
PETER, THE MASTER OF THE FEAST
JOHN, VICEROY, EASTERN HEMISPHERE
LUIS, VICEROY, WESTERN HEMISPHERE**

I had never seen such a document although there may be some among my archives. It was personally signed in the Emperor's name by the Chancellor, the Master Of The Feast and both Viceroys. I read it aloud to Eva in Elaine's presence. The more I read the bigger her beautiful luminous dark brown eyes seemed to become. Then tears came to them. After I finished reading the names at the bottom, she burst into tears. I dropped the pardon on the stones and rushed to hold her just as she sank to the floor. Sitting on the stones she thanked the Emperor again and again to Elaine. I held her and it occurred to me how significant this was to a person convicted of crimes against the Emperor.

Elaine stroked Eva's hair, "There, there little one, I know how you feel. It is a wonderful thing," she said.

I looked at Elaine; my looked said exactly 'what do you mean, I know how you feel?'

Elaine answered, "In our mortality we were all forgiven by the Emperor. That was when we began our new lives. We are now Immortal because of that."

I have read enough of the sacred writings and the journals to understand, at least to some extent, what Elaine was saying.

[N.D.] The very next day I gave Eva a ring to signify our engagement. This is not universally done among us but some choose to practice it. The ring originally belonged to my grandmother Anna. It is gold and rather large with a large blood-red ruby in the center. No one knows just where Anna got the ring. She does not mention it in her journals; it was just found by father among her possessions. Eva never takes it off.

Elaine noticed the ring the other day. “Judah’s ring,” Elaine said. “Yes, Anna received it the year before she passed. It was a great honor.”

I did not ask her to explain.

[N.D.] I have showered Eva with every gift I can think of. Her response is always the same: she does not deserve it, she does not deserve me, she is so thankful, and so on. But she seems to be genuinely happy. And when she is happy, I am happy. Our wedding date has been set. Since I am a widower, a quiet wedding is in order, but Elaine has insisted that it will be held in the Metropolitan’s garden. These Immortals never tire of weddings.

03.02.241 C.R. The Metropolitan performed our wedding ceremony today. Janice was there and the Emperor was represented by the Chancellor himself who brought the Lady Abigail who had been one of his mortal wives. I was very happy with it all and Eva seemed to be content.

[N.D.] We took our wedding trip to the Bahamas. The Metropolitan there has been very kind to us. We will return to the Residence in fourteen days.

[N.D.] This entry is for my private journal only. I have a younger sister named Anna, most people call her "little Anna" to distinguish her from my grandmother Anna, the founder of the line. I was eleven years old when Anna was born so she has always been my baby sister. She does not take to this much anymore as she is a grown woman with, I am afraid, considerable experience. Being the granddaughter of the Keeper Anna has not been easy for little Anna. While I take joy in my duties and my office, she complains that she really does not have enough to do. She went off to school when she was sixteen and my poor father Mark had to repeatedly intervene because she could not stay out of trouble. I remember him saying more than once 'this girl is going to be the death of me yet.' When he did die, I am afraid that she remembered this and blamed herself. This did not, however, cause her to act more prudently. She has had an endless line of men, three husbands to date, she is now single again, and the only time I see her is when she needs money or some other favor that she thinks the Keeper can provide. I am convinced that she intends to live on her reputation as the daughter and the sister of the Keeper. Many people, men and women, seek her favor because she is my sister and I do not think she can tell when their motives are not pure. Or maybe she does not care.

Lucius woke me gently at 3 A.M. Atlanta time. He was careful not to wake Eva. I followed him into my private study off the bedroom and sat down rubbing my eyes. After I appeared ready, Lucius began.

“Keeper, I am sorry to inform you that your sister Anna is in poor condition,” he said softly with almost a hint of non-angelic pity and remorse.

“What is it this time?” I asked wearily.

“She is at this moment lying unconscious in a filthy room in Barcelona. Her breathing is shallow and her pulse is weak.”

I was sufficiently startled and I looked up and asked, “Who is with her now, Lucius?”

“One of my kind. She was discovered by the patrol which has been alerted to send word to you if she ever seemed to be in mortal harm.”

“They think she might die?” I asked.

“Most certainly and that right soon if something is not done right away.”

“Is Elaine in this world right now?” I asked.

“Yes, right here in Atlanta.”

“Then please tell her that I beg her company in this situation, while I dress,” I said.

Lucius disappeared. I dressed quickly and gently woke Eva to tell her where I was going.

“Do you want me to go with you, sweetheart?” she asked.

“No, dearest,” I kissed her goodbye. “You rest. If I can not return today, I will send Lucius with a message.”

Lucius returned with Elaine and her minimum escort.

“Mistress, thank you so much for coming. I simply do not know what to do with my sister,” I said.

“No trouble, Carl. I will do anything that I can,” she said. In a second we appeared in a disgusting little hotel room in Barcelona looking down on my poor sister Anna.

“I think she’s almost dead,” I said.

“Nearly,” Elaine answered.

“Can you, will you, er, fix her,” I asked plaintively

“Yes, of course,” Elaine answered. She put one hand on Anna’s chest and one on her forehead. “Anna, Anna darling, wake up,” Elaine said very softly and lovingly.

“Uh.” Anna began to come to. “Where, what, who are you? Oh, Carl, where did you come from?” She started to sit up and then laid back down again as if in pain.

“Just lay there another few minutes,” Elaine said.

“Uh, Elaine, er, Mistress!” Anna’s eyes opened wide and she tried to sit up again.

“I said, just wait, child,” Elaine said firmly. “You are not quite mended yet.”

Anna laid back and in a few minutes she seemed completely restored. Elaine took her hands off Anna and told Lucius to find some clean water and some food. He disappeared and reappeared with the food and water in no time.

Anna drank and ate heartedly as we watched her in disgust. She was filthy and acted like she didn’t even know it.

“I have left some scars,” Elaine said. Anna looked at her quizzically. Elaine turned her and pulled up her blouse to show me the scars. “There are more on the front and on her legs,” Elaine said. “They now appear as they normally would after six months of healing.”

Anna pulled up her blouse and then her skirt and examined the scars on her stomach and legs. “What? Who? Mistress, make them go away. They are really ugly!” my sister exclaimed.

“I will do nothing of the sort, young lady,” Elaine said. “They will not hurt you. I left them to remind you. If I

had not come, you would have surely died. You have been beaten severely and more than once recently.”

“Maybe you should just let me die,” Anna said ashamed to look either one of us in the face.

“Maybe we should. But your loving brother here cares very much for you and your parents and Anna herself would be ashamed,” Elaine said.

“I know, I know.” Was all that Anna could say. “I don’t know. When I am intoxicated, it all seems like fun. When they start to hurt me, I still like it. By the time I am really hurt, it is too late and I am ashamed to admit to you, brother, the kind of life I lead. I don’t know. I really don’t.”

I looked at Elaine. This had happened before and each time I had hoped that she would do better. But she does not.

“Sit here, Anna.” Elaine commanded. She motioned for me to follow her outside into a dilapidated garden attached to that pitiful hotel. We walked for a while in silence. Then she stopped.

“Carl, I have one recommendation, but it will not be easy for you to follow. I do, however, believe that it is Anna’s only hope for change.”

“Anything, Mistress,” I said. “Anything, I have no ideas at all.”

“I have a friend, an Immortal named Magdalena; she was a mortal friend of the Emperor. She runs a special training home in Crete for girls like Anna. Anna is a little older than most of her charges, but I believe that she would take her in.”

“A mortal friend of the Emperor, wow,” I said. “Of course, that sounds great.”

“Now you would have to have her declared your ward and it would then be your choice to put her there and

to confine her there if you wish. Not all the girls are there under the same conditions. Some are even volunteers. Some are put there by their parents or another relative.”

“My ward?” I asked.

“Yes, she would then be in a relationship to you as a minor child. You would have legal authority over her.”

“How is that done?”

“Henry is her prince. She was born in his realm. He can grant it.”

“She won’t like it,” I said.

“I know,” Elaine answered. “But I tell you, dear Carl, I will not pull her back from the edge again like I did tonight. It is your only choice, really.”

When I saw how serious Elaine was about this, I agreed. We took Anna back to my house and got her a good bath and put her to bed. She slept a long time. By the time Anna awoke, I was back from the Dais with the Metropolitan’s certificate of guardianship. I felt a little sneaky and underhanded when I first got back to the residence, but that didn’t last long. Anna was sitting in the garden with one leg slung over the arm of her chair guzzling wine.

“Oh, my dear brother. My rescuer,” she said sarcastically.

“Anna, would you like your old room back?” Eva asked her.

“My old room? No, dear, there is no need for that. I am not staying long. As a matter of fact I think I will go back to Spain tonight if my dear brother here will tell Lucius to give me a lift.” She looked at me like it was a dare. She did not know what I had in store for her and I no longer felt sneaky.

“I have news for you, my baby sister,” I said.

“You know I don’t like to be called ‘baby’ sister,” Anna scolded.

I waved the guardianship paper in her face. “Read this,” I demanded.

“What? Oh, no. I am my own person. No one tells me what to do. You’ve learned that haven’t you, dear brother. Even when you cut off the money I still get by. I do what I want.”

“I am afraid that you don’t quite understand, Anna,” I said as I sat down beside her. “This is like supervision. You know, attached to an angel. You will go to the home of a lady named Magdalena in Crete and she will teach you to be a descent adult.”

“Tied to an angel? I am no criminal,” she protested.

“No, you are not a criminal. You are a bum. You are my sister and my ward. Your supervisor will not be attached to you but if you give Magdalena any trouble, the angel will restrain you and he will not let you leave.”

“You can’t do this. Damn you, no!” she shouted.

“I can and I am, for your own sake,” I said.

“Look at the seal. Metropolitan Sawyer has decreed it. You have no choice.”

“I’ll appeal, I’ll appeal to the Emperor if necessary,” she said.

At that exact moment Elaine appeared and walked directly to Anna. Anna pushed back in her chair as if trying to avoid Elaine.

“There is no appeal to the Emperor without the agreement of a Viceroy,” Elaine said. “I have just talked to the Viceroy Luis and he refuses appeal. You must do as you are told.”

“I’ll go to John, then,” Anna said.

“He will not countermand Luis. This is what you must do. Do you understand?”

Anna knew from childhood that this question asked in that tone was final. “Yes, mistress,” she mumbled.

Anna’s angel supervisor arrived to take Anna to Magdalena’s. Elaine explained that this angel was not Lucius; he would not do as she commanded. She said that she understood. Anna cried and I hugged her. Eva hugged her. And then they were gone.

“Elaine, may I visit her and meet this Magdalena?” I asked.

“Anytime, Carl. Lucius will take you. I would give her about two weeks to get settled in. Magdalena runs a severe program.” I was not prepared to ask what that meant just now.

[N.D.] Magdalena is wonderful. She is a beautiful Immortal with a face that tells of much experience. But nothing about her face appears worn or haggard. Her smile is fantastic and her resolve is absolute. She cares about all the girls under her charge. She starts by spending three days and nights with each new girl. She tells them her mortal story and how the Emperor transformed her. She tells them of the continuing transforming power of the Presence in her mortal life. Anna was full of enthusiasm when I first visited her two weeks after she was taken to Magdalena’s house. She seemed like a different woman. She said that she has to stay with Magdalena until she passes some tests.

“What kind of tests will they be?” I asked.

“She hasn’t told us yet. She says that we will not know when they are coming and we will not know how we did on them for a while after they are over.”

“Sounds mysterious,” I said. “How many tests will there be?”

“She won’t tell us that either,” Anna answered.

“How do you feel about this,” I asked.

“O.K., I guess. I mean I wouldn’t feel very good about it if it was someone else. But Magdalena is something else, you know what I mean?”

I agreed. All you have to do is meet her and you are sure that there is not another Immortal like her. She has a lot of love for mortals, something that you do not always feel from some of them, and she does not try to hide the fact that as a mortal herself she was quite acquainted with our weaknesses and faults. She seems thankful every day that she is a child of the Emperor. She loves Him dearly and talks of her relationship with Him as a mortal. She spends a lot of time with her charges and when she is not around, you can always guess where she is, at the Capital as close as she can get to the Emperor. Elaine says that although all the Immortals have the freedom to get close to the Emperor, He seems to be particularly happy to have Magdalena around. They are old friends. I was happy to leave Anna with Magdalena and I plan to visit her there often.

[N.D.] I have learned from Anna that Magdalena was the first person to see the Emperor after His Majesty had raised Himself from the dead. She is surely a very special person.

04.22.260 C.R. For many years Eva and I have wanted a child. It is not just because I am expected to produce an heir. We both want very much to have children. We tried for many years to become pregnant. But we have

not been successful. I have mentioned it a couple of times to Elaine and she just encouraged me to be patient. I am aware that Elaine can intervene in these matters as she has in the past, but we have never asked her to help. Eva is now getting older and she has been asking me to ask Elaine to help. So today I asked. Elaine simply put her hand on Eva's stomach for a few seconds and then said that if we did our part we would be expecting soon and that both Eva and the baby would be strong and healthy.

02.03.261 C.R. Today our daughter Alice was born. She is beautiful.

[N.D.] This morning Lucius approached me suddenly and said, "Keeper, there is an angel from Imperial Security to see you."

I was busy writing so I did not look up again. "Bring him in," I said.

There was a sharp popping noise when the angel appeared and I intentionally did not look up for a few seconds. When I did, I saw a most impressive angel standing before me. I looked down again to finish my paragraph but stole a glance up again. The newly arrived angel was standing patiently before me. Lucius was looking from me to him and back to me repeatedly. If I did not know better, I would say that Lucius was nervous. I put my pen down and leaned back. I do not react well when I think an angel is trying to push me. I have no actual right to take this attitude except that I rely on Elaine's favor a great deal.

"And you are?" I asked.

"I am called Bruel," he answered with a slight trace of an echo in his voice, something that they do when they want to intimidate. I weighed his attitude for a while trying

to decide if I would accept the challenge or not. Finally, I decided that I would go along. It was sure to be important or he would not be here. Lucius still looked nervous, but I must have been imagining that as I know very well that they do not have emotions.

“What do you want?” I asked

“The Legate Elaine has instructed me to inform you that your wife’s family is again in danger of discipline,” he said.

I suddenly felt hollow inside. “What this time?” I asked.

“More of the same. Scams to gain wealth.”

“Are they all involved?”

“Primarily Hector, her father, and her oldest brother Pedro,” the angel answered.

“Does the Legate have any instructions for me?”

“Not through me, Keeper.”

“Can we get back to you?” I asked. I needed time.

“This one can,” he answered motioning to Lucius.

“Fine. I will not be long. Is there anything else?” I asked.

“No, Keeper,” he responded and then popped away.

“Lucius, what is that popping sound? I have never heard it before,” I asked.

“Security uses it,” Lucius stated.

“I can tell that, but why? Does it do anything? Er, ... accomplish something?” “

“Not really.”

“Hmm.” ‘I never cease to be surprised,’ I thought.

“Is Eva in the residence?” I asked.

“No, Keeper, she is in the city purchasing some things,” he answered. He does not use the term ‘shopping’ but my Eva is a master at it.

“Do you want me to bring her to you?” Lucius asked.

“No, no, not right now. I need a little time. Ask Mistress Elaine if I may see her.”

Lucius vanished and I changed to meet with Elaine.

Eva’s family had been released from supervision slowly over the years. First, the women were released and then the younger men. Her father and oldest brother, the ones now again on the edge, were the last to be released. I have dreaded the day that they would get into trouble again for Eva’s sake because she being the wife of the Keeper can not help them if they go to far again. They could face more supervision or even the death penalty if they go too far.

Lucius returned and we went immediately to the Dais of Henry Sawyer where Elaine was in charge that day while the Metropolitan was at the Capital for a Governor’s meeting that the Chancellor had called. Since they all communicate immediately through angels or the Presence, I have always thought that their meetings were just another excuse to fellowship with one another and perhaps the Emperor, but I am not the one to decide such things as I am still a lowly, if highly favored, mortal.

“We have only allowed it to go this far so that they may judge themselves with the nature of their actions,” Elaine told me. “I was hoping that goodness might prevail, but Hector and Pedro are very close to being arrested. They have not kept good company like they did just after they were released from supervision. Eva’s mother Juanita and the other females have done alright.”

“They have never asked me for help,” I interrupted.

“I know, they are ashamed, I think,” Elaine answered. “The younger boys are doing well too. They live far away from Hector and Pedro.”

“How free am I to intervene, Mistress?” I asked. When I said ‘Mistress’, that put our talk on an official level.

“I leave it in your hands for 72 hours, Carl. After that, I will have to act. Use Lucius as you want in this. He may get help from the Legions if he needs it.”

“Thank you, Mistress. I have to get busy now.” I said. As I nodded to Lucius to take me back to the residence, she smiled a very loving smile at me. We are so blessed to be under her authority as well as that of the Metropolitan and the Over-Lord, the Viceroy and the Emperor.

As soon as we got back to the residence, I sent Lucius for Eva. “Do not tell her anything,” I instructed. “Just tell her that I need her right away.” He nodded and disappeared. He returned with Eva in less than a minute.

“What is it, dear?” she asked. From the look on my face she guessed. “Oh dear, my family,” she said. All of the energy seemed to drain from her and she sat down. I sat beside her and held her and told her what I knew. She started to cry but fought it back and a determined look crossed her face. “What do you think we should do?” she asked.

I called Lucius closer and we formed a plan. Eva was to put on some dirty ragged clothes and Lucius would take her near to her father and brother. Then she would scream for help and Lucius would vanish. She would tell her father that she had had to leave me and that she had been hunting for them. We always believed that her sister Carla kept in touch with her father, so Eva could say that

she found him through Carla. After a day, (we only had three,) she hoped that she could learn from her brother what they were doing and implore them to stop and even to turn themselves in. Lucius used his connections to locate them in the Pyrenees mountains. It was a remote location and I was worried for her safety.

“Lucius can stay with me,” she said. “I will be fine.”

I thought if I sent Lucius with her then how could I travel to help her. “Perhaps I should go to, in disguise,” I said.

“They might catch on and run,” she added.

Lucius interrupted, “Keeper.”

“Yes, Lucius.”

“The Mistress Elaine said that I could get help, did she not?”

“Yes.”

“Fine. Then this is Lawton,” he said and another angel which looked very much like him suddenly appeared.

“Lawton? What kind of a name is that for an angel?” I asked.

“Please don’t ask, Keeper,” he said.

To me this whole thing was getting more unusual. “Fine then,” I said. “What exactly will Lawton do?”

“He will go with your wife and carry out our plan. He will also protect her, remain invisible, and be in constant contact with me,” Lucius finished.

That sounded fine to me. It was now dark in Atlanta and in the Pyrenees. Eva left almost immediately after I held her for a while and kissed her goodbye.

I was nervous waiting with Lucius at the residence but he kept me posted and it was not too long before I had to make another decision.

From Lawton to Lucius to me I learned that Eva had been successful in getting her father to take her in. She immediately started to try to talk him into stopping his actions and his association with the people he had fallen in with.

“Keeper,” Lucius aroused me. I had let my mind drift to the day I had met Eva.

“Yes, what?”

“Lawton reports that some of father Hector’s associates are now holding Hector, Pedro and Eva at knife point. If we do not come now, Lawton will disarm them immediately.”

“What had happened so fast?” I wondered. Lucius and I went immediately to Eva’s side. Lucius drew the knives to himself and they landed together in his hand with a loud clanking sound. Now the two angels and myself were totally visible. Hector looked surprised at first, then a knowing look crossed his face. Pedro just nodded. Those who had been threatening them were immobilized by the angels, unable to move as if tied up with invisible cords, the same kind of energy cords used in supervision.

“You lied to me, girl. You lied to your father,” Hector accused Eva.

“I had to father. I had to try to convince you to stop this way of life. You are about to be judged.” Tears came to her eyes.

“Well, I guess there is some advantage to being related to the Keeper by marriage,” Hector said glancing my way.

I did not say anything yet. There was a long silence.

“Well,” Hector continued. “When does the judge arrive? When do I pay the piper?”

“What has he done so far?” I asked Lucius.

“Nothing so far,” Lucius said. “Just guilt by association. Although he and the brother were very close, these men were going to require them to act tonight so that they would be bound together by their guilt. You acted just in time, Keeper.”

I knew that this was no happenstance. We had been helped again by Elaine and the others.

“Get Elaine,” I said quietly to Lucius. She was on the spot in a few seconds. At her arrival Hector’s comrades cowered in fear and Hector and Pedro would not meet her gaze. I held Eva while Elaine spoke.

“You will be taken to your wife, you and your son, under supervision. If she can not help you to rehabilitate yourselves in a year, then you will be removed from her and dealt with severely,” Elaine said. “As for these four,” she pointed her scepter at the ones the angels were holding, “There is no hope for them.” They died on the spot. Hector and Pedro grew very pale.

“Did you ever doubt the power of the Governors?” I asked them in disbelief. “What do you think they are here for? You are fools? I, I just can’t believe, ... well...” I took a deep breath. “I wash my hands of you and Pedro, Hector. Mistress, I formally request that they be given no more chances because of their relationship to my wife,” I said.

“Very well, Keeper,” Elaine answered. She looked at Hector and Pedro. “You are truly on your own now,” she said. “It’s change or else.”

They look genuinely frightened. Eva and Lucius and I returned to the residence. I hope that is the end of it. Relatives are certainly a burden to us, hers and mine.

[N.D.] Lucius awoke us at 3 A.M. Atlanta time. I remembered that father had once said that nothing good

ever happens at 3 A.M. This time he would have been correct. We were both in a sound sleep; I on my back while holding Eva with my right arm. She was content with her head on my chest. It was very dark in the room. There was no moon at all. In order to wake us Lucius had to get very bright. Since he was directly in front and above me, I awoke first and shook Eva gently.

“Uh. What darling?” She muttered.

“Wake up sweetheart,” I said. “Lucius has something.” She rubbed her eyes and looked up at the angel. I was certainly wide awake. Lucius glanced at Eva and motioned for me to come aside. I decided to ignore his preferences. “Just go ahead, Lucius. She is awake now.”

“It is her brother Pedro, Keeper.”

“Yes, go ahead.”

“He is dead,” Lucius said.

Eva drew in her breath sharply and then I was sorry that I did not get the information from Lucius first. His statements are always rather blunt, truthful but blunt. I held her tightly.

“I’m alright, Carl,” she said in a few seconds. “It was probably inevitable. How did it happen, Lucius?” she asked.

He was caught in a robbery and killed while trying to escape by the mortal investigators near Amsterdam,” Lucius answered.

“My father?” she asked.

“Not involved,” Lucius answered.

“Thank the Emperor,” Eva said.

We dressed and had Lucius bring the body to us.

[N.D.] We gathered Eva’s family and buried Pedro on the residence grounds. After the internment we all ate

together and Hector asked to speak to me alone. He has been very distraught at the death of his son. Eva seemed excited that her father wanted to talk to me alone.

“What can I do for you, Hector,” I asked.

“Sir, Keeper,” he said very respectfully. “This was my fault. I did not lead the boy as I should have and now he is gone.” He wept bitterly and I kept my hand on his shoulder. Hector seemed genuinely repentant. When he calmed down, he made a request that really caught me off guard.

“Can you arrange, sir, for me to meet the Emperor,” he asked. I did not answer for a moment as I tried to recover my composure.

“I can ask the Immortal Elaine,” I said.

“I would so much appreciate it, sir.”

“Hector . . .”

“Sir?”

“Why? I mean, you must have a reason,” I said.

“I have seen Eva’s pardon, sir. And I believe that only the Emperor can calm my heart and show me what I can do to attempt to make amends for my miserable life.”

“That sounds good to me,” I said. “You and the family stay here with us for a while. You can stay in the cottage.” I did not want the family under foot. “And I will talk to the Immortal Elaine as soon as I can.”

Hector kissed my hands and thanked me profusely.

I got to Elaine the next day and I was a little surprised that she readily agreed to get an audience for Hector.

[N.D.] After almost a four month wait, today Hector has his audience with the Emperor. I am told by Lucius that many mortals are saying that he would not have

gotten this audience if he were not my father-in-law. The Emperor is always very busy when He is on this side and Hector is little more than a common criminal in the Empire, but I do not question anything that Elaine arranges. Hector is as nervous as a new bride today. He has waited patiently these months and has prepared himself to go three times this morning that I know about. I told him months ago that I would allow Lucius to take him to the capital. He is going alone which is fine with the family since the rest of them are honestly afraid of the Emperor. I asked Hector why he is not afraid of the Emperor and he told me that he has nothing to lose. He said that he is a desperate man who can not change himself. He said that the Emperor was his only hope.

Lucius has just returned without Hector. He tells me that he was dismissed by the Chancellor upon arrival. He was not told when Hector would be returned. Hector has now been gone for over six hours. There must have been a wait to see His Majesty.

Another two hours and still no Hector. Eva is not concerned. No one else asks any questions. I have been busy all day in my study preparing several messages with several of my secretaries.

Hector has returned. He was deposited by an angel from the capital in my waiting room. Hector has greeted everyone with generous hugs and now he sits in a chair with a small very satisfied smile on his face. We invited him to supper with the family.

“Now, now I understand,” Hector said. “Every mortal should be able to see the Emperor, then all misunderstanding would be gone. His Majesty is our entire reason for living a productive life. Yes. Yes, it is

wonderful.” He ate a few more bites, the audience did not hamper his appetite.

“The Chancellor himself has put me in touch with a world-wide mortals group, “The Daughters of Anna.” They will arrange for me to speak to groups in many places about what it means to be forgiven by His Majesty. I will tell. I will tell everyone I can about the graciousness and generosity of His Majesty. Why, this group even has a small travel allowance which will help me to get around. Now, my family must all go back to my cousins farm in Spain and I must begin my work,” he concluded.

I arranged for Lucius to take the family to Spain and Hector to Paris where he said he would begin his work. Eva seems relieved to see them depart. Our happy home has now returned to normal.

[N.D.] I get reports through regular channels almost weekly about Hector’s goodwill work among criminals and near criminals in many cities. He seems to be fearless in the service of the Emperor. He never told us any more details about his audience, but knowing the Emperor I am not surprised about the change in Hector.

[ND.] Reports of Hector’s work continue to pour in. He has nearly been killed twice in his work. The first time some of his own followers rescued him and the second time his entire party was captured by criminals and Imperial Security showed up to rescue them all. Hector is quoted as saying that dying for the Emperor would be his privilege.

[N.D.] Hector and some of his followers visited us today. They have been speaking in the area. Prince Henry

has supported their work here. Hector's entourage now includes his entire family. Eva was glad to see them and we were both relieved to see them leave. Eva and I love the quiet life we have when I am at home. I have been trying to be at home more and more as I grow older.

03.12.275 C.R. Our daughter Alice is a fine young woman. She has been helping me and she should do well as Keeper. She sometimes has trouble keeping her mind on her work, but she returns to it with great fervor.

09.22.279 C.R. As I look back over my life, I wonder if it has been or will be considered unusual for someone of my offices. I have traveled and made many public appearances, yet I have not been particularly popular. My father, Mark, was definitely more popular than I am. I have seen the Emperor on many occasions. I also trust the Emperor because of what I know from the sacred writings and the journals. I do not have to see him to trust him. He will invariably do the right thing; he is fair and he is merciful. We have proved that. I have kept mostly to myself. I lost my first wife when I was young. My second wife now of many years, the beautiful and wonderful Eva, is herself a pardoned criminal. I remember this with joy and not regret as I do not have the Emperor's power of forgetfulness.

Elaine has assured me that my daughter Alice will certainly succeed me.

