

Hannah's Heart Chapter Eight - The Office and the Book

January 15, 2020



Hanna fully expected to be met with a dark, gloomy space as she pushed open the wide door—but that was anything but what actually met her. The mound had been the size of perhaps an oversized thatched hut, or a cold-storage cave dug into the side of a much larger mountain.

But inside, she stood at the top of a short flight of steps descending into a bright, clean room lit from some unknown source. (There wasn't a lamp or ceiling light to be seen). As she walked down the steps, she sensed the room was merely

an anteroom to a much larger space beyond it. Perhaps behind the enormous, clear-enough-to-see-through desk that sat directly in front of her? A single door with a small square of glass at eye level pierced the center of a solid wall just behind it and gave promise that there was much more to explore here, if you could only go beyond this smaller place.

The desk was piled with an assortment of books, trays, papers and all sorts of library-counter type things. An angel, (surely that's what he was?) garbed in a dark green robe snuggled around the waist with a braided white rope, was seated in a rolling chair pulled tight to the desk. He had a remarkable lack of hair just in the center of his bent head. But what he had gently framed his face in soft, chocolate waves. One ear sported a large red pencil. He was writing furiously with a black one.

A long, eagle-quill pen and a reservoir of ink perched on a soft grey pad to his right. There were pages disarrayed at all angles covering that side of the workstation, with chicken-scratch writing filling the entire surface of each sheet.

A machine similar to a computer rested on the corner of the desk to his left. Each time the angel finished writing whatever it was he was doing, he would hold the page up near the front of the monitor-looking part and it would disappear. The computer-machine would quietly whirl and make rapid tapping sounds in between, obviously doing something to the work the angel was completing—and soon a new page would appear on the desk in front of him.

While this was curious enough, what caught Hanna's immediate attention was that there were no wires to be seen. Anywhere.

Wow! she thought. *Dad's computer has wires all over the place. Geez, how many times has he complained about us trippin' over them? He even duct-taped the printer cable to the rug last week, after Evan almost knocked it off the stand.*

But not on this desk. No cords. No plugs. No sockets in the wall, for that matter.

The angel was oblivious to her presence. This work he was doing was an absolute clash between medieval days and the present! Or the future? Because she couldn't see anything that looked like a mouse, a keyboard or a printer.

She must be imagining that those papers were appearing out of thin air. There had to be a connection there somewhere...? She stood in front of the desk, furtively looking around. Waiting. Beginning to wonder what to do next.

"Dear, oh dear, oh dear. Great Mekoddishkem," the figure at the desk began to talk to himself in great good humor. "You truly do know how to stretch an angel, don't you? Who would have thought You'd assign me to such a thing..." His voice trailed off to a chuckling mutter.

Another piece of paper slid in place and he began writing again.

“Always learning. Always growing. That’s my motto. You sure took me at my word this time, Oh Yah!”

He grabbed another piece of paper and had just readied his hand to continue writing when he realized he was not alone in the room.

“Oh!” he exclaimed, slapping the pencil down on the desk. It rolled and dropped to the floor, bounced twice on the eraser head, and disappeared like a diver hitting deep water.

“Well, well, well! I’ve been expecting you, dear.” He smiled at her quickly, then leaned over to search for the pencil.

Talking to the floor now, he rambled on, “Just trying to keep up with a little bookwork while we’re waiting—a little scribing, so to speak. Notes all over the place here. Notes for this one, notes for that one ... oh, I just have to keep it all in order.”

“That’s the main thing, keeping it all in order,” he jabbered more quietly now, to no one in particular. He wasn’t looking at Hanna, nor was there anyone else in the room. She suspected he’d forgotten she was even there, but he was so sweet and endearing, Hanna couldn’t help the smile gathering in one corner of her mouth.

The pencil on his ear began to slip forwards as he moved his head, still searching.

“You’re losing your—” she pointed out about the same time he grabbed for it.

Unsuccessful, he straightened and watched this one roll under the door into the next room.

“Yes. Well.”

Remembering his guest, he gave her a small, apologetic smile.

“They keep telling me I need to learn more about this machine, here.” He eyed the computer with a suspicious glance. “I just don’t know. I just don’t know! I tend to be a little old-fashioned, then, don’t I?”

One eyebrow rose while he scanned once more for the first pencil, followed by a quick grunt. “Francis never wanted any of this stuff, either. Well, not that he had it available when he was in his Earth body, you know? But even now, he’s not for all this *fast* stuff. I must say, I can’t agree with him more.”

Giving up the search, he looked fondly over at the quill and ink, reaching over to draw it just a little closer to the paperwork. “I slip together more easily with his kind than you modern ones.”

Clutter apparently disturbed him. He began to gather up all the scattered papers mounded in front of him, and tapped their edges against the desktop, straightening the strays and lining them all up perfectly.

“Things are a good bit slower there. Not so much rush, rush, and rush to get the job done.” He smiled up at her and took a deep breath.

He had apparently arrived at his point of introduction.

He sat back in his chair, clapping both hands down on his knees.

“So! You’re little Hanna.” He wasn’t wearing glasses, yet he peered up at her as though squinting through tiny twin lenses.

She waited a few moments, assuming he’d have more to say. But now he just sat there with a slowly fading, glad-to-meet-you smile on his face and his eyes began to wander.

“Yes!” she finally jumped to answer, perhaps a bit too loudly.

“I’m Hanna.”

She reached out to shake the curious creature’s hand.

“You say you’ve been waiting for me?”

Her answer perked up his attention, but he ignored her hand. She pulled it back again, tucking it into one of her newly earned pockets.

“Yes, yes, yes,” he answered absentmindedly, and suddenly stood, looking around for something. “It was right here a moment ago ... Now where ...?”

His eyes fell on a small table just beyond the desk.

“Ah! Here it is.”

He walked over to retrieve a large, thick book covered with a deep scarlet, leather-like material with gold embossing all along the edges. Decorating the cover were swirls and flowers and birds and bars in blue and green, orange, purple and yellow.

Her full name was printed directly in the center, in letters as tall as her fingers—Hannalee Grisandole James. And then a space was left empty next to it. The surprised look on her face coached him to lean in and whisper conspiratorially, “That’s for when you get married, dear. Nothing to worry about now.”

He had been holding the book out for her to examine. It appeared heavy, and his hands started sinking towards the floor.

“Adonai would like you to look at the first part of this book.”

“If you would.”

“Please.”

He presented the idea to her rapidly, (*when will she take it?*) with a solemn smile. The heavy tome continued to drop, and with a sigh he hoisted it up into both arms, freeing one long arm to point.

“You can take a seat right over there and open it.”

As before, Hanna just stood there, wondering if he was finished yet. He still held the book, and his eyes had started to drift back towards the desk again.

I have work to do. I have work to do! What DO these human creatures think, anyway?

A thought niggled at him. There was something else he was supposed to say to her—wasn’t there?

“Oh, bless me! I’m so sorry. What you must think of me! Dear, dear. What you must think ... I meant to tell you: ‘You will know what to do after that.’ That’s the last thing. Yes, yes.” Having discharged his duty, he smiled at her, made a short, polite bow and thrust the book at her—then turned and wandered away.

“I knew there was just a little more,” he continued to mutter. A little chuckle burst from him every other word or so. “Adonai, Adonai, your instructions were perfect, as always.” Having reached his desk, he re-seated himself and became absorbed once more in his work.

Know what to do after I open a book? Hanna quizzed herself.

Shrugging, she settled the volume more securely in her arms and started to walk the way he’d pointed. *Whatever can he mean by that?* It was so silly a thing to say to her, of all people. She rolled her eyes and kept walking, not wanted to befuddle the poor dear any more with questions.

He’s not exactly a fountain of information anyway, she giggled to herself.

She reached the corner of the room, where a straight-backed loveseat had been placed behind a low, long table. The book looked like it would extend nearly to the same width when it was opened, so she placed it carefully in the center of the polished top. Taking a seat, she glanced up at the angel.

He never did tell me his name, though, she thought. *Huh. I wonder what it is.*

Immediately, a tiny paper with the word “Sofer” lay on the cover of the book.

“Oh!” she blinked. As soon as she had read the note, it disappeared again.

“I see,” she spoke quietly. “Thank you.” She looked up, but Sofer’s head was intent on the work before him.

“Whoever sent that—”

Her eyes sparkled now as she considered what lay before her. Just opening the massive book felt like an adventure, and a thrill ran up inside of her, she was so curious about what might be inside.

She held her breath a little, savoring the moment. It was always this way with a new book. She knew that she held in her hands a myriad of things. Adventure. Danger. Happy things. Heart-rending things. Scary things, maybe. Whatever was inside any particular book had the potential of taking her years and miles and countries away from where she was as she sat to read it.

That was always a wonderful thing.

The cover soon lay open, and before her was the title page, “The Life and Times of Hannalee Grisandole James _____.” Drawn on the page were tiny scenes, little vignettes of her life so far.

First was a scene of Mom holding her, wrapped in a baby blanket, obviously newborn. Dad was hovering over her shoulder, with a look of ... joy? There was a smile on his face like Hanna had never seen before.

Well, I'm not interested in THAT one, that's for sure.

The picture next showed her (presumably) taking her first steps. Mom was kneeling a few paces away, arms held out to her. Daddy was standing behind Hanna, capturing the entire event with a video camera.

I've never seen a home movie like that, she frowned. We don't even HAVE home movies.

This was getting uncomfortable.

A little bitter, now. *I'll bet they threw them away when we moved, she thought sarcastically. So—why is it still in this book? What are these, anyway? Chapters? There're no page numbers anywhere.*

Hanna searched for a picture she might want to... do. Whatever she was supposed to do with it.

On they went through all of her twelve years. One, sometimes more, for each year. Her face lit up as she recognized one in particular.

Uncle Ben and the fishing trip. Wow!

Like this one, some of the scenes were beautiful memories. Some of the scenes she didn't remember at all. A few were a little puzzling as she looked at them, because she didn't seem to be in the picture.

She decided the Uncle Ben chapter would be the best one to look at and tried to turn to the second page—but the book resisted. Remembering the “proper” way to turn a page, she tried to slide her right hand beneath the top corner, but nothing would respond. She placed her left thumb halfway up the bulk of the pages and squeezed backwards with her hand—still nothing happened. The entire book acted like it was all glued together.

She looked up and started to call out a question to Sofer, but his attention was focused intently on yet more papers. Having lost the second pencil, he was happily dipping the long quill pen into the inkbottle, carefully scraping it on the opening and dabbing just a time or two on the felt pad before he resumed his writing.

He appeared to be in—she laughed out loud as this thought—7th Heaven!

Hanna looked down at the page again and blinked in surprise. Where before the pictures had lain flat on the page, now they were raised like broad buttons.

Rather gingerly, she reached with her right forefinger and pressed down on the Uncle Ben scene. No response. She tried one that showed both her and Evan on a trip they'd taken with Uncle Ben and Aunt Janet, but again—nothing happened. One by one, she pressed on the scenes, avoiding the ones where her parents were in the pictures, until finally only those and a scene of herself as a young child playing on a sun-lit beach were left.

Frustrated, she chose the beach one—and the book sprang open. A puff of colored smoke rose from the pages, and a 3-D hologram of the scene formed in the air above it, leaving clean, white paper underneath—as though a page had been emptied and brought to life above the surface of the book.

COOL... she breathed.

Before she could think any further, the scene appeared to grow. And grow. And grow—up and around her—until soon she found herself no longer watching a tiny display, but surrounded full-sized by the scene, standing amidst the participants.

She vaguely remembered the occasion, although it lay deep in her memory; a treasure once enjoyed but buried under an avalanche of misery. She'd been about four. Evan hadn't been born just yet. Weeks before, Mom had gotten a book from the library about going to the seashore, and Hanna had been coaxing to "go there, Mommy. Daddy? Please, we go there, too?"

Early one morning, Daddy had announced to her that "he and his favorite princess were going on a special outing," and after breakfast they had led her to the car. As they rode, he explained that he had planned a whole week for them to spend together—just Hanna, Mommy and Daddy. They were going to a faraway place called Virginia Beach, where they could see all the things she and Mommy had been reading about in her book.

Hanna did remember the long car ride. To keep her occupied and content, they'd stopped at a small petting zoo, and visited several other local attractions along the way. It had taken two days of traveling, but finally they'd settled into an apartment right on the oceanfront.

The beach lay just the other side of a huge, sliding-glass door. And they had spent this particular afternoon playing in the sand, "burying" Daddy and making a sand castle with a wide moat of water Mommy filled with her little buckets.

"Come on, Sweetheart," she could hear her hologram mother coaxing. Her memory returned as though it had been freed from a cage, and suddenly Hanna-in-the-office found herself immersed in the experience.

She was standing just at the edge of where the water met the sand. She could feel the heat of the sun on her back, hear the waves crash and the *huoh-huoh-huoh* of the sea gulls overhead as they searched for a clam to swoop down and snatch away.

Little Hanna was afraid of the roar of the ocean, of watching the pull of the receding water drag things down, into and under the waves. She didn't want to even touch it with her toes, much less walk in to where her mother kneeled in the foamy water.

"You can do it! You can do it, come on!" Mommy reached one hand towards her, not three feet away. "Don't be afraid," her mother continued to coax. "I'm right here, Sweetie—I'll catch you."

A sharp pang of sweetness, a long-forgotten memory of her mother's tender love hit Hanna—it actually made her heart hurt. Before she could think more about it, she heard her father chime in from behind her, "Hanna, Love! Take my hand. I've got you!"

Love. That word again.

An air of love swirled around her like a warm blanket. She was four again. Safe. Innocent. Beloved. Becoming one with the scene, Hanna reached out both arms towards her waiting mother and welcomed the joyous celebration as she dared the tiny waves to fall into Mommy's arms; felt the warmth from Daddy patting her back in pride and approval. Eyes closed, she smelled anew the familiar fragrance of her mother's skin, reveled in the loving touch of her father's hand, warm and sandy from the shoreline.

She began to sway a little with the motion of the waves striking against her mother's body. *THIS is what love feels like*, she smiled. Her heart hadn't forgotten, even though her mind had blocked it away.

She longed to stay there forever...

Without warning, the old, familiar voices of Suspicion and Mistrust thrust into Hanna's mind.

"No!" one screamed to her. *"This isn't real. Not anymore. It's all a game being played on you. You know how your parents feel about you. It's all lies! Lies, all lies."*

A different voice took on a smug growl. *"It's GONE! You aren't really doing any of the things you've just imagined. Don't you see? That was then. THIS IS NOW. They don't care about you anymo—"*

Immediately, in response to the dark whispers that had exploded in her mind, the scene whisked away, the writing returned to the page again and the book slammed shut, jerking itself out of her hands. She could feel the warmth, the deep love that had been washing over her slowly sliding back out of her heart... until all that remained was a cold shiver deep in her soul, and the gentle tap, tap, tapping of the machine across the room. It was so massive a sucker-punch, she couldn't even think, couldn't process the swiftness with which one thing fled into the other. Mindlessly, she stared at the closed book, trying to breathe again.



What she didn't know, and couldn't see, was Kamali. Hidden from her eyes, he was pulling very firmly on a leash and choker chain attached to an ugly, dog-like creature that crouched on her shoulder. His pull had stopped it from spewing any more lies—but the damage had already been done.

It had been allowed—Kamali knew it.

For the sake of the Teaching.

For the sake of His Healing.

Still, he hated it—for her sake.

With another powerful jerk, he flung the creature out of the dimension they were in, back into its own—and it flew howling through the air.



Tears welled up in Hanna's eyes. Something within her yearned for it all to come back. A still, quiet feeling inside urged her to consider letting it.

Something else inside was hot and burning, sharp and prickly.

More out of habit than real conviction, she shook her head hard and made her decision.

No. I don't care what happened years ago. NOW is what matters.

She spoke to herself fiercely, hands clenched into fists, her mouth drawn up to stop it from quivering. With a bitter laugh, she ranted on, needing to convince herself of the righteousness of her wrath.

LOVE? They NEVER loved me! I don't care what happened to them. You don't just stop loving someone. You don't start treating someone you love like... like... like THEY do.

She'd cast off her chance to think clearly now. Her decision to roll with the bitterness deepened.

No! Look how they treat Evan and I! LOVE? They've taken AWAY everyone who really loved me. Really loved us. Sent them away. Drove them away. What does it matter what happened forever ago?

One last glimmer of a thought, that maybe she was being too harsh, floated through her thinking. But Reason pushed it aside and took over again.

Even if they did then, they don't now.

So, what does any of it matter?

Like a piece of softened clay left carelessly out in the sun—what had been a slowly opening heart shrank back to became hard and unmalleable once more.

So far, everyone she'd met seemed to be able to read her mind—and there was no way she wanted that to happen now! Afraid Sofer would look up and see her face, sense her distress and anger, she flung herself up from the chair and rushed for the steps, stumbling up the first one and nearly landing on her face. A swift push with her knees got her moving again, and she grabbed the door handle, jerked it open and stepped out.

She needed to find Jesus and make Him explain.

She needed to make Him understand that it was all oh, so very nice, thank You.

But *this*?

This was impossible.

This couldn't be true.

She wouldn't accept it, wouldn't allow some magic book to soften her heart.

She was fully back in Reality now.

