

*The
Seventh King*

By

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There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

Rev 17:10

Prologue

The grounds were billows of clouds; pure white was the body of the vicinity. Perfection oozed in the air and it made the existence, referred to as “The Prince,” aggravated. Purity was omnipotent and it stunted his style. The Prince had no physical features, but a shape that silhouetted a human form. His face was formless, yet transformable to the form of anyone he wanted any human to perceive. The Prince walked haphazardly through the parameter, two seraphs in the same form as he was, all-colossal in size with eyes red as flame, blocked the entrance to his destination with crossed spears. There were hailing praises around him. The sound disgusted him. In his time, such cacophonous sounds were not allowed. The Prince got tired of the offhanded plodding and decided to take out his ever-living anger on something that could be angered as well. He marched to the two formless Beings, with the crossed blockade and straightened unfaltering focus.

“Look at you servants, created to serve, ha!” They ignored The Prince, which was a perfect response for his exacerbation. He drew closer. “They are above you; you serve them, while I am their god. You will dwell in your

shortening existence whilst I dwell in the world of my luxury! My power! My world! Ask your master if I am not their god.” His voice rose. “I am the world and the world is me, nothing can stop me. Nothing!”

“You may enter.” The domineering resonant voice spoke from behind the Beings’ barricade and the two spears disengaged, giving an opening.

The Prince sauntered toward them, flung his cape at the two Beings and approached a grave enemy: the Voice. The entity with the voice glowed, colossal in nature, its white linen sparkled like the stars. The Prince got to the Being with the Voice. Both existences scrutinized each other with an inner sight, Being to Being. If they had flesh they would have been identical. The hatred was eminent, the anger deeply rooted, and the desire for the other’s pain was mutual.

“Follow me,” the guiding Being said.

“I know my way.”

“I said follow.”

“Watch it, Uriel.”

“I have orders, and if you break them, I would be glad to lend you the repercussion.”

The uninvited guest knew it wasn't joking, it never joked, that's one of the reasons he left them behind; they had no game spirit. The Prince stood watching the other Being peer back at him, then he spoke. "You want to hit me, don't you?"

Uriel ignored The Prince, continuing to walk in the direction of its master.

"You cannot touch me even if you wanted to. You are nothing but a slave and I am above you. There is nothing you can do except with the permission of your master. I feel your anger sieving through me. I stand and walk through your grounds, with anger clouding my visit. Yet, there is nothing the legion of angels can do to me, unless the master gives permission. If your foot touches a grain of sand in my world, I would slice your being into nothing."

Uriel ignored it till they reached their destination. They approached a magnificent throne. Wings from angels beside the throne flapped, while legions of angels hovered around a mighty glowing existence on the throne. The glow emitting from the throne was vivid yet beyond sight. Both Beings bowed their heads, avoiding visual contact. Its every word came out thunderous, with an enormity that

quaked them within, so the fewer the words, the better for The Prince.

“Why are you here?” It spoke to the uninvited.

“I always liked the way you get straight to the point. Anyway, you are not playing fair. I wait and you refuse to blow the trumpet. My time is halted by your presence in my kingdom.”

“Your kingdom.” The magnitude of the words iterated like running water. It sent a spark of fear through the Being, but he was within the belief of justification.

“Yes, My kingdom! I won the fruits of your seventh day labor fairly. It’s mine, along with your images in it.”

“The worship of my subjects breaks through your walls.”

“Why wouldn’t you say that? You pamper them and the ‘Job’ circumstance was not an exception. He was born to know what you can do.” The Prince paused, waiting for a response, but none came, so he continued. “Let me know where you would point your finger at any of the ‘Two Witnesses’ from the day they are born, and I would show that even you make mistakes. Once they taste my world, see the sweetness and accomplishments of my path, they will never leave my way.” The silence still lived and he

stubbornly continued. “Let one have knowledge of my world, live in my power...only one, and I will put you to shame with your choice. Or let me know his birth and that’s all I need.”

“The witness will soon stand on the earth’s land. It has been preserved in the warmth of heaven because death has not come its way. The one will be open to the exposures of your world, and my protection I will give, if and only if, it chooses my way.”

“When will he arrive?”

“He!”

“You are using a woman!” The Prince raised his head to meet the excellence of the Being on the throne. A huge force clutched and catapulted him from the heavenly grounds. It plunged away, but heard the Voice from the Being on the throne as it disappeared.

“All were born to a task and nothing can stop its finish.”

Chapter 1

There are three realms that surge into a being's humanity: the world he can see, the world he can't see, and the world in his head. The world he can see is his past; the world he can't see is his future; and the world in his head is the present. Before you exist, you have a choice to remain as nothing, without the outlook to what is, can or will be and the choice to experience everything without knowing the path to your eternity. I avoided the immaculate nature of nothing and now I'm on my way to the tale of an eternity that was already written before I got to it.

My mother was German. She taught Math in a private Austrian boarding school for teenage boys born into the high status of society. Before me she was, to an extent, happily married to a cobbler. Her earnings made her the breadwinner of their childless home. On my paternal side, I was the creation of nine angry boys, who hated a strict German teacher and chose to pour out their vengeance by donating their spermatozoa forcefully into her ovary. The principal paid her a visit in the hospital, solely to offer her a financial settlement. A settlement she couldn't earn in three

years. With a yes, she would have had the money in her bank account. She blatantly refused, and began her war on the boys, who had parents attached to the destiny of Austria.

She fought against the abuse in every way possible. The police were nonchalant; they didn't want to dirty their future with the men of power. Lawyers refused to back a lost cause; she eventually got fired from her job; the general public had no sympathy for the German teacher; and her husband deserted her when the pressure got to him. The press publicized her as a promiscuous wife, looking for a means to blackmail great men. Her ex-husband never denied the accusations of her promiscuity. It didn't come as any surprise to her, when her ex-husband suddenly had enough money to buy a new car.

It was then that my identity was revealed to her: she found out she was pregnant. The first logical thing that passed through her head was to abort me and return to Germany. But she thought again. I was the perfect tool to gain retribution at the boys who had crashed her life into the misery she stared at in the mirror. She publicized the birth of the son from the molestation episode and the response she got gave her the joy of making the right

decision. The parents of the boys sent messengers, then close associates, before coming individually to beg her to abort me; with not one of them knowing which of their sons was my father. She refused bluntly and enjoyed her plot until the day she gave birth to me. I came into the world, blond, hazel eyed and my skin had smooth perfection written all over it. In other words, I was the perfect grandchild.

The power of generations: the parents of my mother's molesters became obsessed with taking me from my mother. Their restriction wasn't my mother's lethal refusal, but my genuine paternity, which my mother never gave them the chance to find out. Even with the pleasure of uncertainty amongst men of pedigree, growing animosity between them, and public criticism of themselves to her, she wasn't satisfied. The decadence of the delinquents had given birth to a bitterness that had eaten into her. And the deepest part of the rage was fueled by my existence. She gave birth to me for the bitterness to live; I was a tool used to attain her redemption. She never held me, except when her breast was full, and then I was forced to suck. The tale of my torture was far from a secret. It gave her satisfaction, punishing what everyone called a beautiful child, in an ugly

way. The parents of the miscreants kept paying anyone who could, watch, feed and clean me up without the acknowledgement of my mother. Whenever she stepped out at any time, they sneaked in; sometimes running into each other. If they were sure of my paternity, I would have been divorced from my mother in a heartbeat.

From a month old, my mother's harsh words bored into my ears. She blamed me for her husband's desertion, her seclusion, her misery, her joblessness, her nihilistic state, her social misery and her reflection. My brain grew active from the environment I was born into. I had so much hatred installed in my memory, albeit I still longed for her warmth. But that was a paper dream. At a point, her enemies became my guardian angels. But even within their embrace, when she was away, the hatred for humanity had already filtered in and I cried, always crying when she was away, but never wasting my tears when she was around. She never heard my cry, inwardly or outwardly. I grew to sleep and eat less, thanks to my mother's anger. I stayed awake all the time, hoping to see her, and ate less because the rapidity of her breast filling reduced with the months. Feeding from the outsiders occurred only when there was a clear path to me, without her knowledge. My torture was

her prize, her undying redemption. She wanted my benefactors to live with the torture that I was the grandchild in pain, crying out loud for their security.

When I was six months old, she found a suitor. It was not only the happiest thing that could happen to her, but it was the happiest thing that happened to me. She now said less negative things to me. We lived alone. She didn't care that I just started crawling, she had grown my cerebrum to something that no longer belonged to a child, or a person considered normal. Their affair went past the weekend phases. I noticed he gave me abnormal attention, always feeding me personally, changing my diapers, or nagging my mother to give me a name. His pressure and their amorous lock, led to her calling me Hades. When he reprimanded her, she said I reminded her of hell and that was the name I was to live with. That was how I became Hades and the story of Hades began.

I always liked my mother's boyfriend. He was a handsome man, always donning jeans and a tee shirt. I always wondered what he was doing with my mother. She had husky eyebrows, was big boned and had only a cute chubby face to her credit; not to mention she was broke and he was much richer.

As they say, when something feels too good to be true, it isn't. Anytime he took me for a walk alone, I met one of my benefactors, who always sat on a bench with his wife at the park, waiting for us to arrive. I watched them, looking into the eyes of one of my supposed grandfathers as he clutched me whenever we met. The man was white haired, with a tattoo of a hook on his neck. I saw the greed in my mother's beau's eyes, right before he picked up an envelope. It was purely logical to decipher he was being paid to be in a relationship with my mother. Truthfully, I didn't care. I still liked him.

At three-years-old, I did things even I didn't understand. I never talked, not because I couldn't, but it just seemed pointless. I hardly got angry, even with the bitterness that my existence still had on my mother, but when I did, breakables around me, shattered. I could look at a person and hear the echo of voices in their head. I comfortably read picture books covering all subjects. I wasn't as fast a reader as an adult, but the knowledge was permanently stored. I felt odd the way people looked at me when I read. I kept getting books from the tattooed man, who was very intent on every single thing I did. It wasn't a look of love but an obsessive look. And he kept bringing

more complicated books with every meeting. I continually went to the park with my mother's beau. A form of ownership began to surge with his ever-blanketing shadow over me.

A turning point in my idea of heaven happened when my mother discovered her beau was being paid to be with me. I'm not too sure if she used her instincts, or she just felt like joining us in the park; she got there in time for the exchange of a thick brown envelope. Her enemy and lover stood, more afraid than surprised, as she vehemently pulled me away from them. The drive to my destiny had begun or ended. She marched up an isolated bridge, cursing every pore in my body, blaming me, for being deceived by her lover. At the bridge, she pulled me over the barricade, overhead a shallow stream thirty feet away. I looked in her eyes and fear didn't knock on my doorstep. If this was what life was all about, death would make more sense.

The desire to kill me tasted sumptuous in her thoughts. I could see the glee in her eyes, knowing the misery it would rain on her enemies for not protecting me. But, there was another powerful force, which changed the course of her desires. Her antagonist offered her a fortune, not the type she had been offered previously but the type of

treasure that awakened the devil in every immaculate belief. She made her decision, and we both went on a trip together to a place she would return from, alone.

We journeyed to a place in Vienna where darkness examined the light. We spent long hours traveling in a minivan with a driver that didn't say a word and completely ignored my mother's questions about our trip. The car stopped by a fork on an isolated road, and the driver got out, and started walking. He wore a brown caftan and still said nothing as he got out. We didn't need to be told to follow him. We chased after him as he marched downhill through a forest, which was midway between the roads. After walking for six minutes, we got to an edifice that could best be described as a fortress with an encircling structure, raised up a hill. We settled in and spent the night in a room large enough to fit our entire house.

Uniformed attendants brought in food almost every six hours. They politely asked us not to leave the room and to ring the bell if we wanted anything. The next night, we were taken to an underground floor, passing through a dark tunnel-like passage, towards a dull illumination emitting from its end. On arrival at our destination, the shock of what awaited us took hold of my mother's composure. For

the first time in my life, my mother grasped unto me like family. The walls of the entrance revealed the venue of our mission. We saw hundreds of people in the mansion that we had assumed to be deserted. Statues of winged humans with fangs were positioned at the corners of the hall. We were squeezed in the midst of people from all status of society. There was eloquence within the sweat coming from the hordes of people in the hall. Only the candles resting on the hands of the statues provided illumination. The chandelier dangled with the weights of the feet of men and I noticed the hands of the clocks were moving counterclockwise. The people in the room were of different races, dressed with closeness to their individual customs, but with masks on. I was positive I identified three of my supposed grandfathers, even with their masks. Their frail nature was almost unmistakable. There were swords and daggers all placed around the walls. Sirens walked about the place naked, opening doors and acting like guides. We aimlessly walked around the place because my mother was both fascinated and scared. There were five children in the room, of whom I was the youngest. Something about two of them struck the inside of me, and their intuition also curbed me into their view. The oldest child in the room was

a thirteen-year-old Japanese boy. His hair was jet-black resting on his shoulders, and his eyes had an uncomfortable peace with everything around him. The second was a blonde girl who was seven, with a resonant tone that didn't belong to a child.

The dissonant noise from the crowd ended abruptly. Someone, a female, appeared to everybody's focus. I don't know where she came from, but she just appeared. I initially couldn't see her because everybody was taller than I was. But I felt her presence, her command and authority. Her voice was high-pitched with rounded tones and it hit on its listeners like a dagger in the heart.

"I thank you all for coming. I came into Vienna barely three years ago and now look at it. I'm impressed." Immediately the congregation applauded. "Although," they abruptly stopped as she continued, "I'm not too impressed by your individual achievements. I've had to make most of the conversions in here. The time is coming and we are running behind. I will not stand for 'The Second' to be from another sect." She sighed and then continued, "For now, we all are aware of why I'm here. I'm getting old, and immortality isn't staying my way. I need a vassal to take

over my niche. The five nominees I have here, have been chosen and recommended, from all over the world”

I heard her talk and listened. At my age, the words I heard I understood, whilst standing gripping my mother’s hand, who was play-acting the doting mother in the place that seemed to scare her. I looked at my mother; the curiosity to know what was in her head struck me and I looked deeper in her. I heard disconcerted words, echoing louder and louder.

Money. Will she give me? I would start again. Get rid of this trash. Start all over again. Get a real child, not this evil creature. Begin again. Travel around Europe. See the world.

I refuted it, I chose to believe what I wanted to believe; she loved me and found it hard expressing it. Different mothers express themselves differently. Spontaneously, I felt a man’s wooden staff with copper attached by thread to it, bash down in front of me. The copper jangled continually when the staff was still. I wasn’t scared but irritated by this ill-mannered gesture. An aging, mal-nutritioned black man with broken brown dentition, wearing only a cloth wrapped around him and well

manicured hands, squatted to my level and spoke, whilst my mother was lost to the woman's authority.

"I know you," he said to me.

And for the first time in my life I talked. "I know you too."

"I can see you," he said with his hoarse tone.

"I have seen you," I answered from an abyssal part of me I hadn't reached.

"We will meet again. Remember me, Papa Shango...if you live!"

He rose and walked into the crowd. My mother suddenly clasped more firmly onto me and pulled me towards the voice. It was as though she was trapped in a centripetal force. As she moved, everyone moved aside, giving us room. Then we went to an opening, and there was this flight of five stairs that lead to a platform where the voice spoke. I looked up to see the four children already up the platform and I saw the voice. She wore a black smock, her nails were long, her eyeballs were pitch black and her hair was black, curly, long and askew. From the eyes of normalcy, she was less than sixteen. But with the inner eyes, she was in her mid-thirties.

“Go to her.” I heard my mother’s words, soft and tender. I looked back at her puzzled. I was being sold. I always recognized the hatred within my mother, but then I believed money not to be her priority. I wanted to refuse, but this was her very first request to me, and with the look of things, the last. I owed her for the pain of existing, and with this, she would one day have good thoughts of giving birth to me. I began walking up the staircase, fighting hard not to look back, when I heard the words that sunk deep into my heart and followed me into eternity. “Goodbye my son,” I looked back and saw for the first time that she would miss me. Even the wickedness of the destiny I had caused her couldn’t over-ride the maternal bond she had to me. I pitied her. I continued up the platform.

“Finally,” the woman irritably said and continued with a soothing tone directed at all five of us. “Amongst the five of you, I want one, or maybe two, to learn what I know, see what I see, do what I can do and continue to an end in which I will be too old to finish. You all have inborn paranormal features, which is a good side to build from. I want to cultivate you. You are to worship both The Prince and I, as your gods for life. But to do this, I need to build a covenant in blood from two groups of people. The first is

you, and then your parents. If you are ready for this, you can speak now.”

“I’m ready.” The Asian boy’s response was sharp and loud.

The next boy responded positively with less enthusiasm. The subsequent nine-year-old Italian boy cried out with a shrieking tone, “I want to go home!”

“Shut up!” the mother screamed amidst the crowd.

“Please, the child has his rights,” the woman in the black smock responded in a placating manner. “Freddo come up the platform.”

The father of the boy walked up the platform with his head down and stood by her like a guilty child.

She stroked the father’s black glossy hair and grinned as she spoke to the spectators. “When I met Freddo, he was a painter. His paintings were purely unacceptable, but then he loved the art. His paintings had to go for three thousand lira with a lot of sweat and pleading, till I met him.” She looked at him like a medal. His son tried to hold his hand but he pushed it away. “I brought out the best in him, digging out the art in him. Now your paintings get sold everywhere that matters, New York, Paris, Milan and so

on. How much do they go for now?" She asked a question, to which everyone already knew she had the answer.

"A hundred and twenty five thousand," he answered with his head low.

"Is that dollars or lira?"

"Dollars," he answered solemnly.

She began walking around him. "To begin with you didn't come to me, as your deity or even your liege, to tell me you had a child with this power. I had to find out through another subject, an insult I let slip. Now your son, in public, tells me he wants to go home. I gave you months. Months! To prepare the child for what he was coming here for. Now, it is about honor, respect and duty." She began screaming to his face, "You owe a debt to The Prince! You owe a debt to me! And everyone in this room." She stretched her hand and one of the knives on the wall, magnetized to it. She opened his hand and put the knife in it, "Show your loyalty to me. Give me his blood and get rid of his weak spirit."

"Please! I beg of you, I would talk to him. He didn't know what he was saying...he is only a child."

"Freddo, look." She grabbed his face and turned it in our direction. "Do it. Children come and go. The life you

live is but one, and a unique one it is. You can have another child.” In a whisper she said, “Do it.”

He quivered. The knife began to slip through his weak grasp and his head was still down.

“Do it now!” She yelled walking behind him.

He looked at the knife and the innocence of his son’s heart. Swiftly, he clenched the knife and swerved it in the direction of her back, but she raised a finger and he froze, like a mannequin.

“Freddo you disappoint me.” She turned around to meet him, frozen in a stab position, hovering over her. “Both you and I know this effort is fruitless, and all you expect from me is to kill you...I won’t give you that pleasure,” she continually walked around his motionless state. “It is quite commendable that a man with accumulated wealth would rather die than lose his son. To be honest, I should say it’s a first for me.”

The son, at seeing his father’s predicament, attempted a manly attack in the footsteps of his father. He rushed at her yelling, “Leave my daddy alone!”

She grabbed the boy by the head and stuck her index finger fully under his jaw, retrieving a bloody finger and a

dead child. “Kids,” she smirked. “Where was I before I was...*immaturely* interrupted.”

“You won’t give him that pleasure,” the Asian boy responded.

“Yes,” she tapped on her head. “I will take from you, the riches, the fame and the name, I have given to you, and I will make sure you spend the rest of your mortality, remembering the pains of poverty, the sting of hunger and the tears of a nobody.” She snapped her fingers and he fell on the mahogany platform, jerking and slobbering on the ground, his hands started cracking, growing deformed with every snap. Three men appeared and took him away, along with his dead son.

She walked to the blonde little girl, and with a mother-like manner asked, “Have you made your decision?”

“I’m ready,” she said, a wicked grin stamped on her face.

She walked to the fourth child, who was a black boy over ten years old. She didn’t ask him anything; she just looked him in the eyes. The boy began ascending in the air. He rose, numb and suddenly lifeless, elevating higher into an inhuman state, suddenly dropping ferociously on his back, never to see, walk or talk again.

She looked at the boy on the ground and then at the parents as they rushed to pick up their paralyzed child. Then she said, "Sorry, he wasn't strong enough." She then came to me and looked at me as though it was her first time noticing me up there. "Whose child is this?" she addressed the crowd.

"It's mine," my mother answered in a mollified tone, remembering I was not a 'he'.

"Why do you want to sacrifice his future to me?"

With the past occurrences, my mother knew better than to lie, "He brings me only misery."

"And," she arched her dark well-lined eyebrows.

"A man here offered me a fortune to bring him here."

"What's the child's name?" She peered at me still.

"Hades."

"The hatred of a child's progenitor...divine." She had her eyes hooked on me as though I would disappear. "It builds the verve I need in a protégé." She grimaced looking at me. "But he's too young."

"The child is different. He sees and does things." I heard the tattooed man answer but I couldn't see him among the crowd. I wondered what he meant by I see things.

“I know he is different, along with the other children here, but he is too young. I doubt if he can speak properly, not to mention understanding me.” She squatted to meet my gaze.

Looking at her, there was no doubt: I hated the woman. She looked deep in my eyes, seeing into me and I looked back. A force from her focus gripped the inside of me, my spirit was forced out and merged with hers. The spectators watched me begin ascending in the air, not having any idea of what was happening. I could feel her force passing through me; opening locks within the haze of my mind. I began towering over my world like a Behemoth Being, watching her image run in me. I didn't know how far inside of me I would let her go. There was something sensual about her exploration within me, but the further in me, the more power she was having over me, so I shut my mind. My spirit found its way back through its window: the eyes. I landed forcefully on the ground and started laughing. It was actually like playing in a maze. This angered her, so I laughed louder.

She looked into me with a powerful force and a wind swept me up into the air and flung me vigorously to the floor.

This hurt me, but my anger over-rode it, so I gaped intently back at her.

There was perplexity in her expression as she saw me pouring my rage through the visuals of my mind.

At that point, both she and I were like statues. I saw myself running through white walls and vessels of red liquid crosscutting through, with voices from her existence yelling. The spectators saw the both of us standing dead, looking at each other intently. My anger powered my speed. I marched deeper and deeper into white walls, until I felt a colossal fist grab and fling me forcefully back into my body. My return almost caused a convulsion in me. I now appreciated why she was initially mad. I did not understand what had happened.

The surprised expression in her face died away and a reverberating laughter took over and she pulled me into her arms roaring, “I like this boy!”

I don't like you, I replied in her hands, which she used to lift me high for everyone to see. They all applauded in response. I couldn't hear my voice. It seemed to me the words were in my head.

Along with the world and everyone it. That's the way I like it. Call me Hagar. She said, her dark eyes peering at

the crowd, her thin lips tight together. It took me a moment to realize she spoke to me in my head and I did the same initially, without knowing how.

And the pathway past the beginning, began.

Chapter 2

Mother Superior Agnes Iglesias had been a nun for thirty-four years. She joined the convent with the purest will at the age of fifteen. She was taken into St. Matthews Convent at Sardinia in Italy before the required age limit to become a nun, which was due to the consoling field around her that strengthened the weak, gave hope to the hopeless and happiness to the poor. The imposing oddity about her peculiarity was brought to focus with the stigmata attacks she had, in which her palms bled. It was established by the church that she was reliving the pain of Christ.

Her mother was born Ruthie Zipperstein, a Jewish maiden who got married to a recognized art dealer named Fredrick Iglesias. They got married and moved into a fairly expensive house in Florence, Italy. During the holocaust, her husband bribed men in power to ignore the ancestry of his wife and teenage daughter.

On the 28th of April 1980, Sister Agnes realized what she had concealed in her was beyond secrecy. The premises she had surrounding her, constant vomits, paling of her skin, the insatiable appetite and nose enlargement had

summed up her conclusion. She was pregnant. Agnes Iglesias was a major icon in the church and now she was about entering a reality that had an ugly entrance. Her swollen belly hadn't yet become apparent when the bishop, who also was a member of the Episcopacy, summoned her. The Episcopacy was a government of the church of bishops, which had authority over the priests, clergymen and others placed in lower authority. She left her convent escorted by three other nuns, and was ushered to the bishop's chambers. She alone was allowed in. There was a statue of Mary carrying Jesus at the end of the room behind the black oak desk with the padded seat beside it and beside the door was an eight-foot tall black mahogany bookshelf, with a ten-inch displacement from the wall. The bishop wore wireless glasses, his cassock was sparkling clean and he scribbled on a paper pad, pretending to not notice when she entered. When the grandfather clock struck noon, he raised his head while the bell was still jangling.

“Sister Agnes, please sit down.” He rose from his seat, pulling out a wooden chair for her. He went back to his seat. “Is there anything you would like to drink or eat?”

“No thank you,” she said.

“I see you are curious about why I sent for you, but then again, you might already know why.” The sixty-five year old man rocked the wooden chair as he talked.

“I know why.”

“I like to think of us as a little family. You sacrificed most of your life to God and the Church and we don’t intend to abuse your sacrifice now.”

“I didn’t do anything wrong.”

He grinned. “But you are pregnant.”

“ I am.”

“Sex before marriage is a sin Agnes, not to mention you broke your vows.”

“I did not break my vows.”

“But you are pregnant.”

“I did not defile my body with anybody your grace.”

“But you are pregnant!” the Bishop yelled.

“I did not have sex with anyone.”

“So how did you get pregnant?”

“I don’t know.”

The bishop sighed. He walked gently to where she was, leaning on the desk next to her and speaking softly.

“You are not the first nun this has happened to. It’s

understandable, we still are mortal and we all make mistakes. We have ways of taking care of such situations.”

“I did not have sex with any man.”

“Okay, if that’s what you believe, Sister Agnes. But you are a symbol to most nuns around Italy. This will not only be bad for us, but also for you. You will have to get rid of the baby.”

“I can’t your holiness.”

“Why?”

“It’s a sin against God.”

“You didn’t remember it was a sin when you let a man climb on you.”

“I did not have sex with any man.”

The bishop clenched his fist, hit the wall, and then turned around blurting out with an icy tone, “Listen here Agnes, this... this...situation bears a larger gravity than you can imagine. It is beyond you. You have to give up the child.”

“Never!”

He buzzed on a button behind his desk and two priests entered the room. To the taller of the two he said, “Take her to the chamber room.”

The man took her into a hidden door behind the bookshelf and she followed him quietly.

Facing the other priest he said, “Tell the nuns outside, Sister Agnes will not be going back with them... Tell them her services are required in Monaco.” He bowed and left the room to his errand.

Agnes Iglesias tried opening the door but realized she was locked in. There were no windows. She couldn't see any sliver of light. The room had its bathroom and toilet. There were religious pictures on the wall that she couldn't see because of the darkness. She walked around the place then fell on her knees and prayed. This she did for hours, then days, and then weeks. She counted the days by the number of times they brought food in for her.

Cardinal Sixtus was the *Advocatus Diaboli*, meaning the devil's advocate; he examined critically any individual proposed for adulation, scrutinizing their canonicity. He barged into the bishop's chamber unannounced and perspiring. The bishop, on seeing him, wanted to elongate a cordial greeting, but the cardinal was direct to the matter in

his mind, refusing to sit. “Where is she?” the cardinal asked.

“She’s in seclusion.”

“How many people know about this?”

“Apart from you and me, there is a nun vying for her niche. She noticed and told the Mother General and she told me.”

“Sister Agnes! It’s unbelievable.”

“It’s a strange world we live in.”

“Did she confess who the father is?”

“She’s claiming that it is an Immaculate Conception.”

The bishop grinned, but his face reformed at the stern look of the cardinal.

“How old is she?”

“Between forty-nine and fifty-one. I’m not too sure.”

The cardinal spoke, rubbing his chin. “And for the thirty-four years she has been with us, have you heard any promiscuous detail about her.”

“No and—”

“She could be telling the truth. Not everyone wakes up and gets stigmata signs.”

“She was sixteen then, now she’s over forty-nine. Things happen.”

“Use your head, Bishop, it’s not normal for a forty-nine-year-old woman to be pregnant.” The cardinal took out a snuffbox and inhaled its content. “She has to abort the child.”

“ I already asked her to.”

“And?”

“She vehemently refused.”

“I see.”

“Are you going to tell the pope?”

The cardinal looked at the bishop with an awed expression. “Definitely not, for either of these three reasons. First there could be a darker side to Sister Agnes, who hides her prurience from the shade of men. Her pregnancy might just be an earthly phenomenon; older women have given birth before. Second, maybe she could be saying the truth but is unaware of someone who might have abused her. Third, if it truly is an Immaculate Conception, what do we tell the public? Jesus Christ is reborn and Agnes is now the new mother of God? Once the pope hears this, he will want to follow this through, making us look like a laughing stock to the outside world, especially if the former is correct.”

“So what do we do?”

“We do the right thing. The pope must never know about this, neither should anyone else. The nun, who informed you of this predicament, takes over Sister Agnes’ position.”

“The Mother General?”

“Her loyalty is first to the church, so we need not worry about her”

“How about Sister Agnes?”

“We send her to America and then excommunicate her, making it public that she fled because of her pregnancy.”

“At times like this, I see why you made cardinal before I did.”

“Even good has its darker shade,” and he left the room.

Sister Agnes got into America with the belief that she was being sent on a mission. She stayed in a convent in South Dakota, where she spent two weeks doing charitable exercises, until the news hammered that she was excommunicated for promiscuous reasons.

She moved to New York and gave birth to her daughter there, by 11 p.m. on the 14th of December 1980,

exactly the same date and time I was born in Vienna. She was born with the belief of a heavenly guidance and I was born with the belief in the darkness of the earth around me. Her mother named her Marian. Her mysterious birth lead to the belief she was what Revelations 11:3 referred to as a Witness. The dark side called her by the name of the man they believed she reincarnated from: Enoch.

