

THE RED WHISPER
The Prayer That Ignites Heaven and Hell

A Novel

The Prayer Carrier Series

LIBBY SEAMANS

Gabriel sat on the edge of his star listening, pondering, waiting...Jasper would soon receive his orders and Gabriel would be dispatched. All of heaven was on high alert. One mortal...One Carrier—the Red Whisper...what could it all mean?

It had been a week, but the words still echoed in his brain—reverberating like a clanging cymbal in a steel drum. He couldn't shake it. Like a caged animal his eyes darted around the cold, sterile hospital room looking for a way out...but there was none. He was trapped. It was real. He had become a statistic. His life had been reduced to a simple ratio.

“Lincoln, I’m sorry to have to tell you this, but the cancer is back. Your chance for survival has dropped to thirty percent. A stem cell transplant is your only hope.”

Dr. B had expressed his regrets and then relayed the news with the emotion of a robot, drawing circles and graphs on a white board to show how the cancer had outsmarted the drugs meant to kill it. Lincoln didn't drink much, a glass of wine now and then, but at that moment, it had been all he could think about. And his poor mom...he had never seen her without words. She had just sat there staring blankly at the white board. Neither of them knew what to say. How could this have happened?

The tumors had grown during his last round of chemo. The PET scan done simply to mark him for radiation surprised everyone. Everything changed. His past rushed in like an unexpected storm. Now here he was, once again held hostage by dangling tubes and metal bars—trapped in a

nightmare...only this time he might not wake up. At twenty-two, the words had shattered his hope for a normal life, his hope for a future without fear. He thought he was healed. God had tricked him. Why? What had he done to deserve this?

Lincoln stirred anxiously in the narrow hospital bed, trying to shake the words from his brain, trying to push back the horror that haunted him. As if cancer wasn't enough...now he would have to face that, too. He thought no one had to know about his hideous past. *He was wrong*. He couldn't die without telling her. His mom had to know.

There she sat, naive to his thoughts. He couldn't believe she had asked for a stationary bike to be put in his hospital room so he could keep his strength up. She had no idea what she was asking. He didn't want to keep his strength up. But he had gone along. Today she had come in, climbed on the bike, and declared they were going on an imaginary ride down the California coast. It would be fun...it would be a distraction she said. She didn't know there could be no distraction. The words, the noise, the memories wouldn't stop. It was like a freight train running through his brain. Nothing could quiet the torment. How could she ever understand what he was about to tell her?

Her familiar petite frame sat erect atop the stationary bike as if she was standing, her short cropped, dark hair looked straight ahead.

Staring intently at the back of her head, Lincoln willed his mouth open. "Mom, I have something to tell you. Don't turn around. Please, just listen," he managed. He could never get it out if she was looking at him.

“Okay Lincoln. I promise I won’t turn around. I’ll just listen,” his mother said softly, immediately wishing she hadn’t made the promise.

He paused and breathed a heavy sigh. “Mom...I saw the devil when I was three years old,” he blurted, releasing his words like releasing the pressure from an unexploded bomb.

“The devil...” she whispered. Elizabeth’s shoulders stiffened. Her hands turned white as she gripped the handlebars. She’d stopped moving.

The question hung in the air like an anchor. Lincoln mustered the courage to answer. “Yes, the devil. That was the first time I saw him. I woke up in the middle of the night, and two glowing eyes seemed like they were floating in the air above the toy box in the corner of my room. I thought it must be an animal. It was so dark I couldn’t see anything else. Then the eyes moved closer and closer, never blinking, never closing...just staring at me. It was like a shadow moving. I tried not to breathe so it wouldn’t know I was there, but I started choking and gasping for air...*and then...*he sat down on the edge of my bed. ‘Shhhh,’ he whispered. ‘Don’t speak, little one. I’m watching.’ And then he was gone.” Lincoln stopped, now whimpering like a small child who had had a bad dream wanting his mom to make it go away.

“I don’t understand, Lincoln. What are you saying?” Her mind exploding with questions she didn’t want answers to. She wanted to turn around, she wanted to run to her son...*but she had promised.*

“Mom... I’m saying I saw the devil. And not just one time. I saw him a lotta times. He kept coming back. He said if I loved you, I wouldn’t tell. He said if I told anyone, he would come after you and Daddy and my brothers.” Lincoln coughed, his mouth as dry as the desert air, but he had to keep going. He reached for the black Yeti tumbler next to his bed, clasping it with both hands,

he managed a few good sips of water, then sat it back on the table. Trembling, he pushed out his words. “Mom, I don’t know how else to say it. I was afraid. I didn’t want him to hurt you. *And...* I didn’t think you would believe me. Who would’ve believed me? The devil is real Mom. He’s a man...and *he’s a monster*. He changed right in front of me. He wanted me to see. He wanted me to be afraid. The devil isn’t what you think. He’s...” The words wouldn’t come.

Elizabeth could hardly speak—she could hardly utter her next thought, but she had to. “Do you still see him?”

“Yes, but I’m not afraid of him anymore. But, Mom, I’m afraid I’m going to die. I was afraid to die without telling you. You have to know he’s real.”

“Oh, Lincoln, son, I wish you had told me...but I understand why you didn’t, why you couldn’t. It’s okay now, Lincoln. It’s all going to be okay. You don’t have to worry about any of that now. You are not going to die. And the devil...” she paused, searching for the right words. “Well, *God will take care of him.*”

Elizabeth didn’t move. She was frozen to the seat of the stationary bike, anchored in front of the window of Lincoln’s hospital room. She couldn’t turn to look at her son as his dark secret penetrated her heart. Her tears silently rolled off her cheeks onto the floor, making a watery puddle on the dull grey tile. Her gaze fixed on the cement parking lot, twelve stories below. Life as she knew it stopped.

The imaginary bike ride down the California coast was meant to free him from the hospital bed. It freed him from a life of silence. For now, that had to be enough. She wouldn’t exhaust his courage. She wouldn’t push for more. This moment was about him: his pain, his fear, his freedom.

She would hold it together for his sake. Her rage would be silent. But the day would come when every demon in hell would hear it.

Numb, without breath, or sense of being, she began to pedal—pushing one foot down after the other in a mindless motion. She had promised she wouldn't turn around. The imaginary scene came to life as she described the whiff of salt air and giant pines carried by the coastal breeze, and the cry of seagulls overhead, as Lincoln relinquished his bed for the oasis of his mother's imagination.

She clutched the handlebars and bowed her head.

Father, why didn't I see? Why didn't You let me see? I don't understand.

She paused, barely able to utter another thought, another word, her face flushed with anger, her head pounding. How could she go on? How could she dispel the hate that welled up within her, the questions, the fear? Leaning forward, her perfect posture collapsed.

“God, please, help us,” she sighed with her last breath of strength. Silence.

Ariel, the thoughtful, determined prayer carrier dispatched to Elizabeth, penned her prayer with great urgency and vanished, instantly reappearing to capture the transition that would certainly come. She would not stay in this desperate place; the righteous ones always found their faith. He had been transcribing the prayers of righteous mortals for thousands of years, and they never gave up on their Father the King. He nudged the tips of his black boots into a crack of paint, pulled the parchment and pen from his prayer pouch, and steadied himself against the glass in the corner of the windowsill.

Then, as if someone were drawing her out of a deep well, Elizabeth found her strength. Her faith. The spirit within her moved her forward.

“Thank You, Father, for rescuing my Lincoln. You did see him. You did save him. Help me to never fail him again.”

Ariel, rejoicing over Elizabeth’s renewed faith, could hardly contain himself. He leapt to his feet, practically tearing his blue jacket on a protruding nail. Pacing back and forth across the windowsill, he penned her prayer with urgency. If she only knew he was there with her. The carriers were always there. Smiling, he folded the parchment and tucked it into his worn prayer pouch, securing it in his inside pocket. He would deliver the prayer and return before she could blink.

Her son was in a fight for his life, a fight that had been waged long before his battle with cancer. She could not fail him again. Her eyes were opened, and she would not close them. The unseen forces of hell had pierced their reality. They were after Lincoln. They had been after him all along. In mere seconds, images of her son’s life scrolled across her mind like an old movie reel.

It all makes sense now. The doctors had called it night terrors. Screams of unspeakable horror would suddenly shatter the night, her precious son once again tormented by some unseen demon, his peaceful sleep invaded by unexplained terror. Every night the discovery was the same: She would find him cradled in the safety of his bed, fast asleep, unaware of the torment that stalked

him. "Nothing we can do," the doctors said. "He will grow out of it." It went on for years. Why didn't she see it then?

She shifted her weight on the narrow bike seat to ease the strain on her back. Staring out the window, she scanned the images of Lincoln's childhood playing out in her mind, trying to connect all the events of his life to find an answer—an answer for all the hurt, all the torment, and for her blindness. The hand of guilt ripped at her heart. *When did the screams stop? What made them stop?*

Lincoln was five. Moved by the words of a visiting preacher, he held up his hand in children's church. He believed.

"Raised to new life" was what Pastor Kendall had said as he immersed Lincoln beneath the water in the elongated metal tub in front of the makeshift sanctuary, and then raised his small, soaked body up for all to see. Water ran down his little arms and legs, returning to the tub below. His white t-shirt and red shorts clung to his drenched body as his dad wrapped him in a large, white towel. Swaddled in a cocoon of warmth...*That's the night the screams stopped.* She could see it like it was yesterday. He never had another night terror. The fight was over...or so she had thought. How could she have known?

The windowsill afforded Ariel a full view of the room and a direct view of Elizabeth's face. Her swollen, tear-filled eyes were heavy with grief, yet he could see it: a tiny glimmer of hope reflecting in the pools of water. He removed his brass helmet and sat it securely on the sill...he didn't want to miss a thing.

Clinging to the handlebars, Elizabeth climbed off the stationary bike. Steadying herself, she looked around the small, cluttered room for tissue, barely able to see through her tears. *How could she wipe away her tears? Had he ever stopped crying? There would never be enough tissue to wipe away all the tears.*

She moved toward the narrow counter near the sink and grabbed a handful of tissue from the box and pressed it against her face. Wiping her eyes, she straightened and turned to look at Lincoln. Strengthened by an unseen force, she leaned over his bed and gently lifted his head, pressing his wet cheek against her face. The loosely tied green cotton gown clung to his limp, sweaty body. Elizabeth held Lincoln tightly against her, feeling his relief, finding her own strength. She had long understood the supernatural battle that raged against humanity. She now understood the battle that raged against her son. Whatever the reason, Lincoln was a threat to Satan. He was not going to stop.

“I’m sorry, son.”

“I know, Mom,” he whispered with shallow breath, his head resting in the curve of her neck.

Elizabeth could feel his struggle to speak. “You will never be alone again.” She said softly. She kissed his cheek and forehead over and over, finally resting with her arms wrapped fully around him. “I believe you, son.”

Those four words were like a thousand words to Lincoln. They gushed over him like a waterfall. Finally, he wasn’t alone.

Tenderly cupping his face in her hands, her deep brown eyes looking straight at him.

“I don’t know how, son, but I know God’s Word says He can take what was meant for bad and turn it into something good for those who love Him...and I know you love Him. So, something good is coming.” She said with conviction.

“I want to believe you, Mom, but it’s sure hard to imagine anything good is coming.”

Nurse Pat bounced into the room, holding a tiny, white paper cup and glass of water. “It’s time for your meds, handsome. The Ativan will help you sleep.” Lincoln quickly grabbed the edge of the white sheet and wiped his face, then reached to take the cup and water from her hands.

“Thank you,” Lincoln said, in his strong Texas drawl.

She had called him handsome from the first day she saw him. Surprised by his thick, brown, wavy hair, and lean, muscular frame, one would never know he was a cancer patient. Six months of chemo had not yet diminished his good looks.”

“Perfect timing, Nurse Pat,” his mom said with a little ease to her voice.

“Bottoms up!” Nurse Pat proclaimed as Lincoln tilted his head back to swallow the pills. “I’ll be back in a bit to check on you. Looks like you’re in good hands.” She patted his arm, and looked over at his mom, not acknowledging the evidence of Lincoln’s emotional state. Giving a quick smile to them, she turned and hurried off to make her rounds.

Elizabeth stepped into the small bathroom, promptly reappearing with a cold, wet washcloth. “This will help.” She gently pressed the cloth over his eyes, then wiped his face. Lincoln sighed as an unimaginable weight had been lifted. For the first time in a long time, he felt normal.

“Thank you, Mom, for believing me. I couldn’t face any of this if I didn’t...”

“I know,” she interrupted, softly stroking his head. “You rest now. I am right here.”

Succumbing to the Ativan, Lincoln’s eyes closed. Elizabeth pulled the blanket over his chest and tucked it in, silently gazing at her little boy who had become a man. Even in her guilt, she felt a deep connection with her son.

She moved the chair back to the corner near the window, noticing the sun had set behind the tall oaks just beyond the parking lot, creating a soft, pink glow across the dusky sky. Lingered for a bit, caught up in the stillness of the moment, she yearned for the peace outside the window, but her mind would not allow it. Sobered by the past, and sobered by what lay ahead of them, she knew there would be no peace.

Ariel stood and once again secured his helmet, his heart heavy with Elizabeth’s burdens. He would head to the banquet hall for a good meal and find strength in sharing her petitions among friends. It might be a while before he got another chance, and she would certainly need him to be at his best.

The rumbling in Elizabeth’s stomach broke the stillness, reminding her she hadn’t eaten all day. She grabbed her black Coach purse from the couch and slung it on her shoulder, glancing over at her son for a last look. He was sleeping soundly. She flipped the switch on the wall and stepped into the hallway, closing the door behind her. “I’ll be back tomorrow,” she whispered.

Satan thrashed about in torment, shedding his fleshly human form as he crawled out of the dead skin, exposing his tortured, darkened nature. The burning flesh offered up the stench of death as it melted on the hot embers. No longer wrapped in his mortal deception, the rusted musical instruments, barely visible in the deep hollowed holes of his body, pricked him with pain. The precious stones that once covered him with brilliant light had turned to black scales that now covered him in utter darkness.

Captive to the urges of the beast he had become, a prisoner of his own making, he stalked about arrogantly, full of pride in his false kingship, declaring his rule over Lincoln Banks. Stretching his thick, scaly body upwards, extending his head fully, he spewed fire like an offering, his foul, smoldering breath filling the dark cavern.

Constrained by the eternal Word, seething with rage, he gnashed his teeth and cursed against the King and His pathetic Son.

“I curse You who hold Yourself above all others. I rule over Your creation. They are my seed. They hear MY VOICE! I took Your angels from heaven! They followed me. AND I WILL TAKE THIS ONE!” Satan grew louder and louder as he continued spewing vile, evil blasphemies out of his dark, rebellious heart.

Fire and soot and stench swirled about his grotesque, muscular form as Satan moved about, crushing the burning stones beneath his feet, sending tremors throughout the black, endless cavern. The lost souls of the damned and demons alike convulsed in fear as the earth rumbled beneath them, yet they were captive to his powerful presence.

Adad had no need to be summoned; he knew the fury of his master meant only one thing—a soul had escaped. A mortal had broken free. And he would be charged with reclaiming that soul.

“Causing these worthless creatures to denounce the truth—to denounce the God they believe in—is the only way to win,” Adad smirked. Yes, forcing them to question everything they believed, planting the seed of doubt at just the right moment, was the only way. “*Was there even a God? Was it all a lie?*” He hissed jokingly, his mind immediately calculating the cunning ways he could bring a mortal to question the existence of King Elohim, the One they called Father. They placed so much hope in believing that their “*Father*” loves them, that they had worth...such pathetic little creatures. Causing them to question their worth, to question the reason for their very existence, was the first step. It always worked. Once they were there, it was easy. Once he got them to profess, “No one loves me. No one would miss me if I were gone,” he had them. Their faith would evaporate. They would die at their own hand or succumb to the mindless wonderings of the faithless. Such revelry was had when the fallen heard one of these loathsome creatures declare, “I am an atheist” just as simply as saying, “I want something to eat.”

The mortals could not be pried from the grip of the One who created them; yet they could choose to deny His existence. *Free will*, such an odd destructive gift. With a little deception, he used it against them.

He crawled from beneath a jagged crevice in the black, cavernous hall, keeping his head low as he crept toward the enraged Satan. The massive sea of tormented souls parted as Adad approached the throne. Red embers climbed forever upward, casting a deceptive glow of light, giving the lost souls an unquenchable, false hope of escape from the inferno that held them.

“How could you let this happen?” railed Satan. “Surely the chief demon of hell can keep a boy chained in silence.”

“Who, Master?”

“Lincoln Banks, you worthless idiot. He has been freed from his silence, the last thing holding him DOWN!” he roared, flinging Adad against the cavern wall with one forceful swipe of his hand.

Adad raised his crumpled body and shook off the blow. Bowing his long scaly form to the ground, he crept towards Satan, not daring to lift his head, having no desire to incur Satan’s penetrating gaze. He twitched, cocking his head slightly right, black drool dripping from the side of his mouth, sizzling against the cavern floor. He did not dare to speak but knew he couldn’t delay, or he would feel another blow. “But Master, there *is* one more thing. I have stricken him with cancer,” Adad uttered with a slight glint of satisfaction.

“You fool, Adad. That pathetic Yeshua has rule over cancer! Lincoln must denounce the King or die! Take your legions and end his life if he refuses to bow to me. I will regain dominion over his wretched soul. He will again behold my face. He *will* fear me again. His will, his emotions, his desires will be mine once again or he will die! This infectious little weasel must not learn his purpose!”

“Master, what is his purpose?” Adad asked, cowering before Satan.

“Lincoln’s purpose is of no concern to you! I dare you ask me about the hidden things. Yours is to obey my commands. Now go cripple that puny mortal with fear so that he bows to me again...or squash the little maggot!”