

Chapter Five

December 15, 2019 Forgiven, Forgotten



The bluish, golden glow of the Gate grew stronger and stronger, and soon pierced Hannah's eyelids enough to draw her attention. She opened her eyes, expecting that her mother had let the hall light into her room and come to see her after all—and was overjoyed to find, instead, that she lay just before the Garden itself.

Kamali smiled at her and offered one long arm to help her up. He stood at his full, seven-foot-tall stature, his expression friendly—except for the way his eyebrows peaked

together in concern. The battle at her home had been fierce, and he wondered just how much she understood of it.

If any.

The past twelve hours of struggle with her parents were swiftly forgotten in her delight at seeing him. Hanna smiled, all fear and hesitation of being in this place gone.

“Hello, again! Kamali, right?”

As she rose to her feet, she realized she was dressed again in the white shift. It seemed just a little longer this time, and there was a pretty ruffle running around the hem. The red heart was still there, and the key was around her neck.

She looked up into Kamali's face and a mischievous thought crossed her mind.

“So ... when are you going to tell me the ‘story’?”

“Story of what, young one?” he dodged her question.

It was embarrassing to remember the efforts he had gone through trying to craft an appearance he felt would be more approachable to her. He had assumed three or four different body types, questioning whichever angels were near him about their opinions. The others had insisted that he was fine, just as he was, but he hadn't listened to them.

After eons of other, more war-like assignments, El Elyon had approached him nearly fifteen Earth years ago for a “special assignment,” as he had put it. Kamali had been honored and agreed immediately. But it was his great surprise to find out just what had been in the Creator's mind: he'd been assigned to a tiny, human girl-baby as a Guardian angel!

Even so, knowing the Master's ways were higher even than the angels', he had become content to leave his former post.

“There must be more to this assignment than first meets the eye, Oh Yah.” Kamali soon realized. “I accept with eagerness to see what is in Your Great Heart.”

He'd been watching over her all these years, doing his best to protect her from the evil ones' arrows, petitioning Yah for any needs that he knew could be fulfilled. It had pained him to see the mighty battles that her family had gotten embroiled in lately. At times, it had literally pained him, as he gathered Warrior angels to help him fight off vicious attacks on the humans, allowed to act because of Hanna's or her parent's sin.

Didn't they know what they were doing? Didn't they understand the action/reaction laws Yahweh had established firmly, even before He formed the Earth and its inhabitants?

Apparently not.

He still hadn't the foggiest idea about humans, really—not inside, not in their heads. Many were the times he'd fondly remembered comparative *easy*: the General Warrior Ranks and battle in the Second Heavens!

But Hanna had been his delight to serve, and this was going to be his first time plainly appearing to her—so, he had been anxious to put Hanna at ease. He had thought appearing more her own age, just in the beginning, would be a good way to do that.

Palamin had tried to warn him. Even Yeshua had chuckled a bit when he flew past Him, nervous to keep his first appointment with her.

Obviously, his attempt hadn't made the impression he'd been aiming for.

"Of what do you speak, young one?" he repeated, trying to make a better one now. "Did you have a question for me?"

Hanna grinned again and pointed back to the mossy rock where they had first met.

"You. Pretending to be a boy. I knew something wasn't right, right from the beginning. You did look like you were trying to walk on stilts there for a while," she shot back cheekily. "But then, most boys look ridiculous at that age. Look at my dumb cousin, Martin."

She wasn't paying attention to the color moving up his cheeks.

"Boys." She chattered on. "I make it a point never to bother with the pests."

She wasn't naturally unkind. But a few years ago, Hanna and her friends had deemed teasing a useful "cool tool." Tease. Even make fun of someone; but do it laughing, and you don't have to believe you're hurting them. That had been the game.

It had started in Tennessee, where she and her school chums found great delight in watching the results of their sharp words and quick wit. Even the church kids had joined in on the game. At least, the ones she'd hung out with. The DK's—Deacons' Kids.

Lately, though, she'd been noticing that it didn't work so well on the kids around here, especially the First Church kids. They DID tend to take it seriously, and she'd seen it even drive away a friend or two in the last months.

Something inside of her started to feel uncomfortable.

Kamali's expression never changed, but now she could see a faint red creeping into his cheeks.

Uh, oh—what's this? He actually looks like he's blushing!

She got a little worried now. Maybe teasing wasn't such a good idea here, either.

I wonder what I said?

I didn't know angels COULD blush!

She started thinking back about what she'd just said, and looked down at the ground, wishing she'd kept quiet. Wishing he'd at least say something ...

"I see," Kamali spoke finally, making a deep bow to her. "I will remember from now on. Please forgive me for resembling a 'pest,' as you say."

His words stung her, unexpectedly, and she felt heat rising in her cheeks. She searched his eyes to make sure he wasn't mocking her back. (He wasn't.) And licked her lips nervously.

"Well," she ducked her head and muttered. "I accept your apology. Of course. And I'm sorry if I made you feel bad, too."

Wanting to escape the whole exchange, she grabbed the key from around her neck and pressed it into the heart on her frock. The Garden gate began to swing open.



Hanna wasn't really surprised when Kamali didn't follow her this time, and some of the joy of being back in the Garden again faded away. It was even a little eerie being alone, at least in her mind.

She followed the path straight ahead, looking for the circle of buttercups again. She wanted to see if the tree had grown, and how much. Soon, she found what she thought was the correct place. But the flowers weren't bright yellow anymore; they were a rather sickly shade of green. The tree had grown—it was nearly as tall as she was—but there was something definitely wrong with it. The leaves were about the size of her hand in places, each with five “fingers” of leaf with veins running through them. She'd seen leaves like this before on a maple tree, but she'd never seen one that looked like this.

Not everywhere, but here and there, a leaf had lost its green, and was now clear. She held one up (she was afraid to pick it) and could see her hand right through it. The veins that ran inside the leaf were black, and the edges were a little crumpled looking. In this place of beauty and perfection, it all stood out like a tiny nightmare in the middle of a wonderful dream.

Hanna was so shocked, she sat down cross-legged on the path in front of the tree and cupped her head in her hands, just staring. The leaf she'd just handled came floating down and landed in front of her on the path.

She'd almost started to cry when a soft bump nudged her left elbow, and another tapped her right—and when she took her hands away, she saw that a family of doe-eyed bunnies had encircled her. They looked up at her with sad eyes, cocked their heads, and twizzled their whiskers back and forth. Once she'd picked her head up and cleared her lap, they proceeded to fill it, and snuggle down with her, bringing her a living blanket of wriggling bodies. One baby stood as high on his hind legs as he could reach, and sniffed and snuffed at her chin until, no longer able to contain it, she broke out in laughter in spite of the sorry sight in front of her.

This was crazy!

“But I'm still confused, Lord,” she spoke aloud.

“Where are You, anyway?”

“Standing here, waiting for you to invite Me in,” came the soft reply. With a single movement, He scooped up one of the largest bunnies and sat down beside her, then reached over to pick up the fallen leaf.

“They don't do this very often here.” He began. “Fall, I mean. Looks like a disease of some sort. I don't allow that here, you know.” He turned to look her in the face.

“Seems to be a problem. Can you think what might have happened?”

For the second time that morning, a blush began to creep up her face. He was being kind—and she didn't deserve it.

“I ... I think ...” Her hands suddenly got very busy stroking the fur of the bunnies.

“Yes,” she sighed, but kept her eyes focused on her lap.

“I know.”

“Mhmmm?” He prodded softly.

“I didn't mean to hurt him; I was just playing with him.”

Silence.

“Well, he *did* look silly, wobbling around on his legs!” Her embarrassment started to give way to self-defense. “Why didn't he just come like he really looks, anyway?”

“What did I tell you sustains this Garden, Hanna?” the soft answer came.

She knew. But she wouldn't swallow her pride and form the word.

“I see...” came his soft voice.

He held the leaf up in front of her and blew. It grew larger and larger, until it was the size of a small television screen. And when He took his hand away again, it hung suspended in the air.

“Watch.”

On the screen she could see a fierce battle going on, like something out of an old Roman gladiator movie. Angels dressed in armor, complete with helmets and metallic shoes were wielding long, heavy-looking swords that sliced through the middles of ugly, dark creatures. The creatures right around them **didn't have weapons, but instead, spit and did other more unspeakable things** to the angels. Most of it bounced off their armor. But sometimes it would land, and a gash would appear where it touched them.

Other, larger creatures stood farther back; these were shooting arrows at whatever they could hit. Again, most of these were warded off with shields, but once in a while, one would strike, and that angel would fall.

The battle was hard to watch, even though she'd seen TV movies like this. She knew the TV scenes were just actors and could laugh it off because of that. But the more she watched this, the more her stomach hurt every time an arrow pierced, or a blow landed.

Suddenly, one figure rose tall in the middle of the fiercest fighting—tall and white-haired, he had half a dozen creatures hanging from him, spitting and sliming him. One creature was hanging from the **back of his head, pulling it back to expose the angel's neck**—and in the distance, she could see another one taking aim with his enormous, black bow ...

“NOOOO!!” she cried out loud. “No, No, NO!”

The screen went dark. The leaf fell and lay on the ground again, leaf-sized.

Silence rose up around the two. And as though a signal had been given, the bunnies slowly jumped back onto the path and hopped away. The baby reached up and gave her chin a little kiss before leaving, but soon it followed the rest.

Tears were streaming down Hanna's face by this time, and there was a terrible, tight feeling in her chest. She had no idea what she had just watched or why it happened, but something inside of her knew it had been her fault.

“That was him.” Her voice sounded dull and tired. “Wasn't it?”

“Yes.”

“Was this before he became my guardian angel?” Hope stirred just a little. He *was* a military angel before; **didn't she remember that?**

The silence waited for this answer... Then, “No.”

The tightness in her heart shot a pang through her.

“Did it strike him?” The whisper barely came—but she had to know.

Jesus picked up the leaf and arranged it to viewing size again.

“Watch.”

The view resumed from a different angle; now they were looking down from above. What she **hadn't seen before were two slender figures, dressed in modern-day clothes**, standing. And facing each other. One seemed to be oblivious to what was going on around her and was blithely chattering non-stop at the second one. The other one seemed *very* aware—but **wasn't paying any attention to the first one's** blathering. Instead, streams of color were rising from her heart, soaring high into the sky and even farther.

Soon, other streams of color came flowing in from outside the battle circle. And as they all joined into a heavier flood, the battle began to slow, slower now... and stop. The ugly creature dropped from **Kamali's head**. The archer was split in half by an undetected sword. And the rest fled in terror. Within moments, there remained nothing to be seen but a band of angels and the two small girls.

The view came back around, and soon all that could be seen on the tiny screen **was Hanna's** face—and one of the children from First Church. They were students in the same school, although the

other girl was barely older than Evan. Hanna had been flinging “teasing” remarks at her one day and had been puzzled why the kid didn’t respond at all. She’d never even spoken back to her.

Now she knew why.

A thousand questions flew through her mind, but she couldn’t grab one long enough to ask it.

“If you’ll remember,” he came to her rescue. “This was just weeks before you accepted Me into your heart, Hanna. That’s why Kamali was there. Even in that condition, he was always there protecting you in your innocence and ignorance. You are, just now, learning the depths of right and wrong according to My Kingdom. And the Father was showing you Grace.

“Little Pattie has been Mine nearly since she could talk—and her parents both understand the unseen world that surrounds you. She knew enough to start asking for My and Father’s help; thus, the band of angels that joined Kamali.

“Innocent, ignorant—or not. It was you that opened the portal for that battle.”

She felt him looking at her now, even though her face was buried back in her hands. In her mind, her father’s figure overshadowed his—and she assumed his demeanor would be identical...

She knew there was nowhere to hide or run to avoid it.

So—taking a deep breath Hanna raised her head and turned it in His direction.

And steeled herself.

Her father’s eyes would have been boring through her; narrowed and angry in the middle of a hard, cold face.

What met her brought instant tears back to her eyes. In spite of her expectations and fears, all she saw was a face filled with sweet, unbounded, overwhelming acceptance and eyes that poured out into her own.

A face of Love.

There was that word again. There was that idea that formed his Garden, motivated his actions, and was displayed in full abundance all over him and this place.

Love.

He smiled, and tenderly pushed a few stray strands of hair from her eyes. “You were once loved this way, Dear. And least, to the extent that human parents can give.” He cupped her chin in his hand. “It’s My desire to teach it to you again. And to teach you how to give it to others.” His voice was soft and kind and gentle. “Particularly your Mom and Dad.”

“You were once the sunshine of the Day Care, you know.”

That was far away, long ago—and a million tears in the past. And Hanna wasn’t ready to go back there. Not yet. Not today, at least.

She pushed it away, looked up into his face and asked, “What do I do now?”

“Tell him you’re sorry again.” He smiled, having planted at least a seed. “And really mean it this time.”

“Will You forgive me?”

“Of course. I was only waiting for you to ask.”

Out of nowhere, the powerful snort of a horse met Hanna’s ears, and she jerked her head around to find it. A few feet behind them stood Kamali, head held high, a slight waver plucking at the corner of his mouth as he suppressed a grin of pleasure. Beside him, bobbing its head up and down like it understood the entire situation, was the most enormous, magnificent stallion she had ever seen—even in the colorful pages of her Horses of All the World book.

Her mouth dropped open as she looked way, way up to meet its eyes. The white giant nodded once more to greet her and started to walk towards where she and Adonai were rising from the path.

He knew. The horse *knew*—Hanna was sure of it. She glanced over her shoulder to see if she could wheedle an answer.

“Forgiven is forgotten in My world.” Jesus seemed to be suddenly busy with the leaves of the tree beside them.

“Just don’t forget Kamali.”

Humor restored, she laughed out loud at his evasion.

“Go ahead.” He waved her on. “Don’t be afraid of him. He’d like to say hello.”

Encouraged by his words, she stood still while the huge beast approached.

“His name is Regemmelech.” Kamali finally spoke. “Scratch his forehead, right above his eyes—he really likes that.”

The huge creature lowered his head to her and closed his eyes in anticipation of the special attention. With a giggle, Hanna reached up and scratched vigorously.

“He’s soooo beautiful!” she breathed to the others. “Is he yours, Jesus?”

“M-hmmm. He and I have been friends for a very, very long time.” Jesus stepped to her side and patted the horse’s neck affectionately.

“Shall we take her for a ride, Old Friend?”

With one swift move, He mounted up on Regemmelech’s back and smiled down at Hanna. “As soon as you’re finished, that is.”

She was never sure afterward which one of them was the more shy and awkward, but she turned to Kamali then, flung her arms around his waist and asked him in her most earnest voice, “Oh, Kamali! I’m so, so, so sorry! *Will* you please forgive me?”

Certainly not accustomed to such a display of emotion, Kamali patted her a few times on the arm, murmuring, “Of course, Little One, of course.”

Adonai’s deep, hearty laugh saved the day.

“Pax et caritas restituerentur!” Another delighted belly laugh rang through the air. “Hanna, you can look that one up later.

“Come, give me your hand.”

With a strong pull, she was mounted astride with Him, seated just in front. A sudden thought made her look down—and she saw that he had added a pair of wide-legged pants to her outfit and shrunk the shift to the length of a top.

A top with pockets!

She plunged both hands into them, grinning from ear to ear.

She started to notice other things, too.

“There’re no reins, no saddle. What do you hang on to?” She panicked a little. “What do I hang on to?!”

She could feel Adonai’s warm, sweet breath on her hair as He circled his arms around her. “Hold on like this,” He said, showing her where in the horse’s mane to grip.

“Don’t worry about falling off. I’ll be holding you, too. Besides,” his voice smiled. “A horse from My country would never be so careless as to let a rider fall off.”

“Onward!” he called, and immediately they were moving down the path. Soon, the pace quickened until it nearly took Hanna’s breath away, and she could feel swathes of her hair streaming behind her. For a moment, she was tempted to be frightened, until she realized that she was resting on the animal’s back in complete calm. As easily as sitting in an over-stuffed chair, she sat and watched the land fly past. Massive muscles tensed and relaxed beneath her, but there was never a dip, jolt, or stumble in Regemmelech’s stride.

“Are you enjoying the ride?” the Lord’s voice broke into her amazed thoughts. “We’ll be heading over in that direction now.” He lifted his right arm and pointed to the east. “There’s something I’d like to show you over that way. I think you’ll really enjoy it.”

The last time she’d heard those words from Him, she had indeed “enjoyed it”—a concert from the animals and that wonderful fountain!

She nodded her head and sighed.

Who would have ever thought such a wonderful place could exist?

Who would have ever thought that I could find it?

She leaned back against Adonai’s chest and tried guessing what he might have in store for them this time.

