

# WARRIOR CHILDREN



## KEEPERS OF FIRE AND LIGHT

ONLY THE PURE CAN WIELD THE FIRE OF THE OTHERWORLDS

VAUGHN EDWARD

# **WARRIOR CHILDREN**

## The Guardian Series

**Book III: Keepers of Fire and Light**  
is the third installment in  
The Guardian Series.

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## WARRIOR CHILDREN

The Guardian Series

Book 3, *Keepers of Fire and Light*

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## PROLOGUE

PIECES OF ROCKS FLEW THROUGH THE AIR, and a second explosion sounded off in the distance. Sammy stumbled backward and landed on his back. He stood up and coughed loudly from the dust and dirt entering his lungs. To nobody in particular, he mumbled, "Damn, man. That hurt. What the hell's going on here, anyway?" He swiped his hands down the front of his shirt and noticed a small tear. "Really?! I liked this shirt!"

Listening intently, he heard screams in the distance, and he looked in every direction. *Maybe three or four caverns away. Where the hell's Kayden?* He began walking to the entrance to the next cavern, and the cave shook and rumbled again. There were more screams in the distance. He reached the entrance and peered into the next cave. It sloped downward into a smaller cavern. Bright torches lit up the left side, and most of what he could see were clouds of dust and dirt filtering through the air.

He pulled off his shirt and used it as a fan to help clear the air while he walked. After a stretch of nearly fifty feet, he reached the entrance to the next cavern. Just as he was about to walk through the entrance, somebody ran through and bumped into him.

Sammy fell over and looked up. "Kayden! What the hell, man?! I've been looking everywhere for you!"

"Bro! I've been looking all over for you! Took you long enough!"

Sammy eyed him briefly. He squinted his eyes and tilted his head, slightly confused. "So, what exactly IS going on?" He dusted himself off again.

Kayden looked a bit wild-eyed and shaken up. "There are demons down there. A LOT of them. There's also a bunch of people. All tied up. And no, I don't know what the demons are planning to do with the people."

Sammy stood up and tied his shirt around one of the belt loops of his pants. “Real demons? Like twelve to fifteen feet tall? Or the half-baked human-demons that are around seven feet?”

“Real ones. But not the twelve to fifteen kind. More like thirty feet.”

“Thirty feet tall?!” Sammy breathed out loudly and looked around. There was an uneasy feeling in his stomach. “Taking on true demons with only two of us is a huge risk. We don’t know the extent of their powers. But whatever. I’m game. Let’s get this over with. I really should’ve told somebody else to come along, but you didn’t sound worried about it. So it’s just you and me. I’m all you’ve got. How far down are they?”

Kayden seemed to have calmed down. “After this one. They’re all gathered in the next few caverns. The main one after this is huge. There are a few demons in the next caverns, and about ninety where the people are. I didn’t have a plan. I could’ve just gone in swinging, but I wanted to wait for you. I had to run back this way, cause the explosions were a little much for me.”

Sammy stared intently at him for a moment. Something was nagging him, but he could not pinpoint it. “How’d you get mixed up in all of this, anyway? You said you were able to sense them, cause of your new powers?”

Kayden nodded. “Yeah. The new powers. And with my new weapon, all my senses were heightened. I feel things now that I couldn’t feel before. I just followed the scent, or the feeling, of demons. That’s all.”

Sammy squinted his eyes, then rubbed them. “Yeah, I guess so. But... but we should’ve told Edward and Aaron, or Starko, or somebody. I don’t know what we were thinking.”

Kayden shrugged, nonchalantly. “Yeah, we probably should have.”

“Whatever.” Sammy waved him on. “Let’s just do this and get the hell outta here.”

They reached the next cavern. Sammy poked his head around the corner and saw five demons lurking about. “Dang, dude. You ain’t joking. Those are some huge demons. What are they doing?”

“I don’t know,” Kayden answered him. “I guess they’re just guarding the area. It’s like they have their own little operation.”

A little nervous, Sammy was biting his lower lip. “Let’s take them out. If we didn’t have our weapons, I’d be against doing this. Maybe go for the center of the foreheads. Your sword can do that long-distance with your fire, right? Mine can.”

“Yeah. It sure can.”

Sammy turned to peer into the cavern. Still looking ahead, he whispered, “How do you wanna do this? Just walk in quietly, or run in screaming like wild football players?” A few seconds passed without a response, and that nagging feeling grew stronger. He turned his head to face Kayden. As he was turning, he saw the shadow of a knife on the wall, projected from the torches. His right hand quickly moved to unsheathe the sword hanging at his waist, but he was too late. The knife sank into his belly, then thrust upward in one swift motion.

Sammy gasped and fell to his knees. He looked up. “What the hell, Kayden?! Why?!”



## CHAPTER 1

### Part I: Stolen Energy

Late January

THE SUN POKED OVER THE HORIZON, and Aaron stretched his arms out and yawned. While standing on the street corner waiting for Edward, he breathed deeply, and the cold, morning air rushed into his lungs. Everywhere he looked, snow covered the streets and grass. “What a perfect and beautiful planet.”

“Isn’t it?” Walking up to him, Edward handed him a hot coffee. “Cream, sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg. Just how you like it.” He took a sip of his own coffee. “It’s exactly as I like it too.”

Aaron took a sip. “Mmmm. So lucky to have coffee shops almost everywhere we travel. This is exactly how I like it. This is how it was made for me when we first met at the airport.”

Edward smiled. “That wasn’t actually that long ago, but so much has happened, it seems like forever ago.”

“You’re right.” Aaron nodded. “Since the time you all defeated Mephistopheles thousands of years ago, you’ve only been back to this planet for a few months. But we’ve already fought so many battles. I can’t believe how much has happened so far.”

They walked slowly down the street, talking and reminiscing over all the little details of their adventures together. “Thankfully, the past couple of weeks have been quiet. Ever since Moloch was laid to rest, we needed this break.” Edward took another sip of his coffee and continued. “I wish this was all over and we could all just enjoy our times and experiences.”

"Wouldn't that be nice?" Aaron gave him a pouty look. "Every day should be a play day."

"Indeed," agreed Edward. "If we could just play every day, and do nothing, I'd be a happy god. Well, happier than I already am." He grinned and gently ruffled Aaron's hair. "But, as you know, we still have to locate Damenion and take down his stupid master of a demon."

"Yup. All in due time." Aaron took another sip of his coffee. "I'm not even sure where to begin with all that. After Damenion disappeared from the vortex in India, all our info and clues went out the window. I don't know. Maybe he'll contact Thomas again."

A sigh escaped Edward's lips. "Yeah, I don't know about that. He really only contacted Thomas, cause he was ratting out Moloch. Now that Moloch's gone, Damenion doesn't really have a reason to contact us anymore."

They strolled for another three blocks, heading toward home. While walking underneath a bridge, a subway train passed overhead, and they waited for the sounds to dissipate. Once it passed, Aaron looked up and listened to the noisy train drifting off into the distance. "Do you remember that time..."

He was immediately cut off by a horrific scream, which came from overhead where the train had just passed above them. Within seconds, they both leaped up and over the top of the ledge of the bridge. They saw a young woman kneeling over an unconscious man.

Aaron kneeled beside her. Searching for a pulse, he felt the man's wrist. It was faint. He turned to the woman. "It's okay, I'm a medic," he lied. "I can at least help a little before an ambulance gets here. I'm Aaron." He pointed to Edward. "And this is Edward. He'll be calling 911 for you."

He saw her visibly relax. "I'm not with him." She pointed at the unconscious man on the ground. "We both happened to be walking in the same direction. A train passed. And when it passed us, a guy from the other

side of the tracks jumped like twenty feet in the air. He landed in the middle of us, and he put his hand on this guy's forehead. And then, he just fell over. It all happened in a matter of a few seconds. When he fell to the ground, that guy just sped off. He was like lightning fast."

"I see." Aaron laid his hand on the forehead of the unconscious man. "He looks to be around twenty years of age. What do you think?"

The girl shook her head slowly. "Looks that way."

Aaron pondered for a moment. "How old was this guy that sped off? What did he look like?"

"Ummm... he was young, I guess. Maybe early twenties. He had a cap on, dark hair. Caucasian, just normal height, a little taller than me, so maybe around 5'10". I don't really know what else. Skinny? Yeah, skinny. But, my god, he was fast."

Aaron glanced at Edward. "His energy was stripped from him, almost completely." He turned back to the girl. "Thankfully, I can replenish what was taken from him."

"I don't understand." She stared at Aaron, confused.

"In other words, he'll be fine," Aaron reassured her. He placed one palm on the man's forehead, and the other palm on his chest. Energy flowed freely from him to the unconscious body, and after a few minutes, the guy began to stir. He was murmuring something, and he slowly opened his eyes.

He stared at Aaron for a few seconds. "Who... who are you?"

"It's okay," the woman told him. "He saved you. I'm not sure what he did, but you're back." She pointed at Aaron. "He's a medic. I think."

"What? Who are you?" he asked the woman. "Saved me from what?" He tried to get up. A sharp pain shot through his head. "Ohhh, my head."

“It’s okay.” Aaron told him to relax on the ground. “An ambulance will be here soon. Something happened to you, and now you’re fine. We’ll wait here til the ambulance arrives. The police will most likely be here also.”

The woman sat on the ground next to the groggy man. “I can wait, since I saw it happen. The police will want to know what happened.”

Aaron stood up and walked over to Edward. “Something unnatural. Not sure what it is, but I did see what happened, when I put my hands on him to give him healing energy, I saw the other guy’s face.” Aaron glanced at the victim on the ground. “I’m pretty sure the guy in the ballcap was stealing this guy’s energy. At least, that’s what I was picking up on.”

In the distance, they heard the sound of a siren, and within minutes, an ambulance pulled up. They heard another siren closing in on them. “That’s probably the police.” Aaron placed his hand on Edward’s shoulder. “It’s time for us to go.” They both quickly took off in the direction of home.

“Our faces have been all over the news lately,” Aaron reminded him. “It’s not a good idea to be seen by the police or any government official.”

“You’re right about that. It makes it harder for us to move around.” Edward looked around and sighed. “I know it’s a small thing, but we both dropped our coffees when we jumped up on that bridge.”

“It’s okay. There’s another coffee shop on the next block,” Aaron answered. “Gotta love this planet, huh? If Mars had even one coffee shop, it would truly be miraculous.” He rubbed his face with both palms. “Our problem now, is finding out who or what this energy-sucking vampire is. We can’t have some lightning-fast guy running around Chicago, stealing people’s energy from them. I’ve never even heard of such a thing.”

“Yeah. We already have enough problems with this demon from Mars.” Edward stretched his arms out and took a deep breath while walking. “Blight and his armies are already plenty enough for us to worry about.”

## Part II: Almost Immortal

Sammy sped through the hallway and burst into the training hall. Not too far behind him, Cole was screaming at the top of his lungs. His hair was a matted mess, and he was wearing only a pair of sweatpants.

“I’m gonna kick your ass, Sammy!”

“Gotta catch me first!” Sammy was a blur, as he slowed time down.

Cole, however, was already expecting this. He released his power, and seven plants inside the training hall shot their vines out. They wrapped around Sammy’s legs, and he fell flat on his face, unable to move.

Heather walked down the hall, and she was met by Patrick in the kitchen. “What’s up with those two?”

“Oh, Sammy was trying to get Cole to pee. He stuck Cole’s hand in warm water while he was sleeping. When it didn’t work, he slowed time down. I guess Cole was dreaming, and it froze his dreams. Then, he suddenly woke up. That caused Sammy to freak out and spill the water all over Cole’s face. When Cole realized what was happening, he started screaming that his dream was in super slow time. Sammy jetted, and Cole chased him.”

“You mean, I can make somebody’s dreams slow down if I mess with time while they’re sleeping?” Heather was lost in thought for a moment.

“I mean, I guess.” Patrick shrugged his shoulders. “Sounds like Cole caught up with Sammy.”

They both entered the training hall and found Cole standing over Sammy. Sammy was completely tied up in vines, and his face was beet red from laughing so hard. Cole was fuming and trying his best not to pulverize him. When he saw Heather, he backed up a few feet.

“That’s right, Cole. Back up. Go on. Another foot.” Heather scooted him out of the way. She sat on the ground next to Sammy. “So, I heard you slowed Cole’s dreams down. How was that?”

“Ask him.” He pointed at Cole and burst out laughing again.

Heather looked at Cole. “You can release the vines now.”

“Fine.” Cole snapped his fingers, and the vines slithered back to their own respective pots.

“What was it like in your dreams,” Heather asked him.

“I don’t know.” Cole calmed down a bit before continuing. “I guess I was dreaming. And all of a sudden, everything slowed down. Everyone was talking really slow and moving slow. But I was conscious of it. I knew they were all moving slow. It’s different when I’m awake. If Sammy had done that to me when I was awake, I wouldn’t really know that everyone is slow, cause I’d be moving super slow too. But in the dream, I was conscious of everyone else moving slow. Does that make sense?”

Heather was silent for a moment. “That does make sense. Interesting.” She nodded her head and looked at Cole, then at Sammy. “You couldn’t get him to pee, huh?”

“No!” Cole’s face turned red. “I’m not a little kid! That shit don’t work on me! I’ll get you back, Sammy. You watch.” He turned around and walked off.

Sammy yelled out, “Yeah, but at least I’ll be expecting it!”

“No! You won’t!” Cole yelled back. At that moment, the mat beneath Sammy caved in, and roots from various trees wrapped around his body. The roots pulled him underground and dragged him twenty feet, before crashing through the underside of the floor and dumping Sammy back on the mat.

“Got you back.” Cole grinned wide. “And you weren’t expecting it.”

“What the hell?!” Sammy screamed out. “You dragged me underground!”

Heather shook her head. “Well, you kind of deserved it, Sammy. But seriously, Cole. Isn’t that a bit extreme? Now, Christopher has to fix the mat.”

“Nope.” Cole raised his hand in the air. He closed his fist, and the hole next to Sammy closed up. The mat sealed up completely. He repeated it, and the first hole closed up also.

Heather’s eyes were wide. “You know how to do that?”

“Yeah. I watched Christopher do it after my match with Jayson from the Sun warriors. All I did just now was mimic what he did. It’s actually very simple. Like Christopher said, that mat is made of materials from the Earth, which I’m connected to. Stuff like that is pretty simple.” Cole shrugged his shoulders, grinned at Sammy and turned around. “I’ll be in the shower now.”

Heather turned to Patrick. “That innocent-looking boy can be really scary at times.” She yawned, then took off walking toward the exit. “I’m heading to the kitchen to start breakfast for everyone. I could use some coffee too.”

“I’m coming with you.” Patrick ran and caught up to her. “I’m starving.”

“Which isn’t anything new.” She slapped him on the back. “Come on. You can help me cook.”

“Yeah, no.” Patrick shook his head from side to side. “That’s not what I said. I said, I’m starving.”

“Yes, I know. And I said you can help me cook.” She quickened her pace toward the kitchen, and she heard Patrick groan.

“Fine.”

When they entered the kitchen, they found Edward and Aaron sitting at the counter. “Hey, guys.” Heather waved at them. “You missed the informal match between Cole and Sammy. Cole won.”

“Oh, nice. You missed the energy-sucking vampire, who nearly killed some boy in the city.” Aaron set his coffee on the counter. “We were walking, and we ran into this girl who was kneeling over this boy on the ground. Some

guy sucked all the energy from the boy by placing his hand on his head. Also, he's lightning fast too. It's a good thing we were there."

"You serious?" Patrick's eyes were wide. "Could that happen to one of us? Like, some dude put his hand on top of my head and take all my energy?"

Edward shook his head. "I highly doubt it. First, that guy would have to best us in a match. Even if he got close enough to try something like that, his energy output would have to be greater than ours. That isn't an easy feat to accomplish. It's nothing for us to worry about. But it is something for us to worry about for the mortals who may be affected by him in the future."

"I mean, I'm still mortal," Patrick reminded him.

"Yes, you are." Edward shrugged. "But you have god-like powers, with gods watching over you. Your output of energy is much greater than any other mortal on the planet. For somebody to beat you, their energy has to be greater than your energy. It doesn't matter what their powers are. If your resonance, your vibration, is higher, then you will always win."

"You have any leads on this freak?" Heather was rummaging around in the refrigerator. She pulled out a bottle of juice, poured her and Patrick a cup, and sat next to Edward. "Looks like he's on our list now, along with that twenty-foot-tall demon, Blight, and the thousands in his armies." She then tilted her head, confused. "I swear, I'm so tired, I forgot I wanted coffee. But instead, I poured us this juice." She gulped her juice and stood up to get some coffee.

"And Damenion. Can't forget that weasel." Edward tapped his fingertips on the countertop and breathed out audibly. "I still can't believe he just disappeared when we were in India. That little bastard just snuck away without saying anything. And no, we have zero leads on this new guy. We know what he looks like, and we know he stole somebody's energy."



“Well that’s refreshing to hear. So many great things happening. Life keeps getting more and more exciting.” There was a hint of sarcasm in Heather’s voice. “Come on, Patrick. Time to cook.”

“Yeah, fine.” Patrick walked over to where Heather was standing.

“Pancakes or waffles?” Heather asked them.

“Pancakes!” Aaron raised his hand.

“Waffles!” Edward also raised his hand.

“What we meant to say, was that we both want pancakes, and we both want waffles.” Aaron laughed and added, “And a bowl of fruit.”

“Hash browns, too,” Edward added. “Since Patrick’s helping out, that should be easy enough to fix up.”

“Yeah, fine. I’ll cut up the fruit.” Patrick sauntered over to the refrigerator and pulled out random fruits. “So, tomorrow’s the last day, isn’t it?”

“You mean, for Christopher, Gene and Kayden to gain immortality? Yes, it is.” Edward nodded. “If what everything Kayden told us when he was in a trance is true, then tomorrow should definitely be the day.”

“You think it’s that easy?” Patrick asked. “Just twenty-one days?”

“Well, I wouldn’t say it’s easy.” Aaron tilted his head and thought for a moment. “First, you all had to find me, an immortal who’s been alive for thousands and THOUSANDS of years. Then, Edward had to take the karmas of a lot of people, and then get healed by Gaia and both our fathers, so that he could become immortal. And it also took both of us getting initiated by Uri, an angel of the EI clan. All of this, so that we could pass on the powers to Kayden.

“When Kayden got his powers, his body became stronger. That prepared him to take an influx of energy from me and Edward. Gaining powers and moving from Mars gave him the confidence to step up to the challenge of immortality. And when he was in a trance, we got the needed info to know it takes two immortals to make someone else immortal in twenty-one days.”

“Yeah.” Patrick shrugged. “So it’s that easy. Twenty-one days, huh?”

“Yeah, that’s it, Patrick.” Heather rolled her eyes.

“Well, I’m just saying. Now that all of that happened, according to Kayden, or I mean, that god that possessed him, it’s only twenty-one days. We should be pumping out the energy and making everyone immortal now.” Patrick tossed a blueberry into his mouth. “Right?”

“Yeah, well, I don’t see you volunteering for it.” Heather scooted past him and opened a drawer next to the refrigerator. She pulled out eleven large potatoes. “This should be enough for everyone.”

Edward walked over to a cabinet and pulled out a cutting board. “Here, pass those potatoes over to me. I’ll help peel and shred those.”

“I mean, maybe I’ll volunteer once I see what happens to Kayden.” Patrick was a bit defensive.

“Okay. Whatever you say.” She laughed at Patrick. “But Kayden didn’t need anyone to volunteer before him. He just kind of jumped into it without worrying about the results. Seems kind of brave if you ask me.”

“Well, I didn’t ask you. And we’ll just see what happens to all three of them. If it works out, then we should think about making everyone immortal. It just makes sense, right?” He looked at Aaron and Edward.

Aaron rubbed his face. “Maybe. But like you said, we’ll just have to see. There are probably a few ways to make somebody immortal. This seems like the fastest way, inducing them with the energy from two immortals.”

Edward was curious. “Have you thought about it at all, Patrick?”

“I have. Who wouldn’t want to live forever?”

“Well,” Aaron chimed in, “by living forever, it means, you outlive your friends and family, and you oversee putting them into the ground. It means, you get to see the world change before your eyes, for better or for worse. If war happens, you live through it. Is that something you’re prepared to live through?”

“I’ve lived for a very long time. I’ve seen the death of millions of people throughout the years. Cultures, countries, and the destruction of more than one planet. People I got close to, and strangers who I never got to really know. But for me, it’s just my way of life and living. Immortality is neither good nor bad. It does, however, give perspective on the good times and the bad times, and time for you to reflect on everything which has happened.”

Patrick was lost in deep thought. He was gazing at the floor, then looked up. “Since I don’t really have a family anymore, I guess it doesn’t matter, right? My family is pretty much everyone who lives here. So, if everyone chose to be immortal, then I wouldn’t lose anyone in the long run.”

Edward gave him a sympathetic look. “It doesn’t work that way. Some may choose to live forever. Others may not. You should prepare for the worst, while doing your best to see the good in everything. You may lose some of your friends later in life. You have to be able to accept that and be okay with it.”

“And also,” Aaron added, “Kayden already lost everybody and everything. That demon, Blight, took his parents from him and trampled his village. Kayden’s only function on Mars was to protect the younger kids. He didn’t need to think about his past or the future of what may come. He isn’t worried about losing anyone, since he’s already lost it all.

“He didn’t say it, but I think Kayden sees the achievement of immortality as a way to protect the people of this planet, just as he tried to do on Mars. I don’t think he actually cares about living forever. He’s got nothing to lose. His only function is to protect humanity, so they don’t have to experience what he experienced. So that made his decision for immortality an easy one.”

“I guess so.” Patrick started chopping up the fruit in silence.

“Alright.” Heather smacked him on his shoulder, interrupting his silence. “Let’s hurry this up, so everyone can eat in a timely manner.”

Patrick nodded. “Right on.”

### Part III: All-Out City Battle

Entering the training hall, Christopher was brimming with joy. With a big grin on his face, he turned around to face Gene and Kayden. “I can’t believe it’s the last day! We’ve gotten twenty straight days of empowerments for immortality!” He thought for a second. “Hmmm. We could call it the Empowerments for Immortality Course. Or maybe, 21 Days to Immortality.” He snickered, and Gene rolled his eyes.

“Yeah, I don’t know about that.” Gene lowered himself to the mat to stretch his legs out. “That kind of sounds like a sales pitch for an infomercial. The traditional, ‘do this, and it will help you’ from master to disciple always appealed to me. Then, the student doesn’t have so much of an expectation. They just suddenly have a huge break-through.”

“Is that how you two normally teach?” Kayden asked.

Christopher nodded. “It sure is. In the past, we’ve been pretty informal. We tell the student to do something, without giving them a time frame, and we just expect them to do it. If they follow what we tell them, their road is usually clear. Not to say that it isn’t hard. Expectations are what causes roadblocks. Then again, when you were suspended in the air, and your higher consciousness came through, or whoever that god was who was speaking through your body, you clearly told everyone it only takes twenty-one days to gain immortality. So maybe this is just one of those things that is cut and dry.”

“True.” Gene stood up. “This is territory we’ve never ventured through. That’s what makes it so exciting for us now.”

“You guys ready to do this?” Edward entered with Aaron, Thomas and Starko. “The others are on their way.”

Thomas began tinkering with the recording equipment, while Douglas helped him set up. There was some chattering at the entrance of the training

hall, and everyone filtered in. Heather, Gwen, Mery, Sammy and Patrick were carrying trays of drinks, while Caleb was chasing after Cole, for reasons unknown. The former mercenaries, Jace, Kane, Gunner, Edmond, Finn, Payton and Khenpo, shuffled past and took a seat on the floor.

The Sun students, two hundred in total, appeared through a side door. As they passed the picture of Surya, the Sun god, they each took a bow, before marching to the back of the hall.

Heather shook her head. "We're so undisciplined compared to them."

"You ain't kidding," Mery agreed. "Starko trained them almost like they're in the military."

Edward waited for everyone to take their seat. "As a recap, and as you all know, Aaron and I have empowered them with the energy of immortality for twenty straight days. When Kayden was suspended in the air the first day, a random god came through him and voiced out instructions to do this for twenty-one days. And once those twenty-one days are up, these three should be immortal. This is new ground for us, so we're merely taking the word of this god. We don't know who this god is, but our hearts tell us he's the real deal.

"And since this is new ground for us, we honestly don't know how long this'll take, but we wanted everyone here anyway. If these three are suspended in the air for a long time, you can all disperse and just hang out and do whatever." He glanced at Thomas. "You ready to record?"

Thomas peered through one of the cameras, then made an adjustment on his laptop. "I sure am."

"And are you three ready?" Edward asked Gene, Christopher and Kayden. Each of them nodded.

"Alright!" Aaron walked to the center of the mat. "Then let's do this!"

At that moment, Thomas felt his phone buzzing. He looked at the screen. 'No Caller Id'. He was about to ignore it, but the nagging feeling made him answer it. He swiped his phone and put it to his ear. "This is Thomas."

"Old friend. How are you?"

Thomas sucked in his breath. "Damenion. Of all the times for you to call, this has to be the most inopportune time. I'm reeeaaalllly busy at the moment. By the way, where are you?"

"Funny question," Damenion answered. "You know I will not say. However, more pressing, is what I do have to say."

"Go on." Thomas signaled the group and pointed to his phone.

"Yes," Damenion continued. "As you know, I only contact you when I need for you to clear out an area for me, as you did with Moloch. As it stands, another serious player has entered into this game, and we have no idea who it is. He, or it, threatens our existence."

"Right now, there is an army of mercenaries running through your city. I'm surprised you are not already on it. It just went live on the news. When I became aware of all this, I expected to see you and your crew in the middle of it." He paused for a dramatic effect. "Alas, you were nowhere to be found, and the city is being trampled upon as I speak."

"Well, as I said, it's an inopportune time, and we're busy with some important things. We do have lives." Thomas shook his head. "But, in light of what you said, I'll check this out."

"Good. You do that. You clear the area and take them out, and my master and I can do what we need to do, without them in our way. You know the deal." Damenion hung up.

Thomas sighed. He noticed the group in front of him was waiting to hear what he had to say. "It was Damenion. Something's happening this very moment in Chicago. He told me it's a new player, and he has no idea who it is,

but it seems this person is somehow interfering with him and his plans. It looks like we've been so busy and sidetracked here, we didn't hear about any of this. But he said it just went live."

"If this is true," Gene spoke up, "then we have to check it out. Are you able to pull up the live feed, so we can see what it is we're dealing with?"

"Hold on." Thomas clicked on his laptop. "I'll bring up the feed now." The online feed came up. The scene was in the downtown area, and he stared at it in horror. Edward, Aaron, Gene and Christopher all ran over to look.

Edward gasped. "It's like a war going on right now! How did we not hear about this?!"

Christopher looked at Gene and sighed. "We can't possibly sit this one out, just for the sake of immortality. That would be very selfish."

"You're right," Gene agreed. "We have to go there and fight. Besides, it's early, and we can be back here later to do this last day of empowerment."

Kayden squinted his eyes for a second. "If you guys leave to fight, I'm coming with you.

Edward nodded in agreement. "We all go."

Just then, the live feed switched to other parts of the city. It was a split screen. The left side showed the Southside of Chicago, and the right side showed a few blocks surrounding Wrigleyville. Demonic mercenaries were running rampant everywhere.

Starko walked over and peered at the screen. "No way!" He thought for a moment. "Edward, why don't you take a group to the downtown battle. I'll take my guys to the other two battles, since there are a lot of us. We'll split the Sun students up and head to the Southside and to Wrigleyville."

He addressed the Sun students. "I want two groups of fifty each to go to the two fights, in Wrigleyville and on the Southside. There are a hundred of you to scatter out and secure those two areas. Danny, you're in charge of the

Southside group. Starr, you oversee the group in Wrigleyville. Sun students only in those groups, since you guys work well with each other. And the same with the group with Edward. You guys already know how to work side by side.

“The other one hundred Sun students, you’ll split up. Make sure none of these mercenaries are running loose past those areas. Spread further out and guard the perimeters of the city. You’re the last line of defense, so no mercenaries end up past Humboldt Park or go up North, or even the burbs.”

Starko glanced around the room. “Also, stay out of the way of any police. If they ask you questions, just keep fighting and ignore them. They’ll clearly see this isn’t a normal battle by any means. Any questions?”

There were random shouts of “nope” and “no questions here” and “let’s do this”.

“Good.” Starko quickly walked to the front and grabbed a short sword hanging next to the picture of Surya. “This was always more than decoration.” He slipped it behind his back. “We leave right now. Sun students have their vehicles. Gene, Mery and Lynne can portal everyone to the downtown area. It’s centered around Michigan Avenue.”

Everyone gathered whatever weapons they needed and met back in the training hall. By that time, all the Sun students were already gone. Gene, Mery and Lynne stood in the center of everyone. They focused their intent and raised their energy. A huge portal opened up. Gene led the way. Lynne was last, so she could close it.

### ***The Southside***

Danny and his crew arrived a few blocks from Hyde Park. They all found random parking spots near alleys and along various streets. Some parked in the middle of the streets and jumped out of their cars.



Quickly surveying the area, Danny saw people screaming and running in every which way. “What in the hell?!” He heard gunshots, car alarms and a high-pitched alarm from a business around the corner. In the distance, smoke was rising in the air, and there was a stench of burning wood and chemicals.

Chaos ensued in all directions. By that time, the other forty-nine Sun students in his group had made their way to where he was standing, but Danny was speechless. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a skinny blonde boy shuffle up next to him, but he was so lost in thought, it did not register in his mind who had walked up to him.

Standing next to Danny, Seth asked, “What’s the plan?”

Danny turned and stared at Seth. It took him a few seconds before he answered. “Sorry, Seth. I was just processing everything. The plan is to immobilize every one of the attackers. Do what you need to do. Nobody fights alone. At least two. Even better, groups of three or four.” He took off walking at a fast pace. “Everyone, follow me.”

It was a horrifying scene in all directions. Shattered windows, overturned cars, smoke, seven dead bodies, and frantic people running from their homes and businesses. Danny looked up and saw a helicopter overhead. *The news station is watching us.*

The police were already on the scene, but their gunfire was no match for the mercenaries. Danny watched a mercenary sprint toward a lone cop who was firing his weapon. The bullets sunk into the hulking figure, but did nothing, and the cop was pulverized against a wall. Danny turned his head in disgust.

“There’s maybe a couple hundred or more of them here! Spread out!” he shouted to his team. The Sun warriors grouped themselves into teams of three and four, and they raced toward the battle.

Danny pulled his whip from his side, and both his body and his whip blazed into a ferocious fire. A cop turned and saw him and his crew running.

He pointed the gun at Danny. Before the officer could get a shot off, Edison, the Sun warrior to Danny's left, shot a stream of fire from out of his palm, scaring the cop and causing him to stumble backward.

The fire in Danny's body went out, and he tackled and pinned the cop to the ground, using his strength and magick. "Sorry, officer, but I didn't come here to get shot at. We're the good guys. We were sent here by some higher-ups, and we're on your side. My crew and I are here to fight and take these guys out. Your guns don't have any effect on them, but our powers will. I'm gonna let you up now." He glanced at Edison. "Take his gun for a second."

Edison took the gun away and stepped back. There was a flash in the corner of his eye, and he saw a mercenary running toward him. Allie, the third person in Danny's group, met the mercenary head-on, tripping him with her legs and using his momentum to push him to the ground. She then lifted his head up and smacked it into the cement. For good measure, her hand flared up and burned a hole in his skull. When she did, a bright light floated from his body and into the sky, into a huge portal that seemed to disappear into a void.

She looked confused. "It's probably Gene, Mery's teacher," Danny told her. "He's pretty keen on saving the souls during these battles. That's part of their powers from the line of Ascension."

The officer's eyes widened when he saw what she did. He rolled over and tried to stand up. "As I said, officer, we're on your side." Danny looked at the officer square in the eyes. "I'd appreciate it if you spread the word. We'll be taking out the bad guys."

He stammered, "Ye- yeah. I can do that."

"Give him his gun back, Edison." Edison handed the gun to the officer.

The cop began to walk off and was met by another who had drawn his gun on the group. "Wait! Don't fire!" the first cop shouted. "These guys just took out one of those monsters. They said they were sent by someone higher up."

The second cop saw the dead mercenary on the ground, the back of his skull charred. Reluctantly, he lowered his weapon and nodded.

“Alright.” Danny addressed his crew. “We have to get back into this fight.” His body flared up into a ball of fire, which startled both cops. With that, the three quickly eyed their surroundings and ran to the nearest mercenary.

### ***Wrigleyville***

Seven blocks from the stadium, Starr parked his car and met the other forty-nine Sun warriors a block and a half away from all the action. There was an explosion, and people were screaming. Traffic had stopped on the main roads, and most cars were abandoned. Overhead, there was a helicopter.

Starr took about ten seconds to glance in all directions. “Man. What a mess.” He was about to address his group, but out of the corner of his eye, he saw two huge mercenaries who had trapped three teenagers. One of the teenagers had a bat. He had taken it from a store that had its windows smashed in, and he was standing in front of his two friends, trying to protect them from the onslaught of the two giants. The boy, skinny and standing at 6’2”, only reached the height of the chest of the mercenaries before him.

“Yo!” Starr yelled out in their direction. Both mercenaries turned their heads and saw Starr and his group. Starr’s body lit up in a bright fire, and he made a beeline toward them. Jayson, who was standing nearby, also transformed his body into a ferocious fire. The two mercenaries had no choice but to take on the two newcomers.

They turned to face the walking bodies of fire. Starr was only ten feet away. He saw the teenagers run off, and at that moment, he charged straight into his foe. “Let’s see how strong you really are!” He batted the mercenary’s arms away and slid in and picked him up from the front. The mercenary was crying out from the burning fire, and Starr slammed his back onto the cement.

He picked up the mercenary again and slammed him down again. And again. The mercenary's body went limp, and a bright light left his body and raced toward a portal in the sky. "Well check that out!" Starr scratched his head.

Jayson did a similar technique, with his body on fire, except he ended up flipping his opponent over his shoulder, then kicking his face into the concrete several times. "Man. That's gross." He looked up and saw Starr nod at him. They both watched, as light left the body and soared upward.

"Alright, there's a lot more action!" Starr yelled out to the rest of the Sun warriors. "Pick your fights! And I shouldn't have to tell you to WIN them!" They all broke up into their respective groups of three and four.

Starr and Jayson were in a group, along with Syd, a slim, athletic, blonde-haired guy who was in his forties, but only looked as old as twenty-one.

Syd ran up to them both. "I guess there's no need to ask if y'all are ready to do this, huh?"

"I was born ready." Jayson grinned.

"Sure you were, but I'm pretty confident you stole that line from a movie. It's a bit overdone, don't you think?" Syd was about to turn the other direction, but he saw the kid with the bat. "You battling with us?"

Starr shook his head. "No. He's not. Get out of here!"

The kid did not move. "I'm staying. My friends are gone. They're safe now. I made sure they got out of here, but I'm staying. I'm Sky..."

"I don't care who you are!" Starr screamed out. He wiped his forehead and breathed out heavily. "You gotta go! Today ain't the day you get to play hero. You don't got no powers, and you don't know how to fight. The way you're gripping that bat, you could probably take the head off a duck, but not much more." He calmed a bit. "You're gonna get killed out here."

"I won't. And it doesn't matter. I'm staying, whether you like it or not. I don't have to fight with you. I'll do my own thing." He started to walk off.

“God-dammit.” Starr rolled his eyes. “Wait a second. If I can take that bat from you in less than ten seconds, then you gotta scam and get the hell outta here. But if you can last more than ten seconds, you can stay.”

The boy thought for a second. “Deal.”

“Ready?” Starr asked him.

“Mmm hmm.” The boy nodded, then slightly bent his knees.

“Count it, Jayson.” Starr readied himself.

Jayson put his right arm in the air. “Alright. Three, two, one. Go!” His arm came down to signal the start of the ten seconds.

As soon as Jayson gave the signal, the boy leaped to his right and sprinted away from Starr. Not expecting that to happen, Starr had to chase him down. He caught him within three seconds and flung his whip at him. The whip caught hold of the bat, and Starr pulled hard.

The boy had a firm grip on it, but he was struggling. Starr felt an energy pulsate from the boy. It seemed like it came from the boy’s bat, through Starr’s whip and into him. The energy was tugging at Starr’s solar plexus. He tried pulling the whip again, but it would not budge.

Jayson was counting down. There were three seconds to go.

“Give me that BAT!” Starr screamed out. He pulled with all his might, and even used some of his magick.

The boy felt a pressure on him, as if some kind of unseen barrier was pushing outward from him. He saw the determination on Starr’s face, which made him angry, and the boy also screamed out. When he did, Starr felt another pull on his solar plexus, and a stream of fire shot out from his hands into his whip and into the bat. The bat was completely on fire, and the boy was still holding it.

“Game over!” Jayson raised his hand. “Ten seconds are up!” He looked at Starr. “You causing that fire in that bat?”

Starr was dumbfounded. "It ain't me." He sat down for a second. "I actually feel a little drained."

Syd walked over to the boy. He put his hands on the bat and felt the fire. "It's magickal, and it's as hot as anything we put out there." He eyed the boy for a few seconds. "How are you doing this? And why aren't you burning?"

The boy shrugged. He was as confused as they were. "I don't know."

Jayson walked over and held out his hand. "Can I have that bat for a second?" The boy handed it to him. It was still on fire, but Jayson put it out. He gave it back to the boy. "Can you make it start up again?"

The boy fiddled with it for a few moments, but nothing happened. "No. I don't know. I don't know what I did, but it's not working anymore."

Jayson rubbed his chin. "Well, whatever you did, you seem to have command over the fire. Your hair isn't burned, and your hands aren't charred."

"Nope." The boy rubbed his hand through his hair. "I'm pretty sure my wavy, dark hair still looks as good as ever." He pointed at Starr. "Him, on the other hand? He doesn't look so great."

Starr got up. "I'm better now." He walked over to the boy and put his hand out. "I'm Starr. What'd you say your name was again?"

"Skyler. My name is Skyler."

"Cool. How old are you?"

"I'll be eighteen in a couple weeks." Skyler proudly raised his head and chin.

"Dude, you could've just said you're seventeen." Starr rolled his eyes. "So, you really don't know how you did that?"

He shrugged. "No, I don't. And it didn't hurt or burn. I've never done anything like that before."

Well, it's a pretty neat trick you did there, especially not knowing how you did it." Syd gave him a thumbs up.

"I'll say." Starr rubbed his face and took a few deep breaths. "It felt like he stole some of my magick. I don't know how he did it, but I think the fire came from me, but he was the one who caused it by taking it from me."

Skyler shrugged again.

"Alright, Skyler." Jayson slapped him on the shoulder. "You're coming with us. You just earned a spot next to us on the battlefield. Just stay close."

"Deal." Skyler followed closely behind.

### ***Downtown Chicago***

A large portal opened up, and Gene, Edward, Aaron, Christopher, Heather and everyone else who lived at Starko's, walked through. Once through, Lynne closed it, while Gene quickly invoked his father and opened up a portal in the sky to the Otherworlds for any of the souls who would lose their bodies during this day's battle.

The stench of burning gas and oil filled the air, along with the sounds of car alarms and people screaming. Overhead, there was a news helicopter filming everything happening below. As soon as the gods, Guardian Watchers and their entire crew came on the scene, a group of nearly two hundred half-demon, half-human mercenaries rushed to where they were standing. Another hundred or so were causing havoc and waiting to take their turn on the gods.

"Heather, Sammy, stay close to me! Our powers of Time are stronger together!" Edward screamed out. "We fight with our backs to each other!"

He glanced toward Gene, who had done the same with Mery and Lynne, using their magickal knowledge of dimensions. Christopher, Cole and Gwen were in their own little group. Christopher and Cole had called upon the Earth and had hundreds of swirling rocks circling around their three bodies, ready to attack. Gwen was their defense, using dirt, rocks and metals to shield them from magick and physical attacks.

On another team, Kayden and Sunny were working with Thomas, using their powers of the Sun, and the fire from Agni. Starko was on his own. He glanced and saw Kayden swipe the dirt in front of him with his sword, causing a thin line of fire to shoot out and travel ten feet on the cement, igniting the body of one of the assailants. *Dang. I've never seen that before.*

Patrick and Caleb were their own two-person team, linked up in their thoughts and movements. Their speed and agility were unmatched by any mercenary, and they wiped out six of them within the first three minutes.

The former mercenaries were also engaged in the battle. Jace, Gunner and Kane were a team, while Finn, Edmond and Payton were grouped together. Khenpo and Douglas were on their own, adding their powers and might wherever they were needed.

Five grueling hours had passed. Within the first thirty minutes, all the police on the scene had backed away and let the gods and their crew take over. Nearing the sixth hour, every half-demon mercenary had been slain.

Christopher and Gwen walked around, silently assessing the damage. Large pieces of cement from buildings spilled onto the sidewalks, along with broken glass from shattered windows. Cars were overturned, and parking meters were knocked over. Christopher let out a deep breath. "We have to clean up. And the other areas where the Sun warriors are. That'll take all day."

Gwen placed her hand on Christopher's shoulder. "I'm sorry. You may not have enough time to receive your last empowerment for immortality today."

He just shrugged. "It's all good. Somehow, this was meant to happen. Whatever happens with that, is also what is meant to happen. He glanced at the time on his phone. There might be time. We have til midnight."

Aaron was a few feet away. He was inspecting the body of one of the mercenaries. "Notice anything, Christopher? They don't have an upside-down moon on their forehead, like the mercenaries from Mars who work under Blight.



They all have two dots in the middle of their forehead. And I felt their energy. They aren't from Mars."

Christopher took a good look at them. He placed his hand on the forehead of the dead body and shuddered. "It isn't Earth energy either. These half-baked demons aren't from Earth. And if they aren't from Mars either, then where DID they come from?"

Edward kneeled and stared at the body. "That's different. Also, everyone's accounted for, and nobody's hurt. Everyone fought well today."

"Yes." Starko was walking toward them. "I just spoke with both Danny and Starr. From what they told me, they too were in the middle of war zones. Everyone is accounted for in their two groups. A few of them have some minor injuries, but nothing serious.

"Also, there were news helicopters in their areas, just like ours. This will be all over the news, all over the world, most likely. Oh, and one more thing. They rescued a teenage boy. Starr said he has some kind of mystical power. He was able to steal some of Starr's magick, but neither Starr nor the boy knows how he did it. He told me this boy was holding a bat, and when he hit one of the mercenaries, the bat lit up in an orange color, and the mercenary flew back nearly fifteen feet."

"Orange? Isn't that usually the color that half-demons usually emanate?" Edward asked.

"It is." Starko thought for moment. "Which means that this boy is able to steal power from both humans and demons."

"So then, it's pretty much a normal day, huh?" Aaron stretched his arms out and cracked his back. "Normal, at least for us. Then again, the past few months have been anything but normal for people around the world. But I guess it's becoming normal now?"

"Yeah, something like that." Christopher breathed out a long sigh.

“Anywho, I guess it’s that time.” Aaron clapped his hands and yelled out. “Time for all of us to get our second winds and clean this place up!”

At that moment, a news crew, carrying their cameras and microphones, pushed forward through all the mess and rubble. Starko met them, and before they could say a word, he took control of the situation. “We will talk about what just happened, but not here. How about we set up a formal time, and I will be the one to speak? As you can see, we still have a lot of work to do here. We will be the ones cleaning this place up, not the city.”

The reporter, realizing he was not going to get a story at this time, relented and put his microphone away. He reached into his bag and pulled out a card and a pen. On the back of his card, he wrote the address of the network. “Yes. We can set up a time. Here’s my card. Call me when you’re ready.”

“Absolutely.” Starko gave him his word. “And obviously, you can report on what you filmed already today. You can tell the public there will be an interview soon to come. Let’s say, within three days?”

“That’s good enough for me. And if you don’t mind, we’ll be filming the clean-up as well. The world wants to see what you guys do and how you do it. Everybody, including me, wants to know what is happening, and most of all, what is coming.”

“Fair enough,” Starko answered. “Do what you have to do. Just let us do what we need to do here. I’ll contact you soon.” Starko then turned and walked away to help the others with the clean-up.

Patrick, Caleb, Sammy, Sunny and Kayden were helping Jace, Gunner, Finn, Kane, Payton and Edmond drag the bodies into one pile. Gwen, Christopher and Cole were speaking to the Earth, calling forth thousands of vines from under the soil to sprout up and wrap around the dead bodies. Everyone had their own jobs, from cleaning up the sidewalks, to moving

bodies, to putting out fires. At the behest of the city, the police and fire departments maintained their distance, but they stayed to watch.

After all was said and done, it was time to bring a magical rain down to cleanse and purify the city. Christopher, Gene and Edward gathered close and pressed the tips of their swords together. Not far from where they stood, a camera crew focused two cameras and microphones in their direction, as Edward voiced out loudly. "I call on the power of the High Guardians throughout the entire cosmos! Let the skies be ignited by the heavens! Let the Earth be purified! Cleanse this city from all demonic and lower forms of energies! Drench this city in your magick and your beauty!"

As he uttered the last word, lightning streaked across the sky, and thunder boomed fifteen times in a row, scaring the news crew. Harder and harder, rain began to fall. After thirteen minutes of rain, it suddenly stopped.

Christopher snapped his fingers, and the ground shook. From beneath the ground, a stinging and pungent scent seeped up and into the air. It was followed by the aromas of jasmine, lavender and rose. "That first unpleasant scent," Christopher explained to everyone, "was neem. It will further purify the ground, the air and atmosphere, while the jasmine, lavender and rose scents will do the same, but also mask the scent of the neem."

In the background, one of the crew members yelled out, "Did you guys catch all of that?! This is gold!"

Gene looked in all directions, and a satisfied expression settled upon his face. "We should head home now. Now that all the action is done, the longer we stay here, the more at risk we are of having to speak to government and city officials."

"You're right." Edward called out, and everyone in the group huddled together. Gene waved his hand, and a portal opened up. By the time they

made it home, it was just past 10:00pm. “Man.” Edward collapsed on the couch in the room with the fire pit. “I feel like I could sleep for two days. Maybe three.”

“I’m with you on that.” Christopher sat on the floor with his back propped up against the couch.

Thomas was sitting in front of the fireplace. “But you can’t. We have just enough time to start the last empowerment for immortality.”

“I know, Thomas.” Christopher let out a sigh and finally stood up a few seconds later. He tugged on Edward’s sleeve. “Come on. Let’s do this.”

## Part IV: Twenty-One Days of Empowerments

Although everyone was exhausted, nobody wanted to miss the last empowerment, and they all gathered in the training hall. The camera was still set up from earlier in the day. Christopher, Gene and Kayden walked to their designated spots on the mat and stood in place.

“Camera’s rolling. I’ve got a hot tea, thanks to Lynne, and we’re ready to go.” Thomas turned to Christopher, Gene and Kayden. “You’re ready, right?”

“Yeah.” Kayden nodded with an exhausted look on his face. “Let’s just do this, so we can sleep.”

“That’s the spirit, Kayden.” It’s good to know you’re as excited as I am about your immortality.” Thomas let out a hearty laugh. “Alright then.” He nodded at Edward and Aaron.

Edward and Aaron stood behind Christopher and placed their hands on his head. In unison, they stated, “Fathers, bring down the light, into our crowns, into our hearts, out of our hands, and into this body before us. Allow the light of immortality to run through his brain, his nervous system, his veins, and into every cell of his body. Grant him immortality within his body, to match the immortality of the never-ending spirit, which he already is.”

A brilliant white light shot through the ceiling of the training hall. It passed through Edward and Aaron and took root inside of Christopher. Christopher’s body jolted and he screamed a piercing scream. The fires in the torches of the hall responded, and all the flames rose by three inches.

Edward and Aaron kept feeding Christopher’s body with the energy of immortality. Just after five minutes had passed, the energy stopped, and they released their hands from the top of his head. At that moment, Christopher began to float in the air, and his arms raised up into a T position at his sides.

Light was spewing from his eyes, his heart center and his hands. He screamed again. After nearly ten seconds of silence, he voiced out, "I'm conscious. I can see everyone and everything in the universe. Wherever I cast my inner eye, my thoughts, I can see. But I can't move. And... and I feel like I'm dying. My heart's pounding, and my brain feels like it'll explode. It hurts so bad." He paused. "You should begin the process for both Gene and Kayden."

Aaron nodded. "You still want to go through with this?" He glanced at Gene and Kayden, who both nodded in agreement.

"Yes." Gene was adamant. "At this point, it would be ludicrous not to go through with it. It's been twenty-one days, the very last day. We may as well see what happens."

Kayden's head bobbed up and down. "I'm in."

Edward and Aaron then repeated the process with both Gene and Kayden. The results were similar to Christopher. Gene and Kayden were both floating and conscious of everything, and they both claimed they were aware of everything in the universe. They were also in great pain.

"I can't move," Gene told everyone. "My head feels like it's going to split. And like Christopher said, my heart's racing. I don't know. We just need to hang out here and wait this out. See what happens."

"We'll wait. I think we're all curious." Edward placed his hand on Gene's shoulder, and he was met with a shock that spiraled throughout his own body.

"Okie dokie." Christopher was still light-hearted, even with the pain searing in his nerves. "But from my point of view, I think staring at us doing nothing is really boring. But you all do what you wanna do. I don't mind."

Edward managed to laugh. "Yeah. We'll stay." He was seated in a chair, motionless, thinking to himself. He thought back to the day when he was in a coma and scarred beyond recognition, only to be nursed back to health

and given immortality. He looked up at Gene, Christopher and Kayden, who were still afloat, over one foot off the ground.

*What if this doesn't work?* Edward grimaced at his own thought. *Of course it'll work. It has to. I know we have the means to make them immortal.*

Thomas walked up and sat in a chair next to him. "You know, this will work. I mean, we sliced their skin, and the skin barely reacted. It didn't bleed at all, and their skin was back in place in less than a second. It was the best results we've had so far."

"I know, Thomas. You're right. I'm just worried for them for no reason. Perhaps it's a guilt inside of me for having attained immortality without them." Edward sighed. "Thanks for putting it in perspective for me." Edward stood up. "I'll be right back. I need some water and a snack." He left the hall and returned after five minutes with a glass in his left hand and an apple in his right.

"Haven't moved an inch." Thomas waved his hand in the direction of the three floating bodies. Just as he uttered those words, a brilliant light shot out of heart areas of all three of them. Everyone in the room shielded their eyes. As the light was shining, their bodies began to turn slowly in a clockwise direction. With their arms extended at their sides, and their palms facing outward, all three were rotating in the air.

"Unbelievable!" Edward took a few steps closer.

The next moment, three shafts of light poured in from the ceiling and into the bodies of Gene, Christopher and Kayden. When that happened, they stopped rotating, and their bodies began convulsing. Trying not to judge what was happening, Edward watched in silence.

After a few more seconds passed, all three of their bodies stopped moving, and frozen in place, their eyes popped open. With their voices over an octave lower, they all stated slowly and in unison, "The death of this body is

inevitable. When the clock strikes, my heart will stop, and the memories of yesterday will forever be erased in the passing of seven hundred and eighty.”

Everyone in the room stood rooted in place, some in horror, some in shock, and others in curiosity. For nearly twenty seconds, the entire training hall was silent. And from a distant room, they all heard the chime from one of Starko’s clocks. At that moment, the bodies of the three in the air began to violently convulse. Froth built up at each of their mouths.

After nearly a minute, everything suddenly subsided. It was eerily quiet in the training hall. The next moment, Gene, Christopher and Kayden all slumped and fell hard to ground. None of them were moving.

Edward was the first to reach them, followed by Aaron and Thomas. He put his hand on Christopher’s forehead and grabbed his wrist, feeling for a pulse. Aaron did the same for Gene, while Thomas was at Kayden’s side.

“Nothing!” Edward screamed. “He doesn’t have a pulse!” A horrific grimace formed on his face, and he stared at Aaron.

Aaron slowly shook his head and whispered, “Gene doesn’t have a pulse either.”

“Nothing over here.” Thomas patted Kayden’s face, and he kept feeling for a pulse.

Starko had just reached the group and started CPR on Gene, while Thomas did the same for Kayden. “You know how to, Edward?”

Heather ran up. “I know how!” Four minutes had passed, with no results for any of them.

Aaron, Patrick and Caleb all unsheathed their Vel staffs and pointed them at Christopher, Gene and Kayden. The power from the staffs flowed through, and energy filled the bodies of all three. After nearly two minutes, the energy stopped on its own.

“What is happening?!” Edward screamed out.



“Nothing.” Aaron slumped to the floor. “Their bodies will not accept any energy. We’ve tried, and the bodies resist it. The flow from the staffs stopped on its own.”

Thomas shook his head slowly. “They’re... they’re dead. All three of them are dead.” The training hall was super quiet. Thomas repeated it. “All three of them are dead. I... I don’t understand.”

“Wait. What did they say?” Starko was lost in thought. “They said something about seven hundred and eighty.”

“Yes, they did.” Thomas stood up. “They mentioned something about the passing of seven hundred and eighty.”

“What is that?” Edward asked. “Seven hundred eighty what? Days? Weeks? Years?”

“Could be seconds?” Thomas lifted an eyebrow.

Lynne screamed out. “Seven hundred eighty divided by sixty seconds is thirteen minutes!” She showed them on her phone calculator.

“How long has it been?” Starko looked at one of his clocks.

“I don’t know for sure,” Thomas answered him. “But I feel like it’s been about nine minutes.”

Starko kneeled next to Christopher. “Alright, guys. Help me. Let’s line them up. Someone get them each a pillow.”

Edward and Thomas helped line them up comfortably, with their bodies straight and their backs to the floor. Within half a minute, Mery and Lynne were next to them with pillows, which they put under the heads of Christopher, Gene and Kayden.

Edward felt the pulse of Gene again. *Nothing, Father. What the hell is going on?* No answer.

“How much longer?” Starko asked.

Lynne glanced at her phone. “We have about two more minutes left. If what they meant was thirteen minutes.”

“Longest two minutes I’ve ever experienced.” Edward shook his head.

Starko walked over to Thomas. “Is it still recording? We need to study this in every way possible, whether it works or not.”

Thomas nodded. “Never stopped. Everything was caught on camera.”

“Then we wait, whether that is seven hundred eighty seconds, or seven hundred eighty years.”

Edward was staring at the floor, his mind an empty vessel, and his stomach knotted in a twist. Aaron had his arm around him for comfort. Edward raised his head and stared at the dead bodies in front of him, then closed his eyes. He was about to say something, but the air around him suddenly thickened. An invisible pulse shot through the air, knocking him and Aaron over. Starko and Thomas were also sent flying backward. The dead bodies were still motionless on the ground.

Again, a pulse was sent out from the direction of the bodies, and the air thickened a little more. This time, a swirling breeze began to cyclone. Thomas ran toward the camera, which had fallen on the floor. He scooped it up and ran far away from the bodies. He peered through the lens and continued recording the passing events.

The cyclone of air was like a mini tornado, hovering above the dead bodies in the middle of the training hall, with lights shooting from the center. Everyone backed up as far as possible and just watched.

The air was so thick and strong. The bodies of Christopher, Gene and Kayden lifted from the ground and began cycling inside the mini tornado, spinning in a clockwise direction. For nearly four minutes, their bodies were cycling through the air. Electrical sparks were popping loudly, and streams of light were shooting in every direction from the cyclone.

After the four minutes had passed, the air lightened a bit, and the cyclone subsided. The bodies of Christopher, Gene and Kayden were all floating in the air again in a T position, with their arms stretched out. The knot in Edward's stomach released, now that he knew something was happening.

All was quiet again. The training hall was a mess, with candles and plants strewn everywhere. The mat was ripped in multiple places, and the roof had a hole in it. Everyone stood their distance, just in case. For nearly a minute, nothing happened. After what seemed an eternity, loud thunder boomed from outside, and lightning shot across the sky, which could be seen through the hole in the ceiling. Thirty-two times, thunder boomed in the sky. After the last crackle of thunder, a piercing light from the sky shot through the hole in the ceiling, encapsulating the three floating bodies.

In that moment, the eyes of all three of them popped open. In one voice, they spoke out. "Children, fear not. For I am the light of eternity's gaze, the higher presence of those whom you see before you. Every inch of my body has been filled with magick and power beyond mortal comprehension. My DNA is now altered, and immortality will forever rest in my brain, my heart and within the trillions of cells within my body.

"For this to take place, my body needed to die completely. My body and my past. All my former thoughts, and all the cells inside my body. Everything had to die, so the newness of eternity could take hold and fill my body with a new light. This process, from death to rebirth, needed to last exactly thirteen minutes, for this preserving light to take effect.

"This preserving light, given to me and instigated by the son of Kala and the son of Muruga, has changed my destiny. Longer not am I swimming in the endless pool of death's gaze, for the grace of eternity has latched itself upon my being and saved me from the curse of mortality.

“From this moment on, my body will never sicken, never deteriorate, never die. Should I choose to abandon my immortality, I am gifted with the choice to do so at any point in time. My spirit is unfathomable. I can leave my body now, a thousand years from now, ten thousand years from now, or never at all. It is my choosing.”

The eyes of Christopher, Gene and Kayden slowly shut. They remained floating in the air, quietly, and everyone let out a breath of relief.

Edward wrapped his arms around Aaron. “I thought they were gone. The feeling it gave me. I couldn’t believe it.”

“I know. I felt it too.” Aaron hugged him back. “It’s over now. They are immortal. Our student is immortal.”

Thomas set the camera back on the tripod and aimed it at the three floating bodies.

“Well that was different.” Starko patted Thomas on the back. “You don’t see that every day.”

“Nope. But at least we know what to expect. That is, if we do this experiment again with anybody else here.” Thomas shrugged. “You know, the difference with their process and our process of gaining immortality? Our process was over a long period of time. I’m pretty sure the reason it was so dramatic for them was due to their process being in only twenty-one days.”

“You’re not wrong. The immortality in our bodies just kind of happened, because we kept believing in it, kept feeding our bodies with energy every single day for I don’t even remember how long. Years.” Starko rubbed his chin. “A different path to get to the same place.”

Cole, Patrick and Caleb were standing close by. “Yeah, no.” Cole shook his head adamantly. “You ain’t using me as a guinea pig anytime soon. After seeing that, there’s no way I’d wanna experience that.”

“You probably wouldn’t feel a thing, though.” Thomas laughed.  
“Maybe Seth’ll do it.”

“Nope, Thomas!” Seth shouted from the back of the hall. “I’m good!”

“A bunch of babies!” Thomas slapped Starko on his back.

“Well, they did just watch those three die.” Starko took a deep breath and stretched his arms. “What a day. We should all rest.”

He turned his attention to the Sun students. “Alright, everyone. Let’s clear out. This was good for everyone to see. But while these three are in a trance and hanging in the air, it’s probably best to just let them be. If you are needed, Thomas or I will send word out.”

The Sun students filtered out of the training hall, and everything quieted down.

## Part V: Immortality Tested

It was just before noon, and Christopher was the first to awaken. His back was to the mat, and he stared at the ceiling of the training hall. Unsure of where he was at first, he pressed his hands to the mat and hoisted himself up. Lying next to him was Gene, and Kayden was slowly starting to stir.

*What in the world is going on?* Christopher poked Gene on the shoulder, hoping to rouse him. Finally, after a minute, Gene began to move his legs. His eyes opened wide, and his arms fluttered at his sides when he was greeted by the scents and lights of the hall.

Gene turned his head quickly and stared at Christopher. "What the hell just happened?!" He turned to the other side and saw Kayden on the floor.

"Are you guys okay?" Edward was walking toward them. "You've been asleep for hours. Do you remember anything that happened?"

Christopher's cheeks turned a bright red. "Clearly, we all three must have gotten really drunk during a long party that lasted into the early morning. Was Heather and I drunk dancing til I passed out?"

"Ummm, not quite." Edward squinted his eyes. "So, none of you remember a thing?"

"I vaguely remember seeing a light in the distance, and then it just disappeared. It was like it was just snuffed out." Gene paused. "And that's all I remember. Obviously, that was all in my head though, right?"

Kayden finally sat up. "I remember." He stretched his arms out and took a few deep breaths. "I remember being suspended in the air. I felt all this pain. Inside of my mind, or somewhere, I was running in this long tunnel. The walls were swirling around, and they were engulfing me, closing in on me. I got to a point where I just couldn't breathe anymore. Everything felt so real. I

couldn't breathe, and I couldn't see. And then, it was like everything just ended. There was no more tunnel, no nothing. Everything went black."

Christopher fidgeted for a second. "Were we doing the whole immortal energy thing again?"

"Yes, you were." Thomas had joined them, and everyone else had gathered around to join the conversation. Thomas put his hand on Kayden's shoulder. "You're okay?"

Kayden nodded. "I am now. But it kinda freaks me out, thinking about being in that tunnel, and everything blacking out into nothing."

"Was that the last thing you remember?" Thomas asked him. Kayden nodded again, and Thomas patted him on the back. "It's well, it's because you died. All three of you died, literally. When you were suspended in the air, a greater god came through and told us all what was about to happen. He called himself the higher presence of all three of you. We were all so stunned, that none of us even bothered to ask which god was speaking to us. You guys died for thirteen minutes, until the energy resurrected you. It seems, none of you have any recollection of what happened after your deaths."

"We died?" Gene's eyes were wide. He was touching his arms and his face, just to make sure everything was okay.

"We can show you the video. Come on, everyone," Thomas waved his arm to the group. "Let's head to the meeting room with the firepit."

Everyone slowly sauntered out of the training hall and filled up on drinks and snacks. It took Gene, Christopher and Kayden an extra fifteen minutes, just to catch their bearings, splash water on their faces and slowly reconnect with their surroundings.

Once everyone was in the meeting room, spread out, sitting on couches and the floor, Thomas put the video on. "I'm starting this, two minutes before all the excitement begins."

They watched and saw three shafts of light pour into the bodies of Christopher, Gene and Kayden. Then, all three began to speak on the video, and everyone watched in fascination. “The death of this body is inevitable. When the clock strikes, my heart will stop, and the memories of yesterday will forever be erased in the passing of seven hundred and eighty.”

While watching himself die on the video, Kayden shifted a bit on the couch. He was shaking his head back and forth slowly and touching his skin. Thomas turned the video off after the three were resurrected and finally floating in the air again.

“How do you guys feel?” Aaron asked them.

Christopher was the first to answer. “Calmer. I don’t have a nagging, dreading feeling. I guess, when we died, that part of us died too.”

“That pretty much explains it for me too,” Gene added. “That dreadful feeling of mortality is no longer a part of me. What about you, Kayden?”

“I ummm, I feel different.” He touched his skin again. “My skin feels different. More resilient, I think. I don’t feel one bit like I did yesterday. I don’t even know how to explain it. I don’t have that worry either. And deep down, I know something changed. I’m just not sure exactly what that change is.”

“Well, maybe we should test out what everyone is thinking.” Christopher stood up. He took a hot poker from the firepit. “Why don’t we just see if this works?” He set it back in the pit, so that it stayed scalding hot.

Edward lifted an eyebrow, then sighed. “Okay, fine. If you’re gonna do that to yourself, then I’ll do it also. Since I’m technically immortal now, we should test it out on me also.” He walked over to the firepit and stood next to Christopher.”

Gene rolled his eyes and got up. “Fine. I’ll do it too.”

When Kayden saw all three of them by the pit, he groaned. “Alright. I might as well do this too, so we all know if this worked or not.”



“That’s the spirit, Kayden!” Thomas let out a loud laugh.

Christopher gave the poker to Edward, then lifted his shirt up. “Okay. Do whatever you have to do.”

Heather grimaced at the thought and grabbed hold of Mery’s arm. “Oh, god! He’s just gonna stick that hot, metal poker on him and burn him!”

Edward glanced over at Heather. “This is true. I’m definitely gonna burn Christopher, or at least try to. But not before I do it to myself.”

He took the fiery red poker from the pit and lifted his shirt. With his eyes closed, he stuck the tip of the poker onto his skin. Nothing happened. He opened his eyes and looked closely. Not a mark on his skin.

He handed the end to Kayden and said, “Try pushing it into me. And do it as hard as you can.”

Kayden sighed and shook his head. “You’re serious?”

“Very. We need to know the extent of our powers.”

Kayden stuck the tip of the iron poker onto Edward’s stomach. Edward took a deep breath and nodded. At that moment, Kayden pulled the poker back a bit, then shoved it as hard as he could, even using a bit of his magical power. The poker crashed hard into Edward’s stomach, but instead of it ripping through his flesh, the tip bent.

There were a few gasps in the room, and Heather could be heard screaming out, “Oh my god!”

One of Edward’s eyes was squinted, and he was holding his breath. When the poker bent, he let out the breath slowly. “Okay. At least we know.”

“My turn.” Christopher grabbed another poker from the firepit and handed it to Edward. “This one’s hot.” He lifted his shirt up and closed his eyes.

Edward stuck the tip onto Christopher’s stomach, but nothing happened. Satisfied, he turned his attention to Gene. “Give me your hand.”

Gene stuck his hand out, and Edward held it in his right hand. With his left hand, he touched the tip of the hot poker in Gene's palm. Nothing.

"Well, I guess that only leaves me." Kayden took a step closer. "Since I tried to shove that thing into your stomach, you should do the same to me."

Edward was a bit reluctant. After all, Christopher and Gene were gods. Kayden, although powerful, was not yet a god.

"Come on, Edward." Kayden lifted his shirt up. "You HAVE to do this. We all have to know if our experiment worked on me."

Shaking his head, Edward finally gave in. "Alright. I want you to take a few deep breaths and..."

"Nope," Kayden interrupted him. "Just do it. Shove the point really hard into my stomach." He closed his eyes. "Don't even tell me when you're about to..."

Edward shoved the poker hard. The moment the tip hit Kayden's stomach, it bent, then broke into two pieces.

Kayden opened his eyes wide. "Oh my god! Did you all see that?!"

"Holy freaking crap!" Aaron joyfully jumped around a few times. "It actually worked!"

Thomas picked up one of the pieces and stared at it. "Well, looks like we're onto something. Our experiment worked." He handed the broken piece to Kayden. "Keep this. In a way, it's sacred."

Kayden took the broken piece of the poker and stuck it in his pocket. With a few mixed emotions, he took a seat.

"Alright, everyone." Thomas pointed at Aaron and Edward. "We have two immortals, Aaron and Edward, who filtered their energy of immortality into these three for twenty-one days. As you all saw, it wasn't an easy feat for Kayden, Gene or Christopher to go through. For the past twenty-one days, they spent most of their lives, tranced out and suspended in the air."

He paused. “And at the end of the twenty-one days, all three of them died. But now look at them. The DNA in each of them has changed. Their skin, their thoughts, everything has changed, all the way past their cells and into the deepest energies of this universe. I think it’s a good idea to maybe give this experiment a rest. But I want each and every one of you to seriously think about it. This is something all of you can go through in the future.

“That’s right,” Starko chimed in. “We don’t want to force this experience onto you. But we do want you to think about it. We want you to think about what immortality means to you. At least for me, I know immortality is not just about living forever. There’s so much more to it. There are losses in life. Losses for everyone around you. And as an immortal, you get to see all of that. You get to live past all that, and yet, you get to keep that information tucked away inside your mind, forever. Again, over the next few weeks or months, just think about it.”

“I think we should disband and just chill out.” Thomas stood up and stretched his arms out. “We’ve uncovered a big secret, and I think everyone here is a little exhausted.”

“Fine by me.” Kayden also stood up. “I’m definitely exhausted. I’m going to my room, so I can sleep for twelve hours.” He walked out, and the rest of the group followed suit in their own time.

## CHAPTER 2

### Part I: News Around the World

The Next Day – 9:00pm

SINCE THE NEWS CREW HAD BEEN FILMING all day and night, they decided not to air anything until the next evening. Of course, there were still short clips of the battles in all three places within the city. Many local residents used their phones to record battle scenes, and those videos reached millions of people all over social media and the internet. Some people were on foot, while one person had recorded from a distance in her high-rise apartment.

Still, nobody had the full story. Thousands of people were merely speculating. People on social media and forums were posting videos and rants, both for and against the gods.

Starko called everyone to gather in the large room with the fireplace. “The news station has been advertising a special newscast at 9:00pm to reveal scenes of the battle, along with an upcoming interview with me.”

He turned the TV on just in time to catch the segment with the reporter on the set. “Now, for our special broadcast on the recent events here in Chicago. Everyone around the globe has been waiting to see what the real story is. On the scene, we were able to capture close-up footage of these fantastical people with special, mystical powers.”

They brought up close-up footage of Christopher, Gwen and Cole, with swirling rocks and dirt flying around them. Four of the mercenaries were shown on camera trying to break through their defense, but when Cole raised his hands, vines sprouted up from the ground and wrapped around mercenaries’ legs.

The next scene showed Kayden sprinting through a crowd of mercenaries like a samurai with a blazing sword of fire. He ducked one punch, stabbed through the hulking figure behind him, and swung around to swipe the chest of the one he had ducked, all in one fluid motion.

Scene after scene of the escalating battle passed. The station showed the gods and their crew as the heroes, holding their ground and protecting the city. They ended the footage, showing the gods and their crew taking on the responsibility of cleaning up the area. Afterward, the reporter promised the public, "Soon to follow, an interview with one of the leaders of these mystical people. Stay tuned in. This is *The People's News & Network*."

### **On the News**

Three days had passed since the three attacks had happened within the city. All was quiet, with the exception of the boys playing video games. Edward, Aaron, Christopher, Gene and Starko had given everyone a few days off to do whatever they would like. It was a time to rest, recuperate, regenerate and play. Nobody had to do anything.

Starko shut himself in his study for two and a half days, thinking about what had happened and where the new half-demons had come from. They bore the mark of two dark, circular indentations on the forehead, like two dots the size of a dime, over the eyebrows. *Moloch's henchmen didn't have any marks. The guys from Mars all had upside-down moons on their foreheads. These guys have two dots. Where are they from, Father?* No answer.

"Man, Father. Sometimes your silence is pure annoyance." Still no answer. "And this must be my cue to figure everything out by myself, right?" He paused. "Right, then."

He rubbed the temples on his head, then took the palm of his hand and began massaging the back of his neck, before standing up. He stood up

from where he was sitting at his desk in his study. “Perhaps it’s time.” He pulled out the card from the reporter he had met on the scene, and he stared at the name for a moment.

**JAMEY BRODER**

*The People’s News & Network*

He flipped the card, and on the back was an address, phone number and email. Starko picked up his phone and punched in the numbers. It rang twice. “Hello, this is Jamey.”

“Hello, Jamey. This is Starko. Can we meet up?”

“Oh my gosh! Yes! I’ve been waiting for your call. I wasn’t sure if you would follow through and actually call me. When is a good time for you?”

“How about tonight?” Starko answered. “Is that too soon?”

“No! No, no, no. I mean, yes! Wait. No, it isn’t too soon! And yes, we can do tonight! We can have everything set up in time.”

“Good. I can meet you at the address on your card, correct?”

“Yes.” Jamey was doing his best not to sound too excited. “Also, just to make sure, this will be recorded, right? We can have all the lights and mics and the whole deal, right?”

“Indeed. I give you my word. Is 7:00pm good?”

“That is a perfect time, Starko! I will see you then.”

“Yes,” Starko promised. “I’ll definitely be there.” He ended the call and closed his eyes. *I suppose the entire world is waiting for some answers after what just happened.*

The rest of the morning passed, as well as the afternoon. Starko met with Edward, Aaron, Christopher, Gene and Thomas in the kitchen. “I’m about to head out. I’ll be giving the interview tonight with the reporter.”

“Oh boy! So exciting!” Christopher picked up a strawberry from a plate on the counter. He tossed it in the air and caught it in his mouth. “The world is getting to know us more and more!”

“Yes, true. That’s both good and bad, though.” Edward shrugged. “Eh. Maybe it’s all good. All of this was spontaneous, so it must be for the best.”

“I think it’s for the best.” Starko opened the refrigerator and pulled out a juice. “Everything has been out of our control, completely spontaneous, as you said. It isn’t anything we tried to create or shun. We all just went with the flow. So let’s just see what happens with this interview and with the world knowing more about us.”

He left the room and headed for the garage. Once in the garage, he stared at a small car in the back. *I haven’t driven that one in a long time.* He pulled out a key fob from a hidden drawer and clicked it. The car unlocked and lit up. *Alright. Let’s do this.*

Within twenty minutes, Starko pulled up to the building where the network was located. He eyed the area and parked on the street a block away. As he walked, he eyed his surroundings. A homeless woman was curled up in a sleeping bag about two hundred feet away to his left. A block away to his right, kids were shooting hoops. A siren in the distance, and a car alarm sounding off behind him. The air was cold and brisk, and he delighted in the cooling sensation as he breathed in the nighttime air.

He silently walked toward the woman. She was sound asleep, and each time she exhaled, the air was a cloud of white from the cold, which glistened in the light from the streetlamps. He stared at her out of pity for a few moments. She looked to be in her forties, and her hair was a dark matted mess with streaks of gray. “Even late February is still the dead of winter in Chicago. You won’t survive long unless I intervene.”

He felt her forehead with his hand, and he shuddered. Her face was a bit blue, and he could tell she was near frostbitten. The cold was perfect for him, but near unbearable for anyone else.

Placing both his hands atop the crown of her head, he closed his eyes and silently whispered, "Father, give this woman another chance, a better break. Fill her body with warmth, and heal her from all the extremities. Bring her good luck and good fortune. Guide her from this misery, and bring her to the doors of your enlightened feet."

As he uttered the last word, energy seeped from his hands and into the crown of the sleeping woman. It only took a minute. Her body convulsed for about ten seconds. The bluish color in her face disappeared, and a warm glow emanated from her skin and aura. He smiled, knowing she would be alright. He was about to withdraw his hands from atop her head, when a pulse of energy streamed into him. It seemed to come from the woman.

In just a few seconds, Starko saw her entire past. He withdrew his hands and stared at her. For a brief moment, a few thoughts ran through his mind, and he laughed to himself. "Oh, Anna. Who would've thought?" He laughed again and shook his head. He pulled out one of his cards and a pen and began writing.

*For job help, call or email – Starko*

He then pulled out ten one-hundred-dollar bills from his wallet and tucked them underneath her right hand, which was stuffed slightly inside the sleeping bag. He placed his card at the top of the stack of bills, making sure it would be the first thing she would see.

Before standing up, he decided to give her one more gift. With his right index finger, he touched the middle of her forehead. A stream of energy



rocketed into her brain, causing her body to jolt. In that moment, two of the gray streaks in her hair disappeared, and the wrinkles under her eyes smoothed over.

“Wasn’t expecting that, but I can’t say I’m disappointed. Who wouldn’t want a few of their wrinkles to go away?” Satisfied, he stood up and walked toward the network building.

## Part II: The New King

Trudging down the rocky path, he pushed past the wilting tree limbs blocking his way. It had been four hours since his last break. *I should stop. I'm sooo very tired.* He panted, then kicked a rock and sent it flying over a short drop-off. Peering over the drop-off, he set his gaze to a point about one mile in the distance. *Maybe a thirty-minute rest.* He covered his eyes from the glaring sun, and speaking to nobody in particular, he mumbled, "I should be there in just over an hour."

He took a seat on the rocks and peered over the edge again. Thinking back on the recent events, he shuddered and took a deep breath. After he gained his bearings, he slid his backpack off his shoulders and unzipped it. Inside, there was a little side pocket. He reached in and pulled out a small, golden locket. He opened it and stared at the drawing of the woman on the left, and himself on the right, and he chuckled out loud. "Those gods didn't have the slightest idea of where I went. You should have seen me, hun. I put up quite a fight. You would have been proud of me."

Silence ensued for a few seconds, and he took another deep breath. A tear rolled down his eyes. "You know, Iona, Blight says he can give us a second chance. I've waited a thousand years for this. And since that damn demon is here on this planet now, things will move faster. I'm very close to figuring all this out. Once he has what he wants, he'll bring you back."

He closed his eyes and sighed. Thinking about what she looked like in his arms so long ago, he focused on the feeling they used to have. He opened his eyes and stared at the locket again. "You won't look like this. You'll have a different body. But the eyes looking outside of that body will be you. And that is good enough for me."

Damenion closed the locket and placed it in the inside pocket of the backpack. He took a moment to relish in his recent victory over Moloch. "The gods destroyed you, Moloch. I'm halfway there. Halfway." He thought about the new half-demon mercenaries who invaded Chicago. Then, he shook his head and spit on the ground. "We use the gods to get rid of them, whoever they are. Then we get rid of the gods, and Blight can come out into the open and be the new Demon King. Whatever happens after that, I don't give a shit."

Damenion stood up and dusted his pants off. He placed the backpack on his shoulders again and took off walking at a fast pace down the slope of the mountain. Within a half-hour, he reached his destination. Standing in front of a huge boulder, he put his hand on it and whispered an incantation. A barrier released, and before him was an opening, leading into a large cavern. After stepping into the opening, he turned around and sealed the barrier, so that it looked like a boulder again.

Damenion snapped his fingers, and a green light shot out from the palm of his hand, allowing him to see in the dark. He walked toward an entrance into another cavern. After another minute, he found himself inside a long, rock hallway. At the end of the hall, there was a curtain hanging over the entrance to another cavern. Standing in front of the curtain, he listened intently. There was shouting and a loud thud from a chair hitting the wall. Damenion placed his right hand on his forehead and laughed to himself. *Well, this should be fun.* He pushed the curtain aside and walked in.

Upon entering, the room immediately fell into silence. Everyone turned around and glared at Damenion. Before anyone could speak, Damenion took a few steps forward and shouted out, "Raiju! Come forward!"

Raiju walked out into the open. He was a massive soldier, with iron spikes protruding from his armor. "Damenion! You have made a mistake by coming here!"

“No, Rajju.” Damenion took another step forward. “If you remember, Moloch placed me 2nd in Command, directly under him, making you the 3rd in Command. Now that he is gone, I am technically the 1st in Command.” Damenion held his gaze on Rajju.

“Ahhh,” Rajju snarled. “And since we have no Demon King, then it is up to us all to dictate what is up for grabs and what will happen next. This places you in a predicament. You have nobody loyal to you here.”

Damenion smirked. “From what I heard while I was standing outside, nobody seems to be loyal to anyone here either. And, nobody here is a full demon. At best, you are only half. Perhaps we should settle this the old-fashioned way? By combat?”

Rajju walked closer, nearly twenty feet from Damenion. “You think you can lay me into the ground? You? A puny man who weighs no more than my right leg?”

“Careful, Rajju.” Damenion’s hand lit up in a bright orange and green fire. “I walked the Earth a few hundred years before you were born. Looks may be deceiving, but there is a side of me which none of you have seen.”

Everyone remained quiet, waiting for Rajju to answer. Before he could answer, Damenion doused the fire from his hand and continued to speak. “There is no need to fight. Surely, if we do, I will most definitely lay you into the ground, as well as any others who oppose me.

“Moloch may be gone, but it was not by chance! He was a foolish and ignorant demon!” There were gasps and hisses, but some were shaking their heads in agreement. “If you believe he was worthy of the title of Demon King, then you are just as ignorant as him. That stupid fool is now spread out in light within the ethers of the Otherworlds.”

Damenion paced to his right, then his left. He then halted in place and looked a few of the closest henchmen in the eyes. "Compared to those demons from other planets, Moloch was a child!"

"What kind of foolishness are you talking?" Raiju squinted his eyes and glared at him.

"As I said," continued Damenion, "the death of Moloch was not by chance. Within our midst is a far greater master, worthy of such a title as that of Demon King. Moloch was only a few thousand years old. But with my help, I have brought you a new Demon King."

"Go on." Raiju folded his arms and waited for his response.

"It was my plan all along. I told Moloch to visit India. Once he was exposed to the powerful vortex there, I knew he would weaken. And once he was in a weakened state, I also knew the gods would finish him off. Now that Moloch is gone, there is but one demon who walks the Earth!"

All eyes were on Damenion, and not a sound could be heard throughout the cavern. "Let me introduce you to your new master!"

Damenion waved his right hand in a circular motion and chanted a few words in a language unknown to anyone in the room. There was a breeze, which slithered around the room, and the pressure of the air became dense. A portal opened a few feet away from Damenion. When it did, those closest to the front scurried back in a hurry.

There were shimmering lights from the portal, and all that could be heard was a low growl.

"For millions of years, he has walked the planet of Mars!" Damenion shouted. "And now, he has given us the blessing to be in his presence on Earth!"

From out of the portal stepped a gargantuan beast, twenty feet in height. There were scales up and down his arms, and a dark upside-down moon on his forehead.

Damenion got down on one knee and turned to all those behind him. "I suggest you do the same." Everyone followed his lead. Not a sound was heard, except the heavy breathing by the large demon in front of them.

Blight peered around the room, taking note of every single detail. For the next few minutes, nobody said a word. Finally, after sensing the fear in front of him, he snarled, then laughed. He then snapped his fingers, and a cloud of smoke appeared around him. For a few moments, nobody could see through the thickness of the smoke. They all waited intently for something to happen. Within a few seconds, from out of the smoke walked a small boy who looked to be in his early to mid-teens.

The boy was staring at them all. He had a curious smile upon his face, but the sinister energy surrounding his aura pierced through his innocence. He walked closer to the group. His breathing was loud and drawn out. With a slightly high-pitched hiss, he addressed them all. "You will call me Master or Blight."

### Part III: Training with Angles

Three weeks had passed since the rising of immortality in Christopher, Gene and Kayden. Everything was quiet, and the entire group was busy training and preparing for whatever may come next. Danny was waiting in the training hall, standing close to the picture of Surya. He saw a few of the candle flames flicker, and he instantly knew somebody had entered the room.

“Kayden! Good to see you again! It’s been a while. I’ve been so busy taking care of things outside of this place.” Danny walked up to him, and they both bumped fists.

“Yeah, a lot has changed since I saw you last.”

“You mean, the fact that you’re immortal now?” Danny whistled and shook his head. I think I’m about halfway there. I don’t age anymore, but I’m not fully like that. Maybe someday.”

There was rustling just outside the hall, and Cole burst through the doors, followed by Patrick, Caleb and Sammy. “Hahahahaha!” Cole ran past Danny and Kayden.

“Watch out, guys!” Sammy was after him, and he pushed past Danny. “I owe him one!”

Danny shook his head again. “It’s never a dull moment over here. Sometimes, I miss living here.”

“You used to live here?” Kayden asked him.

“Yeah. It’s been a bit though. Before the Guardian Watchers lived here, me and a few of the Sun students had rooms here. But we’ve all got our own places now.” He paused, remembering his days at Starko’s. “So what about you? How’s it going with your training? Thomas and Starko asked me to help train you with all those angles. It sounds like you have a good hold on it, but we can probably perfect it, so you have complete control over it.”

“It’s okay, I guess. And yeah, extra training wouldn’t hurt,” Kayden admitted. “Ever since I became immortal, this power of angles heightened. “I can see everything clearly without straining or trying.”

“Well, I have a few ideas, and I brought some stuff with me.” Danny reached into a backpack and pulled out a couple of rubber balls. He set them on the floor, then fished through the backpack once more. “There it is.”

He pulled out a circular, metal ring, with a diameter of about five inches. Around the edges of the ring, he had sealed a rubber piece around it, so it completely covered the metal. “I made this myself. I wrapped a bunch of rubber bands around a metal ring to make it more shock-absorbent and to give it a bouncier feel. I also bought this black, rubber piece from a hardware store and sealed it really tight around the rubber bands. It bounces off wood and concrete walls, almost as good as those rubber balls.” He handed it to Kayden.

Kayden stared at it for a moment. He gripped the ring, feeling the pressure inside the palm of his right hand. He played around with it, letting it slide between his fingers. He looked up and stared at the wall in front of him. Immediately, he saw all the various spots he could hit on the wall, and the angles the metal ring would take if it bounced off the wall. He could also tell the distance of how far the ring would travel once it bounced off the wall, depending on how hard he threw it.

“What do you see?” Danny asked him.

“Everything. I see every kind of angle this could go, and the distance it’ll travel once it bounces off the wall. With a little magick, the distance can be doubled or tripled.”

“Nice. Now we’re getting somewhere.”

At that moment, the other boys walked back into the room, and Kayden glanced in their direction. He grinned at Danny and picked up one of the rubber balls. He set his gaze to the ceiling above the boys and threw the



ball as hard as he could. The ball smacked into the ceiling and bounced off the wall next to the door. It then ricocheted against the wall in the corner and flew straight at Patrick's head.

At the very last second, Patrick put his hand up and caught the ball without looking. "Nice trick! That would work on pretty much anyone else but me and Caleb. You should've aimed for Sammy!"

"Wait! What?!" Sammy was wide-eyed. "No way, man! I would've caught the damn ball too!" He punched Patrick in the shoulder.

The boys joined Danny and Kayden in the center of the mat. "That was pretty impressive," Danny told him. "I noticed you didn't close your eyes like you had to when you were playing pool. That has changed also?"

"Yeah. I don't need to close my eyes anymore. I'm more relaxed now, and I can see everything clearly with them open. I can also control when I want to see the angles, so it doesn't bombard me every time I look at something."

"Well, that's definitely a game-changer." Danny thought for a moment. "I got it. Drop the metal ring. Just put it on the floor, so it's out of your hands." Kayden did as he was told.

Danny then ran over to the edge of the mat and grabbed three archery targets he had brought. Each target was labeled as 1, 2, and 3. The boys watched him strategically set them up in places around the training hall. He ran back over to Kayden and picked up the metal ring. "Okay. Clear yourself. Just take a couple of deep breaths."

Kayden did as he was told. "Now," Danny continued, "I'll hand this metal ring back to you. When I do, I want you to tell me how fast you're able to see the angles if you bounce this ring off the wall, aiming for each of the targets. Kayden nodded.

"Ready?" Danny asked him. After nodding once more, Danny placed the ring in Kayden's hands.

Immediately, the angles appeared before Kayden. All at once, he saw three possibilities of hitting the wall for each of the three targets. He glanced upward and saw three more possibilities if he threw the ring against the ceiling. He turned toward Danny. "Alright. I have it."

Danny whistled. "That was pretty fast. It literally only took you a couple of seconds, if that, to see everything. Did you see them one at a time? Or were you able to see all the angles at once?"

Kayden thought for a moment. "The moment you placed the ring in my hands, I saw all three angles for all three targets, all at the same time. It's like lines of light that I see."

"Nice. Then let's test it out. Throw the ring against the wall and aim for Target 1." Danny and the other boys backed up to give him some space.

Kayden fumbled around with the ring. "I can see it, but I'm not sure yet how to control my throwing. I don't know if should throw it overhand or underhand, or even sideways."

"Trust your instinct," Danny encouraged him. "Just throw it. Don't try to hit your mark. Just throw it and see what happens. Don't think. Just throw."

With the ring in his right hand, he closed his eyes and took a few breaths. When he was ready, he opened his eyes. Without thinking, he sent the metal ring flying. It hit the wall with a loud crack and went soaring toward Target 1. The ring flew a full foot over the edge of the target.

Danny ran and got the ring and handed it back to Kayden. "You didn't use any magick when you threw it. I could tell. This time, put some power into it. Will it to hit your target, but as I said before, don't think too much. Will it, but just throw it without thinking."

Kayden nodded and took a deep breath. He felt the magick bubble up inside him, and without thinking, he let the metal ring fly from his hand. It bounced off the wall and flew straight to the target, hitting the edge.

The boys erupted with a cheer. “That was awesome!” Sammy slapped him on the back.

Kayden shook his head. “No, it wasn’t. I was aiming for the center. I hit the outer edge. That was kind of horrible.”

“Dude, it was only your second try. Don’t be too hard on yourself.” Patrick ran and got the ring. He handed it to Kayden. “Here, do it again.”

Kayden gripped the ring. This time, he didn’t pause. Using a sideways throw with this right arm, he sent the ring flying again. It cracked hard against the wall and flew straight into the center of Target 2.

“Hells yeah!” Sammy was jumping up and down. “That’s what I’m talking about!”

“Yeah, but those targets aren’t moving.” Kayden shook his head.

“I get it.” Danny handed him the rubber balls. “It doesn’t matter, though. We’re uncovering a lot in just a short time. Let’s keep doing this. You’ll practice with the rubber balls and the ring. And we can use me and the other guys as moving targets. It’s about repetition. Once you get the hang of it, and you know what to expect, it becomes second nature. Let’s just do it. But first, throw the balls at the targets. I’ll go get the ring again.”

Danny jogged over to where the metal ring was next to the target. He picked it up and came back to the group. “Here. I want you to hit Targets 1 and 2 with the rubber balls, and immediately hit Target 3 with this ring.”

Kayden had a ball in each of his hands, and he had tucked the ring in the front of his pants. “Back up, guys.” They did as he told them, and he threw the ball in his right hand first. Over the top, and without slowing his motion, he immediately released the ball in his left hand in an under-handed throw. Both balls smacked against the wall and hit dead center in both targets.

Without pausing, he gripped the metal ring and flung it behind his back toward the ceiling. There was a loud crack against the ceiling, and it was sent flying toward Target 3, hitting it dead in the center.

“What the hell?!” Sammy was jumping up and down. “You didn’t even look when you threw the ring!”

Danny and Patrick collected the balls and the ring and returned to the group. “That was amazing,” Danny told him. “Using your magick and willpower, you can conquer more than you think. Keep practicing. You should be able to hit all three targets five times in a row. Then we’ll practice on moving targets.”

“That’s a lot.” Kayden sighed.

“Yes, it is.” Danny slapped him on the shoulder. “But you’ve got this. Don’t settle for anything less.”

“Fine. I’ll blow through this then.” Kayden repeated the throws and hit all three targets twice in a row. On the third time, he missed the third target by an inch.

“Start over,” Danny yelled out from across the room. “You’re trying too hard. It’s not a race against time. Just slow down and do it in your own time. And who cares if you hit the targets or not. Don’t care about it. Just do it.”

Kayden took his time. He picked up the balls and the metal ring, took a few deep breaths and cleared his mind. After a minute, he was ready. *Here goes.* He threw the ring first, then the balls. Each hit their mark. Without celebrating, he collected the balls and the ring and went back to throwing. Three more times, he hit the targets. *That’s four times.*

Danny watched him from the side. He leaned over to Patrick and whispered. “Did you see Kayden’s energy just now? He wasn’t nervous the first four times. Now that it’s his last throw, he’s thinking about it. Now he’s nervous.”

Kayden was about to do his last throw. “Wait!” Danny yelled out.

“Huh?” Kayden turned and faced Danny.

“Okay! Never mind!” Danny yelled again. “Go ahead and throw it!”

Kayden shrugged his head and gave him an odd look. Without thinking, he let the balls fly. They both smacked the targets, right in the very center. He gripped the ring again. This time, he gave it a swift, underhanded throw. It hit the wall and bounced toward the ceiling.

“What?!” Caleb was pointing at the ring flying through the air. “He’s bouncing it off the ceiling!”

The ring hit the ceiling and came crashing into the third target.

All the boys jumped up, including Danny. “Yeah, baby!” Sammy ran over to Kayden and picked him up. “That’s my booooy! You kicked ass!”

Kayden grinned at Sammy. “Thanks, brother. I needed that.”

“Yeah, man! Let’s keep at it. We should all keep training.” Sammy gathered the balls and the metal ring and came back to the group. He handed them to Kayden. “Now you gotta hit us while we’re running around. Good luck with that, cause you’ll never be able to hit me!”

“Just like I was never going to beat you at pool, but then I smeared you?” Kayden laughed.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.” Sammy rolled his eyes. “That was like your one big lucky moment. That ain’t happening again.”

Danny shook his head and laughed. “Alright! Everyone out to the center of the mat. We’ll be running around, and Kayden will do his best to hit one of us. Anything goes. We can all use our powers.”

Sammy, Patrick, Caleb, Cole and Danny spread themselves out on the mat, while Kayden stood at one end. He had two rubber balls in his hands, and the metal ring was tucked at his side. He could see all the possibilities of how either rubber ball or the metal ring would hit one of his targets. The

moment the other boys started moving around, the angles began to change. Kayden sighed and paused, not knowing how to proceed.

At that moment, the girls walked in to observe. Heather, Lynne, Mery and Gwen all sat on the side and cheered Kayden on. Feeling a bit more confident, Kayden took a deep breath. Out of the corner of his left eye, he saw Caleb running. Using his magick, he was able to calculate where the rubber ball in his right hand would hit Caleb, if Caleb kept up his speed. Without thinking, he threw the ball with all his might. It bounced hard on the ceiling, hit the side wall and was heading straight for Caleb's head.

At the last second, Caleb sensed where the ball was, and he ducked. The ball missed his head by one inch. He grinned at Kayden. "Not bad. That was pretty close. You almost had me."

Kayden said something back to Caleb and pretended to not be paying attention to the others. While he was talking, his right hand slipped down to the metal ring with the rubber around its edges. In one fluid motion, he spun around and let the ring fly with a sideways throw. It bounded off the opposite wall and smacked Danny in his left shin.

"Awww, man!" Danny sat down for a second. "That actually hurt!" He put his hand over his shin and allowed some energy to flow from his hand. The pain in his shin went away within a couple of seconds. "I wasn't even expecting that. But damn, good throw, Kayden." He tossed the metal ring back to Kayden.

Kayden acted as if he was about to catch the ring from Danny, but instead, he whirled around and threw the other rubber ball he had been holding. It bounced off the side of the altar where the picture of Surya was and smacked Sammy in his right shoulder.

“Noooo!” Sammy’s face turned beet red, and he pounded the floor with his fist. “I can’t believe you got me!” He was laughing and shaking his head. “Alright, bro. Nice throw.”

Danny put his hand up and yelled out, “Let’s take a break!”

Everyone walked to where the girls were sitting. Danny bumped fists with Kayden. “That was amazing what you did out there. If you keep working with this new power and training really hard, you’ll be unstoppable on a battlefield, or anywhere really.”

Patrick walked up behind Sammy and put his arm around him. “That’s twice now that Kayden’s put you in your place! Hahahaha!”

Sammy brushed Patrick’s arm away. “Whatever, dude.” He walked up to Kayden. “Yeah, alright. That was pretty cool.”

“Thanks, brother.” Kayden smiled at Sammy, then he pointed at Caleb. “Next time, I’ll make sure I don’t miss you.”

“Ha! Good luck with that!” Caleb walked out of the training hall and yelled back, “Everyone to the kitchen!”

## Part IV: Interview with a God

Starko sat comfortably in his armchair, a few feet away from Jamey Broder. Starko's legs were crossed, and there was a coffee mug on a small table to his right. He picked up the mug and took a sip and gazed at the equipment, lights and crew. There were microphones set up in front of him, along with three cameras pointed at them from three different directions. Jamey nodded at one of the crew members, who in turn gave him a thumbs-up sign and started the cue. "We're live in... 5-4-3-2-1."

Jamey stared at the middle camera. "Good evening, Chicago. And to the world at large, we have a special interview at The People's News & Network. Tonight, our special guest is simply known as Starko. He is one of the super-powered heroes caught on camera during the recent atrocity which happened throughout the city." He turned to Starko. "Starko, why don't you tell us about yourself. Your age? Where are you from? Are you from this planet or a distant planet? And how did you attain your powers?"

A smile spread across Starko's face. "I was born on this planet, yes, prior to the California Gold Rush." Jamey was taken aback, and there was a look of astonishment upon his face.

"You were born in..." He paused. "In the 1800's?" Jamey looked bewildered. "Are you pulling our legs, or are you actually being serious?"

Starko was still smiling. "I am definitely not pulling anyone's leg." He continued. "Back then, I didn't have any powers. I was what you could call an adventurer, traveling from city to city. During that time, I had a sidekick named Thomas. He's actually still with me now, and he too can be seen in a few shots on the news. Long story short, I grew weary of this world and the direction my life was heading. When that happened, I gave in to a higher power and surrendered my will to something unknown and unseen.



“I believe today’s terms would be ‘enlightenment’ or ‘self-realization’ or ‘awakened’. There are so many labels to describe the same happening. This type of opening-up for an individual has happened to many throughout history. I am only one out of many throughout the centuries.

“To answer your question about how I attained my powers... when a person goes through a transformation on the level I had undergone, you literally FIND yourself. Meaning, you find that you are one with everything, if that makes sense?”

Jamey nodded, and Starko continued. “And that realization of being one with everything is the greatest gift or knowingness that you or me or anyone can attain. The powers? They are secondary. They come, simply from being connected to everything powerful within the universe. If I am to say anymore on this topic, it would just be confusing, a hindrance, as words could never describe the wordless, the unknown.

“I should also say...” Starko was lost in thought for a few seconds. “You cannot cheat the universe. Meaning, the powers that I or any of my brethren express, again, come from the inner knowing that we are one with the Source. As is everyone. Although, most people don’t realize they are. And if any of us were to be tested or picked apart, you cannot steal or mimic our DNA to get powers. It simply doesn’t work that way.

“So, to the government or any private agencies out there watching... sorry. The only way to achieve or get the powers we express, is to do it the old-fashioned way. That is, to enlighten. To go deeper into your own inner world.”

“And your transformation gave you the power to live for nearly two centuries?” Jamey asked him.

“Indeed, it did. Although, not everyone who attains enlightenment is able to live in immortality. One sort of chooses to do so and is granted that spark of energy to complete the task.” Starko looked into the camera, then

back to Jamey, then back to the camera. “However, seek the powers, and you will find endless experiences leading to endless roads of searching. Seek to know yourself, and you will find all the answers you ever wanted to know.”

“Sounds like good advice.” Jamey laughed. “And your friends? They too are all from here, and they have all gone through this same transformation as you?”

Starko thought for a moment, choosing his words wisely. “Some of them are students. They have flowered in brilliant and mysterious ways, but they have not yet completely bloomed in full. They are my students and students of some of the others you call super-powered. The powers those students express, which you and everyone saw on camera, are the secondary gifts available to them from going deeper into their search of knowing who they are. The more they find out who they are as light, as energy, the more they’re able to express in this world, as light, as energy.”

He paused. “As for the others who have displayed supernormal powers... They are known as gods, and they are not from here. The leader is Edward, who is known as a High Guardian. The High Guardians are some of the most powerful beings in the entire universe. And with him, he brought two of his trusted...” Starko thought for a moment. “Two of his trusted assistants, Gene and Christopher, who are also very powerful. As for their names, they simply chose them, once they came to our planet. Because, of course, they’d be known as something else in the Otherworlds.

“Also, they hail from varying dimensions of the universe. As for the Otherworlds, most people think of it as Heaven. But that is misleading, as Heaven draws us into a made-up mindset of fairytales of some kind of Sky God who lives only to judge us while we live, rewarding us with some kind of afterlife, based on our merits and sins.

“But if I may be so candid, the afterlife doesn’t exist, at least, not in the way most people think. The afterlife, in fact, is really happening right now as we live, which is why I don’t think of it as an afterlife. To me, the afterlife is simply the Otherworlds, which is a very tangible place that is happening this moment.

“As it pertains to my friends, they came to this planet from this place I keep mentioning, the Otherworlds, simply to eradicate what we call the evil karmas, or the negativities, which are happening at this time. If not for those who came here to help out, this planet would be doomed. Not to sound gloomy, because this world is in very good hands, thanks to those who are helping me out, and of course helping this world out.”

Jamey nodded in understanding. “Yes. There was another person or god who was interviewed at another news network not too long ago.”

“That was Gene. I mentioned that he is one of Edward’s assistants. He is known as the son of the god of Ascension.”

“Tell us about the recent happenings in this city. Why was this city under attack, and who were they?” Jamey asked.

Starko drifted off into deep thought for a few moments. “This planet, Mother Earth, or Gaia, as some know it, has been under attack for thousands of years. During the height of many of these past atrocities... to help out, usually, a person enlightened, and they were able to save the world, merely by existing, because of the purity of their energy. Think of the Messiah, Lau Tzu or the Buddha.

“Or, as history has shown us, a high-level being from the Otherworlds came into existence to help out. If you’re familiar with Krishna, Hanuman or Kwan Yin. As it stands now, the Earth is in far more trouble than it ever was in the past, which is why there are so many gods who came to the planet in this day and age.

“Realize, Chicago wasn’t the only city under attack. Recently, there was a huge battle in Kowloon, another in Bucharest, and a major one in the Himalayas. Chicago marks the fourth large-scale battle in recent times. Although, there have been plenty of smaller battles throughout the world which haven’t been recorded.

“Now, humanity and Earth are at a crux. And if we as a whole... meaning, if the majority of people on this planet can’t learn to play well together, to serve each other in peace and for the betterment of humankind and all the animals, then we will all continue to spiral toward complete and utter destruction. I say this, because the forces at work which are against us are pretty powerful. They are dark and demonic in nature, and they have numbers in the many, many thousands.

“I should add, this darkness is the spawn of all the hatred, separation and destruction that humankind has been doing to each other and to this planet. Meaning, the forces of darkness you see on TV were born completely from humanity. Let me repeat in a different way. All forces of darkness were born from the hatred in the hearts of every single person throughout all of time.

“If you can, imagine a true demon, a warrior who is born from hatred, jealousy, murder and greed. Such a being exists. And yes, this being is the product and spawn of humankind. In short, humans, with all their negativities and atrocities, create demons. Energy begets energy.”

Jamey raised an eyebrow but did not say anything. Starko added, “This is what we are up against. And this is why it is of the utmost importance for neighbors to treat each other well. For towns and cities to get along in peace. For each separate state in this country to think of themselves as one country and one world, and to give and to help, instead of take and deceive. For each country to serve all other countries with empathy, instead of only looking out for your own country.

“In the grand scheme of things, we are all connected. Literally. We are all connected. However, the hatred in our hearts blinds us from seeing and feeling this connection of energy with everyone and everything.”

Jamey nodded in understanding. “Can you tell us a bit more about Edward and some of the others who have come to Earth? How many of them are there? And, is it truly that bad that several high-level beings had to come here to help out all at once?”

“Yes. It is that bad.” Starko shrugged. “However, I’m not here to spread doom and gloom. On the contrary, my very message is to spread peace, and my actions are to eradicate the darkness. For nearly two centuries, I kept out of the limelight of the news and government. The people of this world weren’t ready to hear about magick and the Otherworlds.”

He sighed. “But my hand has been forced. The demonic attacks are blatant and out in the open, and we have no choice but to counterattack, regardless of what police, military or government may think.

“As for High Guardian, Edward... He is known as the son of Time. He was up North where all the Eastern Indian shops are. He healed a boy in front of thousands of people, and he made millions of cherry blossom petals fall from the sky. There is the son of Ascension, Gene. Again, he gave the interview on the other news network, and he appeared and disappeared before everyone’s eyes. And there is Chrisopher, the son of Gaia. He was seen on camera performing miracles at the fountain downtown. There is also another here who hails from Mars.”

Jamey’s eyes widened a bit. “Did you say from Mars?”

“I did.” Starko grinned. “When he arrived here, he chose the name, Aaron. Aaron Olsen, a last name which I believe he stole from a television show.” Starko laughed aloud. “He cannot be tracked, and he cannot be beaten. If you fire a gun at him, he will simply raise his hand, and the bullet will stop a

foot from his body. And if you manage to actually catch him off guard, which is nearly an impossible task, and the bullet does manage to hit him, I am sure he will simply stare at you and laugh.

“Aaron is the Defender of Mars and the son of a great god, Muruga. He is one who is talked about by gods from other galaxies. So, we are very lucky to have him here, as he is a very powerful ally. For thousands of years, he has protected Mars, as well as many planets throughout many galaxies. There is also a young boy whom Aaron took under his wing. This boy traveled from the underground civilizations on Mars. He too is here to protect this planet.”

“There are people on Mars? And they live underground?” Jamey was astonished. “You are actually serious when you say this?”

“Indeed, I am very serious. And yes, there are many people living underground on Mars.” Starko looked upward, while searching for the right words. “Many years ago, the people of Mars went through what we are going through on Earth. They were a very powerful race and very technologically advanced, but they were also greedy, conceited and self-serving.

“They used up the resources of their planet and turned it into a wasteland. The ecosystem imploded, and toxic gases were released into the atmosphere, killing off most of the people and all plant life. With the help of Aaron’s father, Muruga, humanity on Mars was able to continue to thrive underground.

“This is why, if we as a species on Earth do not get it together, we will suffer the same fate as the people of Mars. There really isn’t much time left for us to procrastinate or to come up with long-term plans. Starting right now, we must all live our lives for the betterment of everyone and everything. For other people, for animals, for the Earth. Because, as it stands, we are headed down the exact same path that the humans of Mars walked millions of years ago.”

He paused for a few seconds, and silence ensued as everyone waited in anticipation of his next words. “As I mentioned, I never wanted to be in the limelight, and I would have wished for my group and I to remain in secrecy, working behind the scenes. But since the darkness, or the demonic side, has chosen to reveal itself in such an obvious and grotesque manner, we have been forced to show ourselves and our powers. I am revealing all this for the obvious fact that we have no more time. And also, because our group has already been seen. There is no hiding this or us.

“I would like to give hope. Yes. There ARE horrible atrocities happening in the world today. But never before has there ever been this much divine help from the warriors of the Otherworlds. Help from Aaron, the Defender of Mars, and help from three legends of the past who have been written about in so many texts. And there is help from so many others.”

Starko again looked straight into the camera. “Which is why I say this to everyone who may see this. Do not give up hope. Help your fellow stranger, people in other countries, and even the animals. All of this helps to erase the wrongdoings which have already been done. And just know, there are real and true warriors in the flesh who are on your side. These warriors do not use guns, but instead the magicks of the Otherworlds, combined with the oldest styles of martial arts and combat training from this planet and other planets. They are battling to save this planet and the people from all countries.”

He paused again for a few seconds. “We do not serve one country, but all countries. We do not see lines on a map. To us, all people are deserving of equal treatment and worthy of saving. Please keep this in mind as you go about your daily lives. The life of a stranger on the other side of the planet is just as beautiful as the lives of everyone in your homeland, and vice versa. We are all in this together.”

For the next few seconds, all was quiet at the studio network. Jamey finally broke the silence. “Starko, thank you for meeting us here tonight and for answering many of the questions we have all had. The footage of the battles, which have been circulating around the globe of you and your group, is nothing short of astounding and miraculous. Would you mind if we opened up the lines for questions from the public?”

“Not at all. I can answer a few questions.”

Jamey signaled his crew. Within seconds, the lines were ringing off the hook. A call was forwarded to Jamey and was broadcast live. “Hello. Tell us your name and what area you are in, and you can ask Starko a question,” Jamey told them.

“Hi. My name is Janet, from Naperville. I’ve been following all the news and clips of Starko and the rest of them for awhile now. My question is... I know we should all be doing this, but how will helping other people and treating others equally help stop this bloodshed in the world?”

Starko nodded. “That’s a good question, Janet. This goes back to, as I mentioned earlier, footage of both Christopher and Edward when they were both caught on camera here in Chicago. Christopher was at a large water fountain downtown, and Edward was up North in another part of the city. News crews filmed them, and they both went into trances and produced some miracles for everyone and had some instructions for the world. Do you know what their messages were?”

“Oh yes, I do! I’ve watched those scenes online a hundred times!” Janet exclaimed.

“Good.” Starko continued. “Then you know, what Christopher and Edward said at that time is exactly what I am saying now. We must all come together and help our neighbors, strangers, the planet. When we do this, the subtle energies of good, of love, of the Otherworlds, seep into our bodies, our



minds, and into the world. That energy helps to eradicate the bad karmas which were created when people were acting in separation, with intent to harm, in greediness and maliciousness. The energy we put out now in goodness, can obliterate the energy that was previously put out in greed and evil. Does that make sense?”

“It does! Thank you, Starko! I’ve followed you all since the beginning, and this is a dream come true to speak to you!” Janet was clearly elated and satisfied with Starko’s answer.

Jamey glanced at his crew on the side, then back at the camera. “We have another caller. Go ahead.”

“Hiiiiiii, Starko! My name’s Hannah! I’m right here in the heart of the city! And I think the million-dollar question that all us women wanna know is... Are you seeing anyone? Or are you single?”

“Hahahaha!” Starko looked directly into the camera. “Well, Hannah, it’s very nice of you to call in. I take that as a compliment, so thank you! And thank you for lightening up the air a bit, after that conversation of impending doom in the world. To answer your question, I am single, but not looking. There once was a time when I put myself out there, but with all the time and work involved with everything we are doing in our group, it’s just something that never crosses my mind. Perhaps when all this is over, I may once again put some effort into that arena of life.”

“And there you have it, everyone!” Jamey cut in with a grin. “The most important question of the day has been answered. Only on the People’s News & Network can you get the biggest and juiciest news in the world! Thank you, Hannah. We have time for one more question. We have another caller?”

“Yes, hi. This is Walter, from Detroit. When the attacks happened in Chicago, I was there visiting with my family. I saw those monsters up close. It was...” He breathed out audibly. “It was by far the scariest moment of our lives.

They must've been a foot 'n a half taller than anyone I know! And they were all built like body builders. We managed to get away and drive off, thank god!

"But you know... If this is what we're up against, and you said their army is in the thousands, then well, I just don't see any way that we as a species are gonna come out on top. I know you said the good energy of everyone can obliterate that bad energy of the past. But I just don't see it. Can you explain more?"

Starko nodded. "Yes. Thank you, Walter. The world of the unseen has more depth and volume than what science has been able to prove as of yet. In the wars of gods and monsters, or even between human beings, the one with the most energy will always win. This is why, when we see over-the-top events or happenings, and we can't explain them, we tend to call them miracles.

"For instance, the story of an elderly woman who picks up the front of a car to rescue somebody. Or the story of a man falling from the sky, and his parachute won't open. And when he hits the ground, he bounces a few times, gets up and walks. Or maybe a car that spins out of control down the highway and narrowly misses hitting four or five other cars, only to stop on the other side of the highway, and the driver is alive and well.

"These are all miracles. But coming from the point of view of science, from those of us who CAN see the energy, it was because the people involved somehow had an influx of pure energy going through them, which helped to cancel out the karmas of the previous negative energy. Many times, when our minds go blank and all thoughts stop, we get placed in the present moment, and our energy triples, quadruples, or multiplies by a hundred times.

"Now, imagine if we just lived in this type of good energy all the time, with everyone we know, including strangers. Imagine not living in an atmosphere of separation, of greed or self-centeredness. And the only thing that we as individuals put out there, is good, wholesome love and kindness. If

enough people can put this type of energy into the atmosphere and into the world, then this loving energy will be greater than the past vile energies. In time, all the good energy will eventually cancel out the bad stuff. I hope that answers your question?"

"Yes, it does. It does make more sense, at least."

Jamey took the lead. "Thank you, Starko. This certainly has been an enlightening evening. It's good to know the world is in good hands, but also that we are a part of this world and have some work to do as individuals."

"Exactly that." Starko nodded. "Thank you for this meeting and for the chance to answer some questions. I believe it is enough to help stir the minds of everyone and to get the ball rolling even faster."

At that moment, a crew member walked onto the set and whispered something to Jamey Broder. Jamey's face went slightly pale. He turned to Starko. "It seems we have a few Federal Agents here for you."

"I was already aware of them." Starko grinned and waved his hand in the air as if the presence of the agents was no concern, and he casually looked at all the exits. There were three agents posted at every exit. He turned and faced the middle camera. "As I said earlier about the son of Muruga, Aaron. He cannot be tracked. The same goes for any of us."

"It seems, Federal Agents are here to take me in and question me. Who knows what their agenda may be. I too cannot be tracked. I am found only when I wish to be found. Thank you all for listening tonight. You will see us all again when we wish for that to happen."

Starko snapped his fingers, and blinding rays of golden and white lights shot throughout the studio, causing everyone to shield their eyes. When the lights dimmed, he was gone. The Federal Agents were clearly confused, as they scurried about looking for Starko, while the world watched them on camera.

## CHAPTER 3

### Part I: Levi and Kayden

KAYDEN SAT ON HIS BED, leaning against the wall, thinking about everything which had occurred since his arrival on Earth. His sword lay across his lap, and he watched the fire swirling up and down the blade. He laughed and said aloud, "I really can't die. Awesome. If Aaris could see me now." For a few moments, he was lost in thoughts of the past during his time on Mars, protecting the smaller ones and helping his village in any way he could.

He was interrupted by a high-pitched beep coming from his phone. "Who's that?" He reached over to his desk, grabbed the phone and glanced at the time. The time was 4:33pm. "Alright, who's texting me? Levi?"

The text read, 'What up? It's Levi'.

Kayden was curious and spoke to nobody in particular. "Man. I didn't think I'd ever hear from that little squirt again." He texted back.

**Kayden:** Hey what's goin on?

**Levi:** not much it's been a bit we should hang maybe game center again where we met? just you tho not your friends. i'm cool with you cause you stepped in on my fight

**Kayden:** Yeah okay I'm pretty busy but I can get out of here. Why not any of my other friends though??

**Levi:** idk really I mean i'm cool with you just need to ease into new people I guess. that cool? maybe hang a few times first

**Kayden:** When?

**Levi:** what about now?

**Kayden:** That's cool. I actually have the rest of the night off.

I'll just tell everyone I'm taking a long walk

**Levi:** I'll be at the game center in 30

**Kayden:** Alright It'll take me at least 30 or more to get there.

**Levi:** see ya there

Kayden got up. He shoved his sword in a hidden sheath behind his back, and he ran upstairs. He saw Edward and Aaron. "Hey guys, I'm going out for a long walk to clear my head."

Edward nodded. "Alright. Just make sure you have your phone on you. I'm not worried about your safety, cause you're immortal. But if we need your help, or if there's any other emergency. You get the idea."

Kayden got a drink from the refrigerator and strolled out of the house. Edward turned to Aaron. "You know he's not just going for a walk, right?"

"Yeah, I know. I could tell." Aaron shrugged. "But like you said, he's immortal."

"Yup. And that's why it's really not a big deal for me. Otherwise, I would have dug a little deeper."

Kayden walked up the street a few blocks and waited for the train to come take him downtown. While he was waiting, he stared at his phone conversation. "Why am I meeting Levi of all people? He's like a puny squirt, and he doesn't want to meet my other friends." He shrugged his shoulders, not knowing why he felt completely drawn into the company of Levi.

The tracks rumbled, and the train stopped in front of Kayden. He boarded it and found a seat next to the window. Twenty minutes later, he hopped off the train. Using the GPS on his phone, he followed the directions to the game center where he originally met Levi, and where he originally learned about his power of angles during his billiard game with Sammy.

Once inside, he texted Levi and told him he was at the front of the center. Levi appeared within seconds. “Hey! You made it. Let’s get something to eat. This time, I got it. I actually have money now. I ain’t poor as hell like I was when you first met me.” He laughed and held out his fist.

Kayden bumped fists with Levi. *He’s different. Friendlier? Maybe cause this time he’s not getting his butt kicked in a fight?* “So what’ve you been up to?” Kayden asked him.

“A little of this and a little of that.” Levi shrugged his shoulders. “School, and just bumming around playing games at home or going out with the family. You?”

Kayden thought for a moment. A lot had changed since he last saw Levi. Leaving out the part about his immortality and his training, he answered, “Yeah, same. A lot of hanging out with my family. We’re pretty close and do a lot of things together.”

They walked to the food bar, and immediately, Kayden blushed. He nudged Levi. “Oh my god! I completely forgot all about her.” He pointed at the girl behind the counter. “That’s Sarina. We exchanged numbers last time. But so much has happened since then. I completely forgot to text her.” Lost in thought, he realized how long it had been. *Oh man. It’s almost been a couple of months since I saw her.*

Levi quickly understood. “She’s hot. You fall for brunettes? She’s a little short. Hahaha. Not as short as me, since I’m only like 5’4”. And she’s gotta be about two inches taller than me.”

He walked up to the counter. “Hey, Sarina. I’m Levi. My friend here, Kayden, says he’s verrrry sorry for not texting you. He wants to make it up to you though and maybe hang sometime.”

Caught off guard, she too blushed, and her eyes widened. “I... Kayden, the alien. Yes, I definitely remember you.” Kayden waved to her, not

knowing what to say. She glanced back at Levi. “Nice to meet you, Levi. I recognize you from somewhere.”

“Yeah, yeah. Last time we were all here, I almost beat up two guys, but he wanted the glory and stepped in.” He pointed at Kayden.

“Ahhhh. I remember now.” Sarina looked at Kayden, then Levi, and back to Kayden. “So, uh, you guys ordering anything?”

“Yeah.” Levi pointed to the picture of the garlic fries. “Two of those, that veggie melt thing, and whatever else he wants.”

“You don’t eat meat?” Kayden asked Levi.

“No.” Levi looked at him as if he was the dumbest creature on the planet. “Do you?”

“I mean, no. Just asking. That’s cool, though.” He turned to Sarina. “I’ll have that veggie melt thing also. Thank you.” He blushed again.

Sarina smiled and put the order in. “That’s \$10 a piece for the melts. \$7.50 a piece for the fries. And with my Extended 15% Friends & Family Discount, that comes to \$29.75, plus tax. Which is still expensive.”

“Ohhh, nice.” Levi glanced at Kayden. “We’ve already worked our way into her 15% discount.” He handed Sarina two twenty-dollar bills. “Thanks! Keep the rest of it. I’m a billionaire.” Sarina giggled. Levi tilted his head a bit. “Wait. So, if friends and family get 15%, how much of a discount do you get?”

“I get a free entrée and side on every shift. All fountain drinks, coffee and popcorn are always free. Anything extra, we get 40% off. There’s so many people that come here, and they make just as much money on food as they do games. And if we bring in friends and family for the games, they still make a lot of money on the food, even with the discount.”

“That’s a pretty good deal.” Kayden smacked Levi on the shoulder. “Thanks for getting me this time. You didn’t have to.”

“It’s all good. Besides, you got me last time with the fries. And you kind of saved my ass.”

“I thought you said you almost beat up the two guys last time.” Sarina laughed jokingly.

“Yeah. That’s what I said.” Levi laughed and asked, “So what time you off work?” He pointed at Kayden. “He wants to know. Not me.” Kayden turned his head and looked the other way, avoiding eye contact with Sarina.

She had a disappointed look on her face. “I’ve got a full shift. So not until 11. You guys don’t want to hang around that long.”

Finding the courage to say something, Kayden cleared his throat. “Ummm, maybe we can just set up a time and hang out sometime?”

“And by ‘we’, he means him and you.” Levi pointed to Kayden, then Sarina. “I won’t be there when that happens. FYI. Cause that’s a little much.”

“I would love to go out with you sometime.” Sarina smiled at Kayden, who smiled back.

“Then it’s a date!” Levi threw his arms into the air. “My work here is almost done.”

“I’ll definitely send you a text. I’m sorry.” Kayden lowered his gaze to the floor for a second. “Things just got really busy for me lately, and I kind of forgot about everything.”

“It’s not a big deal. Things happen.” Sarina glanced back at the window to the kitchen behind her. “Your food’s ready.” She grabbed the food and put it on a tray and handed it to Levi. “And I’m starting to get a line.”

Kayden walked up close to the counter and touched Sarina’s hand with one finger. “I’m looking forward to going out with you.” He turned to Levi. “Come on. Let’s find a table.”

“Yeah, cool.” Levi led the way and found a table in a corner, away from the busy areas. “It ain’t quiet, but at least we can chill out here.”



“Do we need it to be quiet?” Kayden gave him a curious look.

“Naw. But at least we can chat a little easier.”

Kayden chomped on a few fries. “So how do you get your money?”

“I’m not a trust fund baby, if that’s what you’re getting at.” Levi laughed at his own joke.

“What’s a trust fund baby?” Kayden was confused.

“Never mind. I do some chores and work for the family, and I earn my money that way. I’ve been saving up for a long time. When I was broke, last time when you bought me the fries, I wasn’t actually broke. I just didn’t have my cash on me that day. How do you get your money?”

Kayden thought for a moment, trying to choose the right words. “I guess like you. I do work for my family, and they pay me. Simple stuff, really.”

“What kind of work?” Levi took a bite of his sandwich, and with his mouth full, he added, “Mine’s like cleaning up and building and rebuilding stuff at home and for the family business.”

“Yeah. Same for me too.” Kayden nodded. “Sometimes I help my family out in the community.”

“Dude. I scored you a date. You owe me.” Levi threw a fry at him.

“Yeah, thanks. I do owe you for that one.”

“You can fight, for sure, but you can’t really talk with a girl. You need to learn how to do that. There’s probably a lot of things you still need to learn. I mean, there’s a lot of bad stuff out in the world.” Levi stared at him for a second and snickered. “See? Good thing I was around to talk for you.”

Kayden had an odd feeling and just laughed with him. “Yeah. I still feel like I’m learning new things every day.” He reached his hand out to grab some of his fries, and at that moment, Levi also reached out to take some fries from Kayden’s stash. When doing so, Levi’s hand touched the side of Kayden’s

hand. Kayden's mind went blank, and he felt a shock go through his body. He jolted in his seat and looked around the game center, then at Levi.

"Oh, my bad. That's your fries, not mine." Levi withdrew his hand and reached over to his own stash. He picked one up, tossed it in the air, and caught it in his mouth, then took a bite of his veggie melt. Kayden was still staring at Levi, while trying to process what happened. He looked confused.

"You okay?" Levi asked him. "You look all weird right now."

"Yeah." Unsure of what happened, Kayden forced a smile. "Yeah, man. I'm alright. Why?"

"I don't know. You just look all weirded out all of a sudden. You thinking about Sarina?"

Kayden relaxed a bit. "Oh, uh, yeah, I guess. It's good to see her again. I just need to know how to talk with her. You're right about that."

"Yeah, well, you'll get there. I mean, I'm not like a professional when it comes to girls, but I HAVE dated before. Just send her a text tonight. That should get things going for you." He stared at his food for a second. "I'm done. I can only eat so much. We should play some games or something. Maybe a game of pool or walk around before we dip out of here."

Kayden scooped up the wrappers and placed them on the tray. "We haven't been here that long."

"I know." Levi shrugged. "But my work here is done now."

"What?" Kayden tilted his head.

"Ohhh, well... I just meant that I reconnected with a friend, scored you a date as a payback for saving my ass in that fight, and I ate some shitty food that tasted really good." He was beaming. "What more could I want?"

"Alright. Let's see what kind of games they have here." Kayden led the way as they strolled around the game center. There were flashing lights and children running in every direction.

After walking around for nearly ten minutes, Levi pulled out his phone and read a text. “I have to get going. I’m being called to come home. We should stop by the café and say bye to your girl.”

“She’s not really my girl.” Kayden rolled his eyes.

“Not yet.” Levi slapped him on the arm. “You should be more positive about that. The way things are going, she’ll be your girl in no time.” He walked toward the food bar, while Kayden followed. Sarina was finishing up with a customer, so they both waited patiently in line.

Once the customer left, Kayden walked up to the counter. “We’re taking off now. It was good to see you. I’ll send you a text tonight, K?”

Sarina blushed. “I’ll look forward to that text. Just remember I’m off at 11, so I won’t be able to text much until then.”

“I won’t forget.” Kayden winked at her. “We’ll talk soon.”

Levi waved at her. “See ya around. I’m glad I was able to put you both on the same path. Alright, let’s dip.” He turned and walked toward the front.

Once outside, Levi asked him, “Which way are you going?”

Kayden pointed to the left. “Down that way to catch the train.”

“Ah, okay. I’m headed that way in the other direction to catch a different train.” He held his fist out to bump against Kayden’s. “We’ll hang again sometime soon.”

“Cool. Send me a text.” Kayden took off in the direction he pointed, while Levi walked in the opposite direction.

Once Kayden was out of sight, Levi turned the corner and walked down a random street until he found an alley. He peered into it for a second and made sure nobody was around. After walking halfway into the alley, he stopped, took a deep breath, then made a big circle in the air with his right arm. A portal opened up, and he stepped into it. Once he was in, it closed up on its own, leaving only the sounds of the city wafting through the alley.

# CHARACTERS

- Aaris** Tall lean, and muscular, she is the Governor of the underground village on Mars, where Kayden is from.
- Aaron** Son of Muruga and High Guardian. Inherits the powers from the god of Time, and the god of Fire. Has been alive for thousands of years. Battled in many galaxies and never lost a fight. His weapon is the Vel Staff, a golden spear. Short, dark wavy hair, stands at 5'8" with dark eyes that sometimes sparkle.
- Ang** The King of Demons on Mars. He has been alive for millions of years.
- Andrei** Son of Siva. Stays out of the wars and missions of the gods on Earth, but he guides the gods and people of the planet. His weapon of choice is the Trident.
- Arul** The god of Ascension and the father of Gene.
- Beckah** Daughter of Surya of the Sun. She had known Starko in her previous life. In this current incarnation, Starko finds her and passes on the full lineage of Surya.
- Blight** Demon from Mars. Has been alive for millions of years. Discovered a portal to Earth and moved to become the new Demon King.
- Caleb Elliott** 2nd son of Muruga. Age 15. Inherited the powers of Gaia, goddess of Earth. Left his home in India to fight with the gods, based in America. He is magickally linked with Patrick. Was given a Vel Staff weapon as a gift from Muruga.
- Christopher Gaia** Son of Gaia. Subordinate to High Guardian, Edward. Inherited the powers of Agni, the god of Fire. Has power over dirt, sand, water, plants. Carries a sword imbued with power from Mikhae. Other weapons are trees, rocks and everything residing in

	Earth. Can turn a bean into a pumpkin. Short, blonde hair, stands at 5'6" and has deep, green eyes.
<b>Cole Brenner</b>	Inherited the powers of Gaia and Muruga. Has control over the Earth and battles with Murugan energy. His weapon is a golden sword, created and bonded by Muruga and Gaia.
<b>Damenion</b>	An immortal, powered by demonic magick. His humanity gives access to places that his demon master cannot go. Black hair, stands at 5'11" with black eyes.
<b>Danny</b>	One of the appointed leaders of the Sun warriors. He is also the boyfriend of Mery.
<b>Douglas Damaru</b>	The father of Mery and Lynne. His magick stems from three lineages: Kala, Gaia and Arul. His weapon, a sword, was empowered by Muruga during his awakening. Short, white hair, stands at 5'11" with blue eyes.
<b>Edmond</b>	Former mercenary of Moloch. Now a disciple of Gene.
<b>Edward Kronos</b>	High Guardian and Son of Kala Bhairava, the god of Time. Inherited the battler powers of Muruga. He also inherited the magick from Agni, the god of Fire. Has access to all facets of Time, including slowing Time down. He wields a sword forged from the sword of Mikhae, the great warrior angel. Blonde hair, stands 5'8" and has piercing, dark eyes.
<b>Eon</b>	Angel, formerly known as the demon, Ire, from Mars.
<b>Finn</b>	Former mercenary of Moloch. Now a disciple of Gene.
<b>Gaia</b>	The goddess of Earth and the mother of Christopher.
<b>Gene Arul</b>	Son of Arul, god of Ascension. Subordinate to High Guardian, Edward. Inherited the powers of Agni, the god of Fire. Easily moves through dimensions. Can turn his enemies to his side, by burning their karmas. Wields a sword forged from the sword of Mikhae, the great warrior angel. Short, light-brown hair, stands at 6'2" with brown eyes that sometimes reflect yellow.
<b>Gunner</b>	Former mercenary of Moloch. Now a disciple of Thomas.

<b>Gwen St. Clair</b>	Guardian Watcher of Christopher, son of Gaia. 20 years old. Has control over all facets of Earth. Bobbed, blonde hair, stands over 5'10" with blue eyes. Girlfriend of Patrick.
<b>Great Wizard</b>	A highly evolved being who was responsible, along with Mikhae, for catching and annihilating Moloch's brother, a fierce and conniving demon. When last here, he presented himself as a hippy who walked around in sandals.
<b>Heather Winters</b>	Guardian Watcher of Edward, son of Kala. 23 years old. Has control over all facets of Time. Very athletic. Long, sandy-brown hair, stands 5'9" with blue eyes.
<b>Jace</b>	Former mercenary of Moloch. Now a disciple of Thomas.
<b>Jan</b>	The reincarnation of Iona, Damenion's true love. In the current life, she and Damenion find each other once more.
<b>Jillion</b>	Angel, formerly a demon from Mars who lost in battle to Aaron, the son of Muruga.
<b>Kala</b>	The god of Time and the father of Edward.
<b>Kane</b>	Former mercenary of Moloch. Now a disciple of Thomas.
<b>Kayden</b>	Boy from Mars, rescued by Edward and Aaron. Has the power of Agni, Kala and Muruga streaming through him. He carries a sword infused with the power from Muruga, Siva and Agni.
<b>Khenpo</b>	Has been alive for hundreds of years. All of his demonic energies were burned away by Gene, the son of Arul. He then became a disciple of Gene.
<b>Levi</b>	Kayden's new friend. Has strange, mystical powers. He later revealed himself as the great god, Sudarshana.
<b>Lynne Damaru</b>	Inherited the powers of Gene, son of Arul. Easily moves in and out of dimensions. Sister of Mery. Long, dark-brunette hair, stands 5'11" with brown-black eyes.
<b>Mery Damaru</b>	Guardian Watcher of Gene, son of Arul. Has control over all facets of moving in and out of dimensions. 17 years old. Sister

of Lynne. Has a magickal ring, empowered by Gene. Shoulder-length, dark-brunette hair, stands 5'8" with brown-black eyes.

- Mikey** Former gang member. Stands at 5'11" with dark brown hair. Inherited the fire lineage of Agni. From Kala, he was given the power to view Time in all ages. Was given the knowledge of all languages, as well as battle tactics from Muruga.
- Mikhae** One of the seven warrior angels of the El Dynasty. He gave the three swords to Edward, Gene and Christopher. Turned into an angel by Siva, he has been alive for millions of years. Has a wingspan of ten feet, and he also stands ten feet high.
- Moloch** Demon King of Earth. Alive for thousands of years, he rose to power after his brother was annihilated by Mikhae and The Great Wizard.
- Muruga** The god of Pleiades, the overlord of Mars, and the father of Aaron.
- Narakasura** The mastermind demon from the planet, Naraka. He was pulling all the strings. Over two hundred fifty million years old, he was the true Demon King, prior to Moloch and Blight.
- Patrick Elliott** Gaia's third chosen child. Age 18. He inherited the powers of the Murugan lineage and is magickally linked with Caleb. He was given a Vel Staff weapon as a gift from Muruga.
- Payton** Former mercenary of Moloch. Now a disciple of Gene.
- Sammy** Age 15. Kala's third chosen child. Also inherited the powers of the Murugan lineage. He knows all facets of Time and is battle-ready, with a silver sword forged by Muruga and Kala Bhairava.
- Sarina** Works at the game center in the city. Stands at 5'9" with long, flowing, black hair and dark skin. She is Kayden's girlfriend.
- Seth** Sun warrior, 20 years old, blonde hair and blue eyes. He is the boyfriend of Skyler.

<b>Skylar</b>	Stands at 6'2" with dark hair. 18 years old. Has the power of Sudarshana with the spinning chakra weapon. Has the ability to take powers from others. Absorbed the power of angles from Kayden. Absorbed the entire lineage of Surya from Seth. Boyfriend of Seth.
<b>Starko</b>	The first son of Surya, god of the Sun. An immortal who trained and learned the highest forms of martial arts, and later trained two hundred others in the ways of Surya. Muscular, dark-brown hair, stands at 6'1".
<b>Sunny</b>	A son of Surya, god of the Sun. Originally a small child, Sunny was saved by Thomas, who changed his grotesque form into that of a toned athlete in his mid-twenties. Sunny stands at 6'1" with jet-black hair, dark eyes and chiseled cheeks.
<b>Sudarshana</b>	The god of Sudarsa, the planet which is 600 light years from Earth. This great warrior god empowered Kayden, Skylar and Seth, as well as Aaron and Edward, to carry his lineage.
<b>Thomas</b>	The second son of Surya, god of the Sun. An immortal, trained by Starko, in the ways of fire and fighting. He can read minds and influence others to do his bidding. Thick and muscular, fiery, red hair, stands at 6'1".
<b>Uri</b>	One of the seven warrior angels of the El Dynasty. He empowered Aaron, Edward, Gene and Christopher in the ways of Agni, the god of Fire. Turned into an angel by Agni, he has been alive for millions and millions of years.
<b>Zeal</b>	Formerly known as the demon, Akrimon, from the planet, Naraka, he was transformed into an angel by Edward and Aaron and given the power of lightning from Mikhae.



# CHARACTER GROUPS

## HIGH GUARDIANS

*Edward and Aaron*

The High Guardians are powerful beings from the Otherworlds. They help to keep balance and order throughout the Cosmos. Their very presence radiates peace throughout the myriad galaxies and infinite dimensions of the seen and unseen worlds.

## THE LEGENDARY THREE

*Edward, son of Kala Bhairava, god of Time  
Christopher, son of Gaia, goddess of Earth  
Gene, son of Arul, god of Ascension*

Edward, Christopher and Gene are the Legendary Three. They first came to Earth, 3300 years ago, to rid the planet of Mephistopheles and his countless armies. Now in modern day, they have returned to destroy the Demon King, Moloch, and to restore balance to the Earth.

## THE MURUGAN WARRIORS

*Aaron, Edward, Patrick, Caleb, Sammy, Cole*

There are six sons of the Red Planet, Mars. They are the warriors who hold the Murugan battle energy from Muruga, the god of Pleiades, and the overlord of Mars. Six was the chosen number, for the six faces of Muruga (Sa Ra Va Na Ba Va). The sons of the Red Planet know how to battle and strategize, and they have the power to learn any language, including languages in the animal and insect kingdoms.

## KEEPERS OF FIRE AND LIGHT

*Aaron, Edward, Christopher, Gene, Kayden, Sunny, Beckah, Mikey,  
Skyler, Seth, Thomas, Starko, Zeal*

All who inherited the power of Agni, the fire in all universes, are known as the Children of the Sun. They are able to transform into lightning and travel through the air at the speed of light. This power helped to end the reign of the demons.

## **WARRIORS OF THE SUN**

*Starko, Thomas, Danny, Starr, Seth, William, Jonathan, Jayson, Rico, Kellan, Allie, Brynne, Kiara, and all the warriors who fight in the name of the Sun.*

The Sun Warriors clan was started by the immortal, Starko. Starko was first son of Surya, god of the Sun. The Sun Warriors have their own fighting style, one of the craftiest of martial arts in the entire Universe. Each of the members of the Sun Warriors are ageless and will eventually be immortal. They can turn their bodies into fire, and they can shoot fire from their hands.

## **THE PANTHERS OF TERRA-THATH**

*The King and Queen and their Subjects*

The panthers are a race residing in Terra-Thath, the land far below the surface of Earth. They were originally four-legged creatures, but through the grace of the angel, Mikhae, they evolved and were given cognitive powers, reasoning and fighting skills to be warriors.

## **THE EL DYNASTY**

*Seven Powerful Angels, including Mikhae and Uri*

The oldest and most powerful of all the angels. Within the clan are seven of the most powerful beings in the entire universe. Each angel in the El Dynasty has been around for many millions of years. Nothing is hidden from them. The power of Mikhae runs through the swords owned by Christopher, Gene and Edward. Edward, Aaron and Kayden all wield the power of Uri.

## **THE DEMONS OF MARS**

*Ang, the Demon King, and his Subjects*

This race of demons was born on Mars. Millions of years ago, they destroyed the entire civilization and caused the entire collapse of the planet. They are an immortal bunch, governed by their karma to live, but to never enjoy and to never die. To this day, they still reside on Mars, free to roam and to do as they please.

## **THE DEMONS OF NARAKA**

*Narakasura, the Demon King, and his Subjects*

This race of demons was born on Naraka, a planet that is 600 light years from Earth. A group of ruthless and savage beasts, these demons have existed for over two hundred fifty million years. Their goal was to enslave thousands of people from Earth, in order to repopulate their own planet.



**VAUGHN EZRA EDWARD** is an Author, a Performing Vocalist & Instrumentalist, and a Photographer. He has performed across the country from coast to coast, singing his own Originals. Along with the vocals, he plays fluently, the keyboard, saxophone and hand drums. He has toured through the Caribbean and has played in multiple clubs, universities, venues and fests around the country.

His travels have led him through almost every mountain range in the United States. During his travels, he studied for many years under many authentic, enlightened teachers from India, Tibet, the U.K., Jamaica, the Island of Mauritius and elsewhere. Each of his teachers left their mark and contributed in some way to the stories and basis of Warrior Children, and the gods and goddesses within the series.

[www.vaughnedward.com](http://www.vaughnedward.com)

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