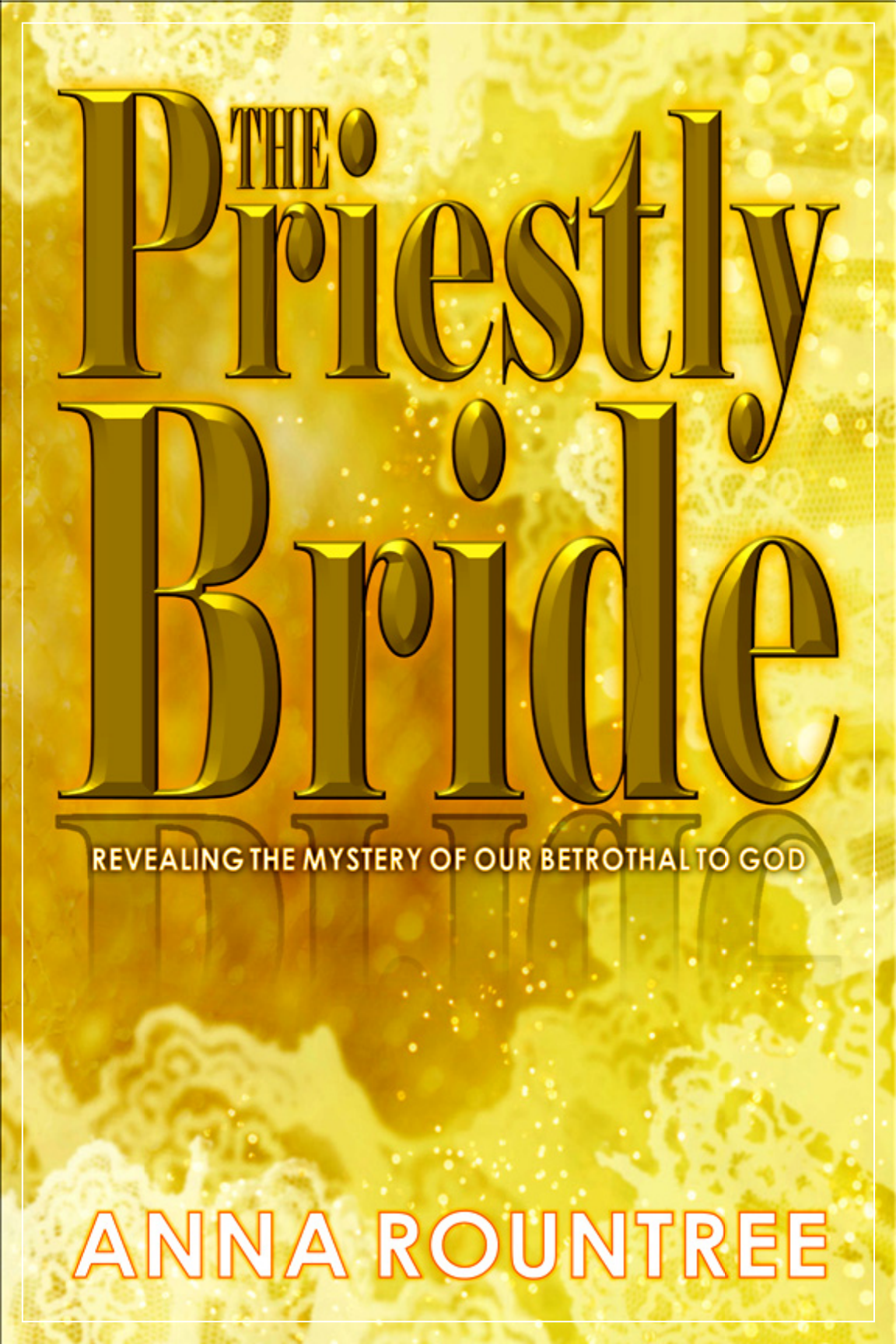

THE
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REVEALING THE MYSTERY OF OUR BETROTHAL TO GOD
ANNA ROUNTREE

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THE Priestly Bride

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THE PRIESTLY BRIDE:
Revealing the Mystery of Our Betrothal to God

by Anna Rountree

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Preface



Often men identify with the priesthood of Christ and women with the bride of Christ. But in reality, neither the priest nor the bride has anything to do with our own gender. Our heavenly Father is looking only for His Son in us.

He is looking to see if we exhibit the holiness and righteousness that was to be displayed in the lives of His biblical priests. He is looking to see if we exhibit that single-eyed devotion so apparent in a loving bride—the one who wishes nothing more than to live in perfect union with her husband—even as Christ lives in perfect union with His Father.

Since only perfect union will satisfy our Father, He created us so that only perfect union will satisfy His children. The ancient betrothal process in the Bible is a spiritual road map for the believers' "rite of passage" into this consuming intimacy with God in Christ.

When we are born again, we are joined to Christ in spirit, translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the

kingdom of the Son of His love, seated with Him in heavenly places and made coheirs with Christ Jesus of God the Father. We begin as high as we can get, but not as deep. Depth is a journey.

If in this journey we seek the Lord for His sake alone, if we long to know Him as He knows us, then He will draw near to us in startling reality. He will ratify the betrothal covenant into which we entered (arranged by our heavenly Father) at the time of our new birth.

Passionately He will draw us after Him and usher us into that stage of our Christian growth that the Bible describes as "the time of love" (Ezek. 16:8, KJV). The New International Version says this: "I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love" (Ezek. 16:8), describing this stage as *courtship*.

For the betrothed, this is a time of intense joy and severe testing. An acute longing begins to grow within such believers. They realize that nothing will satisfy this hunger except a deeper union with Christ Himself.

If we will persevere, seeking consolation for our hearts in Christ alone, the Lord will draw us into a spiritual oneness. Once we have been brought into a more complete melding, we "know" Him—oh, not as we will know Him later, nor as we will know Him when we have full salvation by receiving our resurrected bodies. But we know Him as the One who will say to us, as He said to Abraham, "I *know* him" (Gen. 18:19, KJV, emphasis added). The Hebrew meaning of the word can be translated: "I am *intimate* with him" (emphasis added).

There are three distinct stages within the bridal process. The individual experiences two of these, and one is corporate.

This book is an actual account of such a journey—a journey (open to all believers) into a consuming intimacy with Christ. I am sharing my love letters with you because the One who gave them asked me to share them.

His visitation to me on Earth, as well as these particular visions and revelations experienced in heaven, occurred between July 5, 1995, and July 5, 1996 (with two related visions given later). They were recorded word for word in journals. They chronicle a relentless, passionate drawing by the Lord unto Himself, culminating in a glorious, spiritual union.

It is my great hope that these will be an encouragement to all who wish to live in God as deeply as possible while on Earth—and to know Him above all others and above all else both on Earth and in heaven.

For you, Christ has love letters of your own awaiting.

The chart on the next page shows each stage, the work accomplished and what is received in each stage.

Many of us have some grasp of the first and third stages of this process. But some of us have not comprehended the depth of the impassioned commitment on the part of Christ toward His chosen ones, nor the poignant intimacy with Hun that is possible during this lifetime within the second stage.

WHO EXPERIENCES THIS STAGE OF SALVATION	WORK ACCOMPLISHED IN THIS STAGE OF SALVATION	RECEIVED IN THIS STAGE OF SALVATION
1st STAGE Individual	a. New bith/betrothal b. Bridal price c. Dowry d. Clothed with Christ e. Spiritual gifts to the bride f. Marriage contract g. Formal acceptance h. The covenant cup/first cup of wine	▫ Repentance and forgiveness of sins (Acts 11:18; 10:43) ▫ Declared righteous in Christ (Rom. 10:4) ▫ The Holy Spirit (John 7:39) ▫ New spiritual heart and new human spirit (Ezek. 36;26) ▫ Adoption as heirs (Rom. 8;17) ▫ Eternal life (Rom. 6:23)
2nd STAGE Individual	a. Ongoing sanctification b. Ratification of betrothal with accompanying gifts c. Esther's preparation/testings d. Deeper union with Christ e. Formal betrothal (with the status of being married; the bride is a married woman, the groom a married man, but they are not a married couple)	▫ Transformation of the soul life (Matt. 16:24-25) ▫ Consecration of body (Rom. 12:1)
3rd STAGE Corporate (realized after passing from this-life)	a. Resurrected body b. Linen garments of righteous deeds c. The corporate bride of Christ d. The Father's blessing e. The cup of new wine/second cup of wine f. Married/ the bridal week (full marital status g. Marriage supper of the Lamb h. Reigning with Christ on earth	▫ Salvation of the body (Phil. 3:21) ▫ Full salvation ▫ Married

“The bride belongs to
the bridegroom.”

John 3:29 NIV



“Place me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal on your arm;

for love is as strong as death,
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.

It burns like blazing fire,
like a mighty flame.

Many waters cannot quench love;
rivers cannot wash it away.”

Songs 8:6-7 NIV

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Chapter 1

The Visitation

The edges of the air were on fire.

I raised my hand to shield my eyes from the searing light. The very molecules of the air within our apartment were burning white-hot from a central point.

Swiftly the Holy Spirit spoke: "Rise, Anna." At the time I was down on my knees in prayer asking for more of God. Now, however, I had stopped praying, for I was struck by the wonder materializing before my eyes. The air sizzled and curled.

From the center of this phenomenon, the fiery glory of the Lord began to burn through the wall of our apartment. The Holy Spirit had to set me on my feet, for I could not stand. Seeing the Lord's glory while on Earth and in one's body is very different from seeing Him above while in spirit. His glory is almost more than the physical body can bear.

Angels of His Presence

As I rose to my feet, stately angels of His presence

stepped through the center of the blazing light to enter the room. They came in pairs but separated as they touched the room's atmosphere. Four angels stood before me in a semicircle to my left, four angels in a semicircle to my right. They wore pale lavender robes embroidered with deep purple and gold on the sleeves and hem. Golden girdles bound these garments across their chests. Each angel carried something in his hands in the manner of an emissary.

Then four additional angels, similarly dressed, entered the room through the burning air. Each of these held one pole of a canopy, the sort one might see in a Jewish wedding. As they moved forward, the word *LOVE* could be seen at times in the canopy's fabric.

King Jesus

The Holy Spirit stirred and swelled into a whirlwind in response to the One who now stepped beneath the canopy. Kink Jesus, brighter than the sun, entered the room.

Through the shock of unbelievable light, I could see faintly that He was wearing a rich purple cloak that opened in the front and hung in folds to the ground. It had long sleeves and was edged with a wide, gold brocaded border. Beneath this garment was a white robe that also reached to His feet. The robe was grappled across His chest with a golden girdle. On His head was a golden crown that was similar in some respects to the crowns used to cap Torah scrolls. He was terrible in majesty, awesome in holiness, splendid in beauty.

The Holy Spirit swirled around me to strengthen me, for the intense light and power emanating from the Lord made it difficult for me to stand.

Gifts

Then, as if by some silent command from Jesus, the nearest angel in the semicircle stepped toward me. In his hands he held a golden crown, which he carefully placed upon my head. “Wisdom,” he said, smiling slightly. Then crossing his arms over his chest, he nodded respectfully and stepped back into the semicircle.

The angel opposite him in the semicircle stepped forward with the gift he was carrying. He placed golden earrings on my ears. “Knowledge,” he said. Then he too folded his arms over his chest and moved back to join the other angels.

One by one each of the remaining angels of His presence brought the gift that he held in his hands. After the physical gift was placed upon me, the angel named the spiritual gift it symbolized. The gifts these angels presented included a golden heart that hung on a chain over my own heart—*understanding*; golden bracelets on each wrist—*discretion*; a golden nose ornament—*discernment*; golden rings on each finger—*the ability to communicate*; and a golden necklace—*the fear of the Lord*. The eighth angel stepped forward and blew a mist of gold over me. It covered me like a veil from my head to my feet.

“Favor,” he said as he smiled. He too nodded and stepped back into the semicircle.

The Response

I was stunned. I had never received such an immediate and extravagant answer to prayer. I looked down at the gifts that I was able to see. They were princely—gifts of my Father from my Father. But why the canopy?

“Lord,” I said, “let all of these gifts be within for Your

pleasure."

He smiled at me. "Because you have asked that these be for My pleasure, they will be [for My pleasure] and will also be experienced by others. These gifts will unlock My heart to you and to My body. All mysteries are bound up, locked away in Me, Anna. But the mystery of My love is the greatest revelation of all." Moving toward me, He said, "My chosen one, My love, a fruitful bough, an orchard of fruitfulness."

"Lord," I replied, "I am barren." (I had never borne physical children.)

He smiled again as He answered, "You will bear and be more fruitful than if you had borne physical children. I have withheld your bearing. But now I place My hands upon you that you might bring forth good fruit—many children, all heirs, kings and priests to their Father."

He placed His hands upon me. Fire and power surged through me. He continued to speak, "No longer will you bear shame because of unfruitfulness."

Ratification of Betrothal

"Cleave to Me," He said. "I am your Husband. Let My covering be on your head." His eyes burned into me as He continued, "I am the Lord your God, and none is like Me. I am the beginning and the end. I am your health, your protection and your fruitfulness. Thousands upon thousands of heirs will you bear, those who will walk right into My kingdom, those who will be at home in My chambers.

"Anna," He said in a more intimate tone, "you are more beautiful now than earlier. My heart is turned toward you. My desire is for you. You have captured My heart. Lock

this away in your heart, for My promises are true and sure."

I could hardly breathe. "Lord," I whispered, "let it be soon."

"It is already accomplished," He said. "Bear fruit for the kingdom. Shun pride. Point not the finger."

The Departure

He bowed at the waist as a sign of His departure and stepped back under the canopy. Once under the canopy, He turned and walked through the burning opening in the wall of the apartment. The four angels holding the poles of the canopy also bowed and walked out with Him, holding the canopy over His head as He disappeared. The angels of His presence also signified their departure, and two by two they followed the Lord.

Then the Holy Spirit swirled before me again, this time gathering up all of the remaining fire and light. He too passed through the apartment wall. Instantly, the gifts became internal and no longer adorned me externally. The wall closed.

Silence.

"Father," I whispered, "who am I to marry a King? I come with nothing. I have no dowry. I do not even have a hope chest with linens and …"

Before I could continue, my Father thundered audibly in the room: "Can I not provide linens for My children?"

Immediately, I heard a knock at the front door of the apartment. Although engrossed in all that was occurring, I managed to cross to the door and open it.

The Caravan

"Hello, Anna," blurted a tall angel. I say that he was an angel because he called me by the name that at the time was known only in heaven.

Also, he was dressed in Bedouin attire (uncommon apparel for this continent). Beyond him in the parking lot I saw a caravan of twenty-four camels with Bedouin attendants.

I shot a quick glance around the apartment complex. My husband and I were living in a low-rent housing facility in Florida. We had adjusted fairly well to these living conditions since we had learned to duck when the neighbors were shooting at each other. However, I was not sure how they might react to a camel caravan. Although usually the complex was alive with adults and children, no one was in sight.

Hope Chests

The angel continued. "We have brought your hope chests," he said effusively. "Twenty-four chests. Where would you like them?"

My hands went to my face in amazement. I was flooded with so many mixed emotions that I began to laugh and cry at the same time.

"It is all right, Anna," the large angel said comfortingly. "Do not be troubled. Your Father loves you."

In the parking lot the Bedouin attendants signaled the camels to kneel down. These angels began unloading the chests.

Between the laughing and crying I said, "Can you stack the chests in here [meaning in the living room]?"

"We certainly can," he brightened. He whistled to the other angels and indicated with his head to bring the chests. Then he turned his attention to me again. "Hope is of God, Anna. Each chest your Father gives to you is hope that you can share. This is a greater gift to your Husband than laces and embroidered towels," the angel smiled.

The attendants began carrying the chests into the living room with two angels holding each chest. All of these angels wore camel-colored, desert clothing. After delivering a chest, each pair of angels smiled broadly like those wishing to show themselves extremely agreeable. Then they returned to the caravan.

The chests seemed to be covered in camel skin. They were large and looked something like treasure chests. The five straps encircling each chest were gold, and the two handles for carrying were an intense blue. The opening for a key on each chest was encased in gold, with the shape of the keyhole itself being a cross. No one ever gave me a physical key, however.

The Receipt

Because of their size, the chests stacked up to, and then through, the apartment ceiling.

The large angel rocked back and forth on his heels enjoying the sight. "Yes," he smiled, "there is great hope here." Then he took a pencil from behind his ear and pulled out a clipboard that held a receipt. "Sign here, please," he said, extending the clipboard to me.

"What name should I use?" I asked.

"Anna would be fine."

I wrote "Anna" on the white receipt and then handed the clipboard back to him.

"All right," he said with a sigh that denoted closure of a mission. He pulled out the under copy of the receipt and handed it to me. "Here is your receipt. Twenty-four chests full of hope."

Rebekah

Suddenly, I remembered Rebekah and how she had watered the camels as well as drawn water for Abraham's servant. "Would you like some water or something?" I asked haltingly, not sure of what to say.

"Oh, no," he laughed. "We have better water than your city's water system can supply. We will be going now before we draw a crowd."

"Thank you for bringing the chests," I said.

"Our pleasure," he smiled. "*Shalom.*"

The attendants whistled and clicked their tongues for the camels to rise. The large angel grasped the reins attached to the headgear of the lead camel and guided him around so that the caravan could reverse its direction in the parking lot. Then he and the camels with their attendants began to leave. Suddenly, they disappeared.

Just as suddenly, life in the apartment complex returned to normal.

I closed the door and leaned against it looking at the chests piled through the ceiling. "Thank You, Daddy," I whispered.

My Father spoke audibly again. "You have a bigger and better hope than any princess brought to her wedding day. Now," He continued, "come up here."

Amazingly, in my spirit, I began to rise.

Chapter 2

The Ascent

As I rose, I realized that a protective shield surrounded me. It was clear and round. I wondered if this shield was present at all times; even though I did not see it. I sat down, drawing my knees up to my chest with my arms hugging my legs.

The Deeper Life

I began to reflect during this ascent, "How did all of this begin? Certainly when I was born again," I thought to myself. But I wanted to think beyond Christian infancy and adolescence. "No," I thought, "it began when I decided that I wanted to live as deeply as possible—to touch the essence of life itself. The only way to do that was to know truly Life Himself."

I had come to a place in my life where I did not want to live like a pebble skipped across the water. I wanted to experience deeply. I wanted to know Him.

As I reflected, I realized that it had taken me twenty

years as a Christian to come to this conclusion. Twenty years to be persuaded that to know and to fellowship with God is the noblest pursuit of mankind. “Why,” I wondered, “had it taken me so long?”

The Ambush

As I neared the second heaven; I had a sense of foreboding.

Suddenly, in the distance the atmosphere ripped, and a black swarm poured through the opening. From my perspective, the swarm looked like locusts or bees. Whatever it was, it was rapidly heading in my direction.

Demons—black, red-eyed, putrid-smelling—surrounded the shield. They looked like winged gargoyles. They began screaming curses at me. I felt trapped, cornered.

These spirits began to vomit a sickly green bile onto the shield. The bile must have had the properties of acid, for it began to burn into the surface, causing it to warp and thin like heated plastic. Then with sharp claws, the demons began to dig through these weakened areas.

“Lord, help me,” I cried.

Angelic Help

Immediately, shrieks came from several of these demons on the outer edge of the pack. Quickly they turned their attention from me to two warrior angels clothed in bright armor and to the angel Azar.

I was very glad to see Azar. When I had seen him before, he had told me that he was an angel of “helps” assigned to protect me. Well, I certainly needed help now.

He was dressed in work overalls over which he wore a

thin, brown robe. A white tool pouch hung from his belt. Two suction cups that had a handle between them also hung from this belt. (These cups were the kind used to move large sheets of glass.) In addition, he had a tank harnessed to his back. I cheered when I saw him.

The warriors were dressed in armor similar to that worn by centurion guards—except that the armor was shot through with light. Instead of swords, they carried long rods that displayed the Word of God. The demons recoiled at the touch of these rods as if receiving a violent shock. Like wild animals with a fresh kill, however, they fought viciously to retain their prey.

While the warriors were fighting the enemy, Azar pulled out a hose that was attached to the tank harnessed to his back. Quickly he hosed down the bubble to stop the bile from eating through the surface. Just as rapidly, he attached the two suction cups to the bubble. Then he grabbed the handle that was between them. With a great heave, he started to pull the shield upward, away from the battle. The demons began to scream when they realized we were getting away.

The warrior angels held the demons at bay while we made our escape. As we climbed higher, I saw that the warriors were routing the enemy, driving them back toward the rip in the atmosphere. I sighed in relief.

The Corridor

As we arose, the sound of demonic clamor faded. A great sense of peace came over me.

Azar had pulled the shield into an invisible passageway. On either side of the bubble, thousands of angels were flying in a slow, upward spiral. They formed a

magnificent, shimmering corridor to Paradise. They smiled at us as we passed.

Laser-like streaks of light flashed by us going up and down. These were angels who were traveling the passageway.

Paradise

Before we entered a greater light at the end of this corridor, Azar veered off to carry me into Paradise a different way. Suddenly, the bubble surfaced through an opening in the turf of God's perfectly groomed park.

As soon as the shield touched the grass, it went "pink," bursting as easily as a fragile soap bubble. "Sorry to burst your bubble," Azar joked.

"Thank you for helping me, Azar," I said with great relief.

"We aim to please," he drawled in a cowhand accent. He pulled out a clothes whisk and began dusting me off. I suppose I had bubble flakes on me.

I looked around. How at home I felt here now. Even though I had visited Paradise many times, the beauty and grandeur of God's park always overwhelmed me.

Azar continued concerning the demons, "They're just a nuisance. Those have no real power. That's the reason they travel in packs. They're a bother, though. They can slow you down."

"And the warriors?" I asked.

"Well," he smiled, "sometimes I need help myself. Those were Watchers, part of the border patrol. They refuse to take any nonsense from those wishing to interfere." He stepped back, looking at me, "So, how do you feel?"

"I feel fine," I said. "Will you thank the Watchers who helped me?"

"I will," he smiled. He began taking his arms out of the straps that held the tank to his back. "Are you going to see your Daddy?" he asked.

"Yes," I smiled, handing him the suction cups that had fallen to the ground when the bubble burst.

Angelic Escorts

Two angels who looked like lovely young women came flying by. They wore pale blue robes and had no wings. "Come fly with us, Anna," they called.

Azar smiled, "They will escort you to the throne room."

"Will you come with us?" I asked Azar.

"I need to test this equipment before I store it," he said. "Go on," he continued. "You'll enjoy the flight."

I lifted my arms toward the angels, indicating that I wanted to join them. Laughing, they swooped down and picked me up, one on either side. Immediately they executed two loop-the-loops that took my breath away.

Azar laughed and called after me, "Have a good time with your Daddy."

Off they flew with me between them. They were like precision stunt flyers executing perilous aerobatics over the terrain of Paradise. They banked, rolled, dove, and looped-the-loop. I knew they were trying to share an experience with me that I could not have on Earth. However I was beginning to be grateful for that fact. They were as exuberant as children.

The Throne Room

We arrived very high in the throne room and rather far away from the throne. However, from this vantage point I had a panoramic view of the glorious bow of colors emanating from my Father, the thousands of redeemed on the sea of glass, the angels coming and going, the elders, the four living creatures, and the activity around the throne (which I supposed to be official business of the kingdom).

"I wonder if I should disturb my Father?" I asked myself.

I did not wonder long. "Come here, Anna." My Father spoke in that loud but soft voice that penetrates to the core of your being.

The angels who were carrying me responded instantly to His request. They made a steep turn and flew toward the throne area—too rapidly for comfort, I might say. Right before we arrived at the throne, the angels dipped down and made an abrupt landing at a respectful distance from the activity. Unfortunately they released me too quickly, and the momentum caused me to slide on. Those conducting official business moved out of the way, being unsure of how far I might travel. I was incredibly embarrassed, and the angels who brought me were abashed.

But like a powerful head of government whose two-year-old stumbles into his office, my heavenly Father was more concerned about my feelings than His own.

"Not bad," He chuckled, commenting on my landing.

"Just out of the nest, Daddy," I sputtered, trying to help the situation.

He spoke graciously to the escort angels, seeking to relieve their distress. "Thank you for bringing My child," He

said. They bowed deeply, shaking their heads and biting their lips as they excused themselves.

I turned in an apologetic way to those who had been in conference. “I did not realize so much was going on up here.” I looked back at my Father, “Are You busy?”

There was a pause—then God laughed. The elders laughed. The redeemed and the angels laughed. I laughed. It was a laugh that rolled and continued to roll throughout heaven.

My Father

After the sound subsided, my Father said, “Come here, My child.” He picked me up and set me on the armrest of the throne. Those who had been meeting with Him bowed and withdrew.

I looked up toward the area of His face. Our Father is light—dazzling light. He has a form and even looks clothed in a garment of light.

From His chest upward it is impossible to see His face because of the brilliance. The white light of His presence radiates outward to create an aurora of jewel-like colors. Resplendent.

Even though He embodies holiness and majesty, to be near Him is to have the keenest sense of coming home. I felt completely safe and utterly loved.

There must be millions of people speaking to You right now," I said to my Father.

"Millions," He affirmed, "but each of My children has a personal relationship with Me. Each feels like an only child, receiving all of My attention.”

The Golden Eagle

"So," my Father continued, "how is My golden eagle today?"

I supposed that He referred to me as a juvenile eagle because of my inglorious landing near the throne. "I am fine, Daddy," I said. "How long does it take a golden eagle to mature?"

"When your feathers become pure white, you are ready to nest above. You must fly the mountains and valleys of heaven, though, and you must eat from My hand. Do not seek that which the eagles below seek. They seek fresh meat [fresh revelation], but their game is earth-bound, and so is their revelation—times, seasons, natural signs, and consequences of sin. I have given them to see into human souls, but all of it concerns the needed revelation for the outer court. Most eagles labor there for the need is great."

He continued, "There are those eagles who fly in the holy place. They minister to Me more intimately. They fly among the branches of the golden lampstand. They, like David, are in communion with My Son, eating the showbread. Their revelation is used to assist those who minister at the golden altar of incense. Fewer minister in the holy place. But who ministers to Me before the ark?"

The Great High Priest

"The High Priest, Daddy," I said.

"Yes, My Son. He is the great white Eagle as well as the great High Priest. He is the sacrifice, and His is the blood sprinkled. How many enter into that place [meaning the holy of holies]?"

"One," I answered.

"One," He reiterated. "He is the Door, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He draws near to minister to Me. And when you, joined to Him, eat from My hand, when you eat from the hand of the One who sits upon the throne, you too become white. Narrower and narrower is the way, Anna. Fewer and fewer are those who will continue. But for those who will be drawn near to Me—for those who will lay their hands upon the ark and die to the fleshly use of their own souls—they will live between the cherubim and will bear much fruit for the kingdom."

Suddenly, He opened my eyes in vision to see two white eagles cart-wheeling. He continued, "I have chosen you, and you have chosen Me, and I have chosen you." It was as though the cart wheeling could go on and on, like an eternal wheel. The vision ended.

My Father continued, "Let nothing turn you to coarser food, helpful though you think that would be to mankind. Eat from My hand and sleep between the cherubim."

Golden Manna

When the vision ended, I realized that a golden rain of light was falling on me. It piled up on my head, my shoulders, and then my upturned hands. It was soft like snow but not cold.

"Golden manna, My child. Food for the golden eagle." He scraped the manna from my head, shoulders, and hands and held out His hand of light from which He wanted me to eat. "Food from the hand of God, Anna."

I ate from His hand. He continued, "That which goes in your mouth will issue forth through your hand so that you may write what you see and hear."

The golden rain ceased.

Betrothal

"Now for the reason I summoned you, Anna," my Father continued. "You must make yourself ready. Since your betrothal to My Son, you are no longer your own. You belong to Him. Prepare yourself as Esther did. We love you, and you are called and chosen. Therefore, the need is not eliminated for the all-important training that lies in obedience. Your obedience must arise out of a perfect love for Me—not under constraint, but for love's sake. Catch the little foxes, Anna, that My harvest may be full."

He continued, "This time will pass swiftly. We want you to treasure all of it. Courtship is a memorable time, a suspended time. It is a time when lovers walk hand in hand, a time of growing in knowledge and understanding concerning the other. The time of courtship on Earth is sweet. But you, Anna, are in a courtship with My Son, the Prince, none more perfect and beautiful, none more powerful and glorious—My Son. Abandon yourself to the experience of the time."

The Flesh vs. the Spirit

"I do not want you to live by what your eyes see or your ears hear or by what you reason," He said. "I want you to live by every word that proceeds from My mouth to you. The arm of the flesh can never do My will. Try My way, Anna. You have given your own way a princely chance. Now take the way of the Prince Himself—the mind of Christ, the emotions of Christ, the will of Christ. All of Him. None of your flesh. Complete and total union. He deserves nothing less, does He not?"

"Yes, Daddy," I said quietly.

"That is My girl," He said, picking me up and placing

me onto the sea of glass before Him.

The Emerald

My Father held out a large emerald to me. "For your crown, Anna," He said.

I took it. "Oh, Daddy, it is beautiful!" I replied (although I did not know to what crown He was referring). "Thank You."

There was a pause. Then He asked, "Would you like to see your Beloved?"

I felt embarrassed, for He had read my innermost desire. I ducked my head and pulled out the golden key that hangs from a scarlet cord around my neck. Jesus had given the key to me. It unlocks the golden filigree gate to the enclosed garden of my heart in Paradise. The Lord had told me that if I wanted to see Him that He would meet me there. I held up the golden key and smiled at my Father.

"Go to Him," my Father said tenderly. His glory came from Him and kissed my forehead.

Instantly, I was before the walled garden.

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Chapter 3

The Beloved



Quickly I placed the key into the lock and opened the gate to the enclosed garden. I dropped the scarlet cord back around my neck, quietly stepping inside the gate. As it closed behind me, it clicked shut.

Within the Garden

What stillness and peace were there.

I stood facing the three-tiered fountain in the center of the garden. Cool, clear water flowed from its top and gently pooled in its widely rimmed basin. The large, flowering apricot tree arched over the fountain, with the bench for two at its base.

I let my eyes rest upon the colors and varieties of the plantings within the walled area. All sorts of scented herbs grew among the jonquils, tulips and daffodils. The fruit-bearing trees and vines were heavy with flowers, but they also had leaves and the rudiments of both summer and fall fruit. As with the trees and vines, the flowers of spring,

summer, and fall were blooming at the same time within the beds.

A slight breeze blew across the garden stirring the aromas. The fragrance was unique. On Earth we do not experience the three growing seasons together. I was reminded of Aaron's staff that sprouted, blossomed, and bore fruit at the same time. I wondered if the three seasons being represented within the garden had something to do with the priesthood of believers. But I did not know.

I breathed in deeply and exhaled slowly. Peace.

Not Alone

Suddenly I heard someone clearing His throat in order to call attention to His presence. I looked up. Jesus was sitting in the large apricot tree. "My Lord," I said in amazement, "what are You doing up there?"

"I am up a tree, Anna," He said.

I laughed. "What are You doing up a tree?"

"You want Me up here," He replied.

"I want You up a tree?" I laughed, for I thought He was joking.

"Yes," He answered. "I am localized, and you know where I am. You can come to the base of the tree and ask Me questions, and then go about your life. I am in a portion of your heart, but I do not have free access to the whole garden."

I was cut to the quick. I swallowed hard. "Come down, my Lord," I said.

"Forgive me. These mysteries are so exciting. . .well, forgive me that…"

"...that you have begun to use Me?" He asked, jumping down from the tree.

"The very thing I have hated, I am doing," I said.

He walked toward me. "What do you want of Me, Anna? Information? There is a vast supply. Is that what you want?"

"No, of course not," I replied. "These mysteries are so..."

"...titillating?" He asked.

"Well, they are . .

"...seductive?" He added.

"Yes," I affirmed.

"But they are part of Me—and you have been given all of Me. It seems a poor exchange."

"Oh, my Friend," I continued, "forgive me. I love You and want to be with You. I want You to have access to the entire garden."

"You are called to know mysteries, Anna, but not to use Me," He said.

To Still the Soul

I was speechless. When years before I had decided to pursue the Lord earnestly, I withdrew my senses from the overstimulation of worldly input. I felt that I needed to still my soul if I wanted Him to come knocking at my heart.

The withdrawal from keeping myself entertained with the world was exceedingly painful. But now the Lord was saying that I had replaced the worldly with spiritual entertainment—desiring more and more spiritual knowledge—a subtler and less objectionable substitute, but still a substitute for Him. I did not know what to say. I was stunned.

He took me by the arm and guided me gently to the rim of the fountain. "Sit down," He said quietly. He sat beside me. I looked into His face. The beauty and clearness of those eyes were beyond compare. He took my hand and held it.

A True Friend

"My Anna," He said, "be a true friend to Me, as I am to you. I want you to desire My company. I am a King, but I desire to be with you, as any lover would long to be with the one he loves. I do not command your love; I humbly ask for it. I do not dictate that you be with Me. I long for you to seek Me. Therefore I wait for you, Anna."

I dropped my head. "Lord," I said, "I am selfish. I am using You for my own pleasure."

Even a King

He lifted my chin. "Anna, look at Me," He said. "Even a King wishes to be loved for Himself, not for the gifts He bestows." He smiled at me. "If you do not enjoy being with Me now, why do you believe you will enjoy My company for eternity?" He looked down at my hand. "The pursuer wants to be pursued also," He said gently.

He looked up and then over to the gate. "Have you ever thought of standing at the entrance to the garden with the gate opened, waiting for Me?"

"No," I replied.

"You have expected Me to travel the entire distance to you. Do you not think I would be pleased to have you waiting, with part of the distance covered so that we might see each other sooner?"

"Yes," I said quietly.

He smiled at me. "Come, My love, let us walk." He helped me to rise and put His arm around my waist. We began to walk the path that circles the garden. "I have called you to Myself;" He said looking down at me. "Few understand what this means. Would you like to know, Anna?"

"Yes," I said tentatively. "I say this in fear and trembling because I fear not getting something I want."

He laughed. "I know this. What does that say about our relationship?"

"It sounds like I do not trust You," I said.

"That is what it sounds like," He agreed.

"Is it true?"

"Yes," He replied.

"Well, Lord, help me!" I pleaded. "I want to trust You."

"My wonderful girl," He said, "My love. Do you not understand? My desire is for you. My passions burn with eternal fires. No mere tear could quench them. It would take the tears from eternity, and still the fire of My passion for you would not be quenched. Why would you not trust the One who loves you as I love?"

I could not answer. I did not know why I did not abandon myself to God. I shook my head. "Who am I to deserve such love?"

"You are chosen for Me by My Father," He said earnestly. "With wisdom that is beyond wisdom, He has chosen you."

"Then increase my desire to be with You," I said, "to desire You more than an anointing or spiritual knowledge

or…" I could not think fast enough to enumerate. I shook my head in frustration and then blurted out: "I love You." I clung to Him, burying my face in His chest. "You are the dearest Friend I have…love You!"

He placed His arms around me lovingly. "My own," He said. He dropped His head back and laughed as in pain mixed with joy. Then, bringing His head to mine, He spoke softly, "Anna, Anna." There was great pain in His voice. "Please do not do this again." He held me trembling. "Anna, do not do this again."

I had hurt Him deeply by treating Him presumptuously, casually—like someone with whom I had to deal in order to receive that which was my primary interest. But He loved me. He wanted my company and wanted me to desire His. That which is the deepest desire of every human heart was mine, and I was seeking secondary rewards.

My heart began to break. The pain was excruciating. The garden responded also. The smell of myrrh flooded the area. I glanced at the myrrh tree. Red tears of the aromatic gum were slipping from the heart of the wood.

I pulled back, holding Him at arm's length, looking into His eyes. "My God, my God," I said. "I am not worthy of You. I cannot even respond correctly to the depth of Your love. Ishi, if You do not give to me a love that matches Yours in intensity…" The pain in my heart was so severe that I could not finish the sentence. With all that was in me I pushed past the extreme pain to cry out, "Oh, please help me to love You as You love me. I am willing, Lord, but I cannot do this myself. You must do this through me! Please!"

The Impartation

He looked at me intently. Then He took my right hand into His, turned it over, and tenderly kissed the center of it. "Receive," He said. Immediately I could feel the Spirit surging through me. "There is no greater closeness than to share one life," He said.

In the blur of light and power that followed, I saw worlds collide and millions of people being born. I saw death and life. Wave upon wave of ecstasy rolled over me. I thought I would burst into a million pieces, being unable to contain such heights of love. I lost track of where I was or even who I was. I lost track of everything but Love Himself. How long this impartation lasted I do not know, but when the power began to subside, the garden slowly came back into focus for me. I was fuzzy, though, blurry and unstable. I had to be steadied.

He spoke reassuringly, "This quiet place [meaning the garden] is within you, Anna, where you may meet with Me at all times."

My vision cleared finally. I looked into His face. He smiled at me. "My Anna," He said, "I will show you another garden."

Instantly, He became the white Eagle. "Come, Anna," He urged. I climbed onto His back and lay down with my arms around His neck, as I had done in the past. Then with one mighty movement of His wings, He flew over the garden wall. Immediately, we were on Earth.

Vision of the Bride

We flew over a vast desert. In vision we were approaching what seemed to be a garden in the center of this wilderness. The white Eagle spoke, "I wall show you the

bride, Anna."

At the center of this garden in the wilderness I saw a lovely young woman (the corporate bride of Christ). She was clothed in the glory of God.

The white Eagle continued, "The Holy Spirit is training the bride. I have taken her into the wilderness to teach her to sing. She is a virgin, undefiled by idols. She will not name them or consider their beds. Her eye is single, and I fill all her sight. She will not lust for idols or cut her eyes to entice them. My beloved will desire Me alone."

The young woman began to sing:

Daystar of the morning,
Dawn before our eyes,
Rise that we might see Your face,
Prince of Paradise.
Clothe Yourself in splendor.
Clothe Yourself in might.
Trail supernal righteousness,
Quintessence of all Light.

The Lord continued, "The Holy Spirit will be a pillar of fire and a pillar of the cloud of God's glory. As with the children of Israel, He will lead her in the wilderness, and He will protect her. The glory of God will rest upon her."

Intimacy of the Garden

"Our Father is restoring the intimacy of the garden, Anna. He is giving Me a bride who will walk with Me hand in hand."

He continued, "The pillar of fire will consume all that is not of Me? The pillar of cloud will cover her. The Holy Spirit passionately desires that I have a pure bride. He will teach her and lead her. He will give her the oils and the

perfumed spices. He will feed her manna from above—as He fed the children of Israel in the desert—so that within and without she might be prepared. Nurtured and warm, she will grow and bloom for Me alone. The fragrance of her perfumes will be for Me alone, and she will sing—sing for Me alone. The glory will be a shield for her, blinding the eyes of the wicked. The cloud will cause them to stumble and fall. They will grope as in the darkest night, but they will not find her."

Come to the Garden

"The call has gone out from the very halls of heaven to come to the garden. But most will remain outside. I, Myself, call, 'Come to the garden!' But many who do enter are content to eat the fruit nearest the gate. Few seek Me in the center of the garden. However, for the few who do make the journey, searching for Me, they find an open door to the Father's heart. For in the center of the garden is the entrance to My Father's heart, and within His heart, I live and move.

"As for you, Anna," He said, "leave behind all that has been an anchor to your soul. Loose the rope, trim the sails, and let Me set the course. Come into the wilderness. For in the wilderness there is a secret garden, and in the center of that garden, the doorway to God."

We began to fly away from the garden in the wilderness.

The Mountains

Suddenly, the vision ended. I found that we were actually flying up to a mountain range on Earth. Beneath us the valley lay lush and green. On several of the encircling mountains there were apple orchards. These were

laid out in neat rows and were carefully tended. The sun shone on what seemed to be a river winding through the valley far below. However, as we drew nearer, I realized that it was a road.

Before us near the top of the highest mountain was a large, protruding rock. It formed a ledge. The white Eagle had taken me to this rock before.

I buried my face in His scented feathers as I clung to His neck. He was taking me to His nest.

Chapter 4

Lessons of the Birds

We continued to fly higher. Before we neared the tallest mountain, I saw vultures circling the valley below us. Their bald heads looked raw, unclean, and repugnant.

The white Eagle spoke, "Pay no attention to them. They seek that which is dead, not the living." I diverted my eyes.

Chimney Swifts

Suddenly, thousands of small, dark birds began to pass us. The sky was filled with them. They chattered loudly among themselves. The sound of their wings added to the commotion of their flight. They were so noisy and gabby that they did not recognize the white Eagle flying among them. They called past us to confer and re-confer with one another.

"Chimney swifts," the white Eagle said. "They live in soot. They rise, but not from fire. Covered with charcoal, they rise from the darkness of hiding among that which is

charred. Their tails are like snakes' tongues. Do not fly with them."

Hearing their communal chatter, the word 'gossip' came to mind—"for poison is in their tales," I thought.

An updraft mercifully carried us higher than their piercing calls. I was troubled by the Lord's warning and began to ponder what He had said.

Often conversation among the brethren did seem to be more like a checkout counter tabloid than the admonition from Paul to "let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth" (Eph. 4:29). "Indeed," I thought, "how can we fly higher if we are earthbound by our fascination with hearing of and talking about sin—not only the world's sins, but also sin among the brethren? Our earthbound focus has driven a stake into the ground to which our spirits are tethered."

Hawks

I blinked back into the present moment as a dark bird of prey passed beneath us.

"Hawk's hawk," the Lord said. "Do not fly with them."

"Hawking your wares," I murmured to myself. I had not thought of that phrase in years—and certainly not in connection with the work of the kingdom. However, now that I thought about it, it seemed that in trying to reach the world or harvest, some of us had become remark-ably like the world. We rivaled sideshow barkers in our flamboyant peddling. Could it be that we were cheapening the depth of commitment to which the Lord had called us? Was the salt losing its savor?

Falcons

Before I could consider this further, a falcon swooped passed us. "Falcons will con you," the white Eagle said. "The lie will run your life afoul. Do not fly with them."

"With whom may I fly, Lord?" I asked.

"Fly with Me, Anna. Fly with Me. Eagles nest high. They do not travel in flocks like ducks [following one another instead of the Lord]. They do not roost together like chickens [seeking protection from others instead of Christ]. They do not hunt bugs together like geese [seeking provision from others than the Lord]. Eagles nest high. Do you wish to fly with Me, Anna?"

"Yes, Lord," I said.

"Stop trying to be a part of the flock [that does not follow the Lord]. Turn into the wind, and let the currents lift you higher."

The Rock

Immediately, the wind swelled beneath His wings.

"We will soar, Anna. We will soar," He exclaimed. We did soar, higher and higher. "Leave your father's and your mother's house. The King desires your company." With a mighty upsurge of wind and power, we soared to the rock near the top of the mountain.

The great white Eagle gently descended. He settled upon the rim of His large nest. I climbed from His back and sat down near its center.

The nest was made of strong tree branches. When I was seated on its floor, the rim was about chest high.

Frankincense

Within its circumference, there was the pungent aroma of frankincense.

"Purity," I thought to myself. "That is what the Lord has been saying through the lesson of the birds. It is not enough to love Him and want to be with Him. He wants a bride who is pure—one who is free from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Also one who will not participate in the sins of immature Christians—one who is willing to be transformed into His likeness."

I folded my arms on top of the nest and rested my head on my hands, looking out. We were very high above the valley. You could see for miles. The land looked fertile.

I had noticed a few white feathers within the nest when I sat down. As I looked out over the valley now, I wondered how many of my own juvenile feathers had been replaced by the strong, mature, white ones.

"Am I growing up? Am I being transformed? Am I willing to pay the price?"

The Question

My heavenly Father had asked me this question when I became His chancellor (a secretary to a king). I answered that I was willing. Sometimes, however, I find that I answer before I know the cost—the real cost.

Now I wanted to ask myself the same question: "Am I willing to pay the price? Really willing? Do I want to give up habits that I consider minor infractions—the ones about which the devil whispers to me, 'It's all right this time?' Am I willing to let the Holy Spirit bring me into a disciplined life, the life of a disciple?" My thoughts continued. And my motives: "Do I want success, or am I willing to allow Him to

work through me, freely embracing the visible outcome or lack of visible outcome—whichever He chooses? What reward do I seek—Him or my own glory, being the bride He desires or becoming a marketable commodity? What reward do I seek?"

The Rose

I turned to look at the white Eagle. He had changed into Jesus. The Lord now was sitting on the rim of the nest with His feet on its floor. In His left hand He held a large, pink rose.

"The flesh may look good," He said, "but the thorns on this rose can cause many wounds." Suddenly in His right hand appeared a bouquet of (what looked like) red tulips. "This is the rose of Sharon," He continued. "It grows within My garden. I want you to be such a rose, Anna, a rose without thorns."

The pink rose disappeared as He continued, "Testings crack the grip of the flesh. Let yourself be poured from vessel to vessel so that the cracked sediment can be left behind." He handed to me the bouquet of the red rose of Sharon. "For you, Anna," He said.

"My Lord, they are beautiful," I responded. "But will they not die here on Earth?"

The Reward

"They will not die," He smiled. "When you are rewarded by the Reward, life, even life on Earth, becomes electric, mysterious, pulsating with true, eternal life. You become a life-giving spirit, for My Spirit touches others through you."

He continued, "When I in greater measure flow

through you, My reward is with Me. Fortresses tumble, wails crack and fall—more life rushes through your spirit and overflows to others. But you too benefit. You too are invigorated by being a channel of My life."

The choice was clear—life or death. If I wanted more life—more of Him—it would cost me. "What will it cost me?" I quickly asked myself "Everything," I quickly answered. "Everything else. But what is that everything else?" I again asked myself. "Death. Everything outside of Him is death, death wearing a mask, mere delusion. No," I thought to myself; "let others have more of the world. I want more of God."

I got up from the floor of the nest and sat beside Him on its rim. I looked into those clear eyes. "I want You as my reward, Lord. Since You have promised to be my reward, the only reward I will accept is You." Laying the bouquet in my lap, I put my arms around Him, resting my head on His chest. "You, Lord. I want my Lover, my Friend; I want my Husband and my strong tower. I love You and will be satisfied with nothing but You.

"My little princess," He said, kissing me softly on my forehead, I love you.

I tilted my head to look up at Him. "Thank You for loving me," I said. Then I returned my head to His chest. How secure I felt with His arms around me, how happy, how complete and totally at peace. I asked quietly, "Did You watch me grow up?"

"Yes," He answered tenderly.

"I wish I could have watched You grow up," I said.

Alone Together

We sat together quietly, holding one another. "We do

not need words, do we, Anna? Give Me your hand," He said.

He took my hand and placed it over His heart. I could feel and hear His heart beating. He looked down at His hand covering mine. "My heart beats for you, Anna." When I looked up into His face, His eyes were full of tears. "I love you," He said.

Blue Spirits

Suddenly, before us in the air were twenty-four spirits. They were ice blue, like clear gemstones. I could see right through them. In a stately manner they began to dance to heavenly music that seemed to come from nowhere. They danced on the air as if it were a floor. However, when they made a circle, it was vertical, like a wheel. Their demeanor was reverential. They began to sing:

Let the earth hear heaven declare.
Hear, O Earth, its voice.
Paradise breathes out a prayer.
Trees and rocks rejoice.
Every minute, every hour,
Singing songs unsung,
Praising mysteries of His power,
Blades of grass a tongue.
Endless wonder, endless awe,
Endless pure delight,
Life and love the Spirit's law,
In heaven, land of light.
Ever seeing, yet unseen,
Spirits join as one,
Extolling God, our gracious King,
Extolling Christ, His Son.
Hear, O Earth, as heaven sings.
Echo back its praise,

Silent, joyful thundering
To God, the Ancient of Days.

After their song ended, the dance continued to heavenly music. I remained with my head resting on the Lord's shoulder as I watched the spirits complete their dance.

I wondered if the Lord would be wooing me always as He was doing now. "Will it always be like this?" I asked.

He smiled, "No, Anna. As on Earth the preparation for marriage is not marriage, so with the birds—a couple in mating rituals is not the couple after consummation and nesting begins. Yet each period of time is rich in itself. You do not like a static routine. Why should you mind change? Eat what is set before you. Enjoy the journey today."

The spirits completed their exquisite offering. The music ended. I sat up. Ishi and I both clapped in appreciation.

"Deeply meaningful, dear friends," He said to the spirits. He turned to me, "Hold out your right hand."

I did. Instantly the spirits flew to me.

Blue Salt

Each spirit poured into my hand a small deposit of blue salt. Then each spirit flew back to stand before us.

"Eat, Anna," the Lord said. I ate the blue salt. It was good. He continued, "This covenant of salt is for the heavenly realm."

The spirits seemed exceedingly pleased to have represented heaven in helping to make this covenant. "Thank you, My dear friends," Jesus said. They bowed deeply from the waist, then disappeared.

The Emerald

"Come, Anna," the Lord said, rising. He helped me to stand. I picked up the bouquet. Instantly it became a large emerald. I blurted out a laugh, because it startled me.

"For your crown, Anna," He said.

"Thank You, Lord," I smiled in return (although, as with my Father, I did not know to what crown He was referring). "How do You spend so much time with me?" I asked.

"It is in My job description," He laughed. He held out His hand to me saying, "Come." I gave Him my hand. We began to rise from the nest.

Wheel of the Everlasting Gospel

As we rose, I saw an unrolled scroll with writing on it. It extended from heaven to Earth and then back to heaven again. It formed a huge wheel touching Earth and heaven. We rose right beside it.

"I have never seen this, Lord," I said.

"The everlasting gospel made visible Anna," He said. "Proclaimed in heaven, fulfilled on Earth—proclaimed on Earth, fulfilled in heaven. Come."

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Chapter 5

The Pool of Reflection

After we arrived in Paradise, I found that I was sitting alone near a clear, round pool of water. On the opposite side of the pool, shrubbery was growing in geometric shapes—squares, rectangles, triangles, and circles. These shapes were reflected perfectly within the pool.

Stacte was blooming behind the geometric shrubs. Each of these bushes was covered with waxy white blossoms that gave a mild, pleasant fragrance. I remembered that stacte was a spice used in the holy incense. But I could not remember the meaning inherent in its name.

It was unusually still by the pool, like being in the eye of a hurricane. I swung my legs around, putting my feet into the water. They hardly made a ripple. Strange.

"Where am I?" I asked aloud.

"The pool of reflection," a child's voice answered from behind me.

Crystal Clear

"Uh oh," I said within myself because I recognized the voice. "Crystal Clear," I smiled faintly as I turned to face her.

There she stood, her hair still tousled as if from play. She was wearing the same pale shift and pinafore. She looked five or six years of age.

However, she had old eyes. At times I could see through her arm or leg. She was a spirit.

"You have come back to see us," she exclaimed cheerily. "We L-O-V-E, love you," she continued, spelling out the word love as if it were in a child's song.

I sighed painfully within myself as I remembered the last time I had seen her. "But," I thought, "perhaps this time will be different." I decided to ask her about the pool. "What is the pool of reflection?"

"It is a place where you can see yourself very clearly," she said.

I was not sure that I liked that idea. "Does one wish to reflect upon oneself?" I asked coolly, my flesh suddenly rising up and being as sly, legalistic, and evasive as the flesh always is.

She continued as though she did not notice. "You might want to take a look to see if you are cooperating with God or resisting Him. Do you want to look into the pool?" she asked brightly.

The Decision

Of course I did not want to look into the pool. However, I was beginning to hear in my own voice, as well as in the hardness of my heart, my resistance to correction.

Shortly before arriving at the pool I was telling the Lord that I would give up anything and everything in order to gain more of Him. Now with my first opportunity to allow this declaration to become experiential in my life, I was balking. “Do you think I should look?” I asked limply.

“It might help,” she replied.

With a sigh I took my feet out of the water and lay down on my stomach to look into the pool. I was amazed. I saw Jesus’ face reflected in the water instead of my own. But there were geometric objects stuck onto His head and face. “What are these objects?” I asked.

“Blocks,” she said. “You are blocking Him. They make the face of Jesus look really ugly.”

“How do I get them off?” I asked with alarm.

She leaned over to look at my face in the pool. “Hmmm,” she said, as if making a diagnosis. “You need to unstick the glue.”

“Unstick the glue?” I asked. “How do I do that?”

Repentance

“Repentance,” she said matter-of-factly. “Repentance unsticks the glue.” She pulled back to look at me directly instead of at my reflection.

I sat up to look into her face. She shook her head from side to side as children do when correcting one another. Speaking in a slow, singsong manner, she said, “You’re too old to play with blocks.” Before I could answer her, she vanished.

Stacte

The strong smell of stacte flooded the area. I looked at

the bushes. The fragrant gum was running down the branches.

"Truth with mercy," I said glumly, remembering now the inherent meaning within the name.

With a sigh I turned back to the pool. I looked into the water again. The face, and therefore the life of Jesus, was definitely blocked from flowing to others. I gathered the courage to look at the blocks more closely. Each had writing on it. I squinted to decipher the lettering.

The Blocks

"Hypocrite" was written on one block. "Hypocrite," I said with self-righteous indignation. Although indignant, I dared not try to refute this because I knew it to be true. That which people on Earth might not see was plainly visible in heaven. Perhaps I might hide this from others, but I could not hide it from myself or from God. "I am a hypocrite", I said, and You see it. I say that I am doing what I do out of obedience, not caring about the results, but I do care. I care greatly. I want success. I want to feel that I am accomplishing something." I could not look at that block any longer.

I decided to look at another block. "Money" was written on it. "Oh, no," I moaned. "Well, it is true. I say that I do not mind being poor, but I mind a great deal. I do not like being poor. I know that to live by faith pleases You, and I want to please You. But truthfully, it is easier to talk about faith than to live by it. At times I think, 'If I just had enough money, I would never need to think about money again.'" My confession made me uneasy. I decided to look at another block.

"Being a star" was written on this block. My hands

went to my face in embarrassment. “True again,” I confessed. “It is difficult for me to live a hidden life. I want respect. I want honor. I want to be known. I want...” I almost said “glory.” As I confessed this sin, I was struck by the seriousness of it. “God, help me,” I said. “I want Your glory,” I shook my head. “This is serious, very serious. How have You taken me as far as You have taken me? How can You love me? How can You want me to be Your Son’s bride? In my spirit I know that I want to be on the inside that which I present on the outside. I know that I want to live by faith. I know that pride is a great sin. Satan wanted Your glory. How am I better?”

The Blood

Saying that galvanized my thinking. “I am in a better place before You, Father, for my Lord and Savior died to release me from the penalty of death due to sin. And I can plead the blood of Jesus before You and ask that You forgive me for every sin, as well as for every transgression. I can proclaim to You that the Holy Spirit was sent to apply the cross to every act of the flesh within me. I am in a better place.

“Then, Daddy,” I cried, “I ask for correction by the Holy Spirit. I ask for the cross. I ask that I be clean inside and outside. I want the life of Jesus to flow through me unhindered. I mean, Daddy, that I do not want one hindrance. I give You permission to bring me into a pure walk before You. I know it will hurt. I know it. But I give You permission to ignore my whining.”

Tears

“O God, do not leave me as one dead,” I began to cry. “Forgive me. Wash me clean with the blood of Jesus—He

who paid the ultimate price with His shed blood and death on the cross so that I might stand before You clean, in His righteousness."

I continued, "Deal with my flesh. Override my protests. Discount my whimpering. Please, please do not let me go around this mountain one more time. I do not want to live a halfhearted life, compromising at every turn because I do not want the pain of the cross," I wept bitterly. "And I miss Jesus," I cried. "I am in pain when we are apart!"

I realized suddenly that a very bright angel was near me catching in an alabaster bottle every tear that I cried. The tears would start down my cheeks and then automatically, obediently even, go into the vial. I was fascinated.

The Angel of Praise

I was so fixed upon this sight that I jumped a little when my name was called from behind me. It was Judy, the angel of praise.

She was dressed in a gossamer green under tunic bound with a golden girdle. Over this was a deeper green cloak that had long, oversized sleeves. These sleeves contained pockets that held all manner of golden musical instruments. Her neck, hands, and feet had a slight tint of gold. Her auburn hair was plaited into seven loops interlaced with gold. On her forehead was a small golden box, housing Scripture. She began to speak. "Anna, rejoice that you are loved. I am sent to comfort you with the mantle of praise."

"What is that?" I asked, wiping my eyes with my hand. The bright angel with the vial for tears disappeared.

Hymn of Praise

"Shh," she said, putting her finger to her lips. "Let me help to calm your soul. Rest." She became a small, green whirlwind. The wind and movement caused all the instruments within her robe to play together. The sound of praise was so pure that it seemed to draw angels from the air. They gathered in a large circle around her. She began to sing:

O great I AM, Eternal One,
Fountain of life within the Son,
Wellspring of blessing,
Wellspring of light,
Infinite mystery hid from our sight.
Searched by the Spirit,
Revealed through the Son,
Mystery unfolding, though ever begun.
Beginning and ending, great circle of light
That shatters the darkness, confounding the night.
All beauty, all joy, all splendor in One,
His grace freely shared through the life of His Son.
His life and His death and His life evermore,
Though crucified ever, to die nevermore.
All hail, Great Redeemer, All hail, Mighty King,
Of Life and of Truth and of Light do we sing.
All praise, adoration, and thanksgiving,
Through time never ending, our homage we'll bring.

Galbanum and Cassia

As she sang, the aroma of galbanum and cassia filled the air. Galbanum bespeaks worship, adoration, thanksgiving, and praise. Cassia urges homage to God alone. I needed both. I needed the idols in my heart to be cast down. Also, I needed to be lifted up, out of myself;

through turning my eyes toward Him in praise. Her song was like a mantle dropping upon me—lifting my spirit but settling my soul.

At the end of the song, the many angels that had gathered withdrew discreetly. Judy spoke. "Worship God, Anna. He alone is worthy." Then she too disappeared.

God at Work

I was alone again. But the stillness near the pool was no longer a vacuum. It was closer to the stillness within my soul. The Lord had accomplished a work within me, although I did not know the nature of the work or how He had accomplished it. But I felt that I could see more clearly, that in some way I was different.

The answer seemed simple. Jesus overcame the flesh when He walked the earth. Now He could overcome the flesh in me. He would work, and I would rest in Him. I felt cleansed, washed, with my soul as still as the round pool before me.

However, the stilling of my soul made room for a greater longing for Him. The ache within my spirit had grown painfully acute. I missed Him. I wanted to be with Him. The pain was becoming a wracking hunger.

Two Angels

Suddenly two angels came strolling down the path near the pool. They looked like young men of about twenty-five years of age. One had brown hair and wore a brown robe. The other had blond hair and wore a blond robe. There was something comical about them. But I did not know why I felt this way. Salt and pepper came to mind when I looked at them. They were laughing and talking.

"Hello," I said. "Who are you?"

"Sense," bowed the angel in the brown robe.

"Nonsense," bowed the angel in the blond.

"What?" I laughed. "God is not into nonsense."

"Oh, yes," said Nonsense. "There is more understood by the spirit than the mind."

"And much that the mind is given to comprehend as true," Sense added.

"That reminds me of a song," said Nonsense.

"Oh, dear," said Sense.

"We will sing it for you," added Nonsense.

"We will?" asked Sense.

"Why not?" replied Nonsense. "You always like my songs."

"I do?" Sense asked incredulously.

"They certainly are better than yours," Nonsense quipped. "Yours sound like math problems."

Sense roared with laughter. "All right, all right," he said. "You start it." Nonsense sang:

What is it like to live above?
What is it like above?
Walk blind you see, walk deaf you hear,
That's what it's like above, above.
That's what it's like above.

There was a long pause. "Is that it?" Sense asked.

"Well, I'm not singing an aria here," Nonsense answered. "That is it." There was another long pause.

"I like it," Sense said wholeheartedly.

"Thank you," Nonsense said begrudgingly. "Shall we sing it together?"

"Very well," Sense nodded.

"Would you like to join us, Anna?"

"If I can remember it," I said.

"Just jump in when you can," Nonsense added. Nonsense began to sing the song again. We joined in when we could.

When the song ended, Nonsense asked, "Shall we sing it again?"

Laughing, Sense and I said, "By all means."

Sense continued, "Come, Anna, we will walk with you down the path."

We began to walk and sing the song again. We sang it again and again and again. The more we walked and sang, the funnier everything seemed. We all began to laugh uproariously. In fact, we laughed so much that we could hardly stand. At times we had to hang on to one another just to remain upright.

"Your songs are better than I remembered," roared Sense.

We almost fell down laughing because the song was true, but absolute nonsense. We walked and sang and laughed until we neared a large verdant garden, the entrance to which was guarded by two enormous cherubim.

"We leave you here," said Sense.

I wanted to ask, "Where?" But before I could ask, Nonsense said, "Whenever you need a little traveling music, just let us know." They bowed laughing and were gone.

I was left on the path leading to the garden. Just ahead of me was a sign in the shape of an arrow pointing to the entrance. The lettering on the sign read: THE GARDEN OF GOD.

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Chapter 6

The Garden of God

The brief reprieve of laughter had vanished with Sense and Nonsense. The dull ache of longing returned. It was becoming acute, alarmingly so. It was multiplying, galloping in intensity.

I had asked to desire the Lord more than life itself. I did not realize that receiving such love would be excruciatingly painful. It was as though a javelin had been driven through my stomach. I could not pull it out. I was skewered with longing. But I pushed forward toward the garden. Perhaps I would see Jesus there. He and He alone was my cure. That I knew.

The Angel Elijah

Suddenly the venerable angel Elijah joined me on the path. He was large, old looking, and slightly blue because of a blue light emanating from him. He had a partially bald head and a very long white beard. He wore a full-length, sleeveless mantle woven with various shades of blue. Underneath this cloak was an even deeper blue robe. Light

flashed within the mantle as if a distant thunderstorm was raging within the fabric. Earlier my heavenly Father had assigned this angel to travel with me for the remainder of my life on Earth. He had become a friend.

"Elijah," I smiled, acknowledging him.

"May I walk with you?" he asked.

"Please do," I replied.

He did not address the pain I was experiencing, for which I was grateful. As we walked, he began to speak. "Life in the Spirit is being known intimately and knowing intimately—trusting the Beloved One, preferring the Beloved One, thinking of the Beloved One, honoring the Beloved One, holding the Beloved One to your heart."

He looked at me as he continued, "Your heavenly Father has provided marriage on Earth to demonstrate the bond of growing love between the loved ones, maturing in love, deepening in love, not seeking to expose but to nourish, being vulnerable to the beloved and tender toward others."

He continued, "Because our great and mighty God has created all, all has dignity. The One you love is mercy poured like warm oil on the wounds of the world, the balm of Gilead. The anointed One gave Himself for all, for He has compassion on all, though few will cling to Him."

We approached the entrance to the garden. It had no walls around it. However, it looked as though it grew up to an invisible wall and then stopped.

Cherubim

We stopped before two large cherubim that flanked the entryway. Each cherub had two faces. One cherub had the

face of a man in front and of a lion in back. The other had the face of an eagle in front and of an ox in back Each cherub had two wings and hands under the wings. Their legs were straight like a man's but ended in hooves. Taupe-colored feathers covered their bodies like fish-scale mail. They were full of eyes around their bodies and within their wings. They were fearsome-looking creatures.

The cherubim bowed to Elijah. The face of the man asked, "How are you this blessed day in the kingdom of our God?" Then the four faces of the two cherubim burst into song, "Bless His name forever and ever!" They were a quartet.

Elijah spoke to them, "I am accompanying Anna into the garden."

"Welcome," said the face of the eagle. Then the quartet sang, "Praise Him, praise Him, all His handiwork."

Elijah turned to me. "Shall we go, Anna?"

"Yes, please," I answered

"Splendor and majesty, glory and honor are Yours, O God," sang the cherubim. Their wings were raised and touching over the entrance. The eyes of all four faces were lifted in praise as we passed beneath their wings.

Eden

My longing eased somewhat as we entered the garden. The Lord's presence was there. We started down the path. The sound of praise from the cherubim grew fainter the deeper we went into the garden.

The area was bountiful. It looked as though every variety of tree, shrub, flower, and herb grew within its circumference. The fruit-bearing trees had flowers and

leaves and were also heavy with fruit. I was in awe.

"I am walking in the original of the garden that graced Earth at the dawn of Creation," I said to myself. "And this is the way it smelled," I added, because of the deliciously intoxicating aromas.

"Is the garden still on Earth?" I asked Elijah.

"No," he answered. "It was carried away with the flood."

"Why are the cherubim at the entrance?" I asked.

"To join in the hymn of praise rising from this place to your Father," he said. "Listen."

It was as though everything within the garden was given a voice with which to sing in unison. The sound was not loud. I needed to still myself to hear it. It blended like music coming from all that made up the garden—all that reflected Christ.

"Sweet music," I said

"Sweeter still because it comes from the heart of Him who is beyond compare. It comes from the heart of Jesus," he added.

The garden was cool, not sticky as I would have imagined with so much foliage. We passed small waterfalls and hidden pools. The rose of Sharon grew near the water.

"Does Jesus walk here?" I asked Elijah.

"Yes," he smiled. "This is His garden. He walks here."

"It is very beautiful," I said.

"Yes," he agreed, "the life breath of God, the garden of Jesus."

We came to a clearing in what I supposed to be the center of the garden. The rose of Sharon grew around its

perimeter. In the center of this meadow grew a large, bright tree. It was the shape of a many-branched oak tree or a very large apple tree. The branches were heavy with fruit. It shone with so much light that it was not the color of a tree on Earth. Elijah gestured toward it as we moved into the clearing: "The tree of life," he proclaimed. "I will take my leave of you now, Anna."

"Oh, Elijah," I exclaimed.

He turned to face me. "Remember, Anna, in that which is to come, remember that you are loved," he said.

In the past I had found that such statements did more to stand my hair on end than to comfort me. This time was no exception.

"Remember," he said again, kissing my hand. He vanished.

Seemingly I was alone in the garden. I looked around the clearing. A slight breeze stirred the flowers and grasses in the meadow. I began to walk toward the tree of life.

The Suffering Christ

When halfway to the tree, the Lord materialized before my eyes. He stood before me beaten, bruised, His garments stuck to His wounds that were still open, gouges in His skull, swollen fingers, and swollen face.

I cried out in alarm. I did not know what to do or how to help. I was in shock. I sank to my knees, for all the strength left me. My hands covered my face.

"Anna," He said, "this is your Husband, too. I still bear wounds from the faithless in the world."

I could not look at Him.

"It is all right, Anna," He said. "It is all right." He took both of my hands into His and helped me to rise. "Look at Me, Anna," He continued. He had changed and now looked as I usually see Him. "I am both—what you see and what you saw. You need to know that you are marrying into both, one but both."

"I do not know what to say," I whispered.

"Say nothing," He said. "What is there to say? But you need to know Me as both so that you do not wed blindly."

"What does this mean?" I asked.

"Those who are one share all," He said. "You wish to drink deeply, to share fully, to know even as you are known. This too is part of the knowing, the sharing, the being one. There are not many who turn from their own interests to seek the interests of God. But those who are called and chosen to live in God desire to share the sufferings of the Godhead."

It was as though I was struck dumb.

He continued, "I realize that you are in shock. Therefore I will not ask you now if you are willing to share My sufferings, My sorrows."

"Lord," I said, trying to face the reality of what I had seen, "make me willing. I want to be one with You. I would deny You nothing, nor would I turn away from You because there are sorrows to bear—as long as we are together."

"Do you mean this?" He asked.

"Yes, Lord," I said.

"Behold," He exclaimed, turning to face the tree of life and gesturing in its direction.

The Wheel of Fire

A huge, gold ring began to spin before us. It was as tall as the Ferris wheels that are part of the world's fair exhibitions on Earth. It spun rapidly, bursting into flames.

I realized that the flames were fiery seraphim, hundreds, no thousands, of them. Their flames were as intense as blowtorches. But a figure similar to a man's was at the core of each torch. Each seraph had six wings. With two they covered their eyes, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. A unique and pure music came from their midst.

"Who will ride the wheel of fire?" the seraphim called. Their voices had a strange sound, as if their words were passing through some medium to which we are not accustomed on Earth.

I realized I would need a greater spiritual maturity than I now possessed if I would desire to share the burdens of God. I did not know what this would mean. But evidently this fire was a first step if I wished such maturity I turned to Jesus, "I want to ride the wheel, my Lord."

He smiled. "We will ride it together."

I called to the seraphim, "We will ride."

Jesus took my right hand, and we started forward. The closer we came to the wheel, the hotter grew the flames with which it burned. The sound of thousands of blowtorches was formidable. But through the flames I could hear an adoration of God that was of such purity that it startled my senses.

As we arrived at the fiery wheel, a seraph beckoned for us to enter the flames. The seraph spoke to me. "Few wish to ride the ring of fire. They want the ring of gold but not

the ring of fire."

I looked at Jesus. Then holding tightly to His hand, we both entered the fire. It was extremely hot among these flaming seraphim.

A seraph gestured for us to sit down. We did. The wheel began to turn. We went up as if the fiery ring was actually a huge Ferris wheel.

The Ministry of Seraphs

Jesus said, "The seraphim will train you in a holiness that will bring forth pure worship, holiness burning like a torch, intense in its focus. If you will yield to the ministry of these servants, you too will be like a flame and burn like a torch of love and purity for your God."

He continued, "The fire is for all. Learn to live in the fire by allowing it to burn away all that will not pass through as purely of Me. Learn to love the fire of God."

The Flaming Coal

As the wheel climbed, it seemed as though I could see the entire universe—the beyond of beyond.

A seraph flew to me with a live coal and placed it on my lips and tongue. The fire burned across my face and down my throat into my heart.

The seraph said, "Let your words be fewer and only those that come from the throne."

Calamus and Cinnamon

The smell of calamus and cinnamon was intense within the flames.

I knew that calamus means upright in God's sight. Cinnamon bespeaks the smell of holiness that comes from a heart pure before God, holiness of heart.

Song of the Seraphim

The thousands of seraphs sang:

Let all in heaven, Let all on earth,
Proclaim His holy name.
Let all in heaven, Let all on earth,
Speak of His glory and fame.
A wall of fire around our hearts,
A wall of fire around our minds,
A wall of fire around our feet,
Holy is His name.

I looked at Jesus. The more they sang, the more light poured through His skin. "Your skin," I said, "it is so… different. It is as though light comes from it."

Those Who Draw Near

"Light does pass through My skin," He said. "But Anna, light can pass through your skin, for those who draw near to Me are light bearers. The nearer they come, the more light passes through their skin to others."

"Like Moses?" I asked. I thought to myself of how separated his life became. Moses would go alone to the tent of meeting, alone to the mountaintop, alone with a veil eventually over his face because of the glory of God upon his countenance. The Lord read my thoughts.

"There is a separation that occurs, Anna. As one draws closer to God, there is a burning away of the dimness over the eyes of the mind and the eyes of the heart. For these the world loses its luster. The ingenuity of mankind

becomes a passing spectacle that only causes the person to turn with a sigh back to God."

He continued, "When the True comes, that which is but a copy, but a reworked speck of a magnificent whole, cannot hold that person's interest. God alone can capture their spirits, hearts, souls and bodies."

Adoration

As the fiery wheel reached its zenith, Jesus began to praise the Father while the seraphim burned more brightly in response to His adoration:

O incomparable Father, who or what is like You?
The vast universe is held in existence by the
might of Your power.
Each hair is numbered because of Your tender
compassion.
Who is like You, Father?
How awesome in majesty!
How faithful in covenant!
Unsurpassed in beauty!
Blessed are those who draw near to You.
Blessed are those who dwell in You.
They will forever praise You and minister to You
the desires of Your heart—
Love undivided, burning in the zeal of holiness,
suitable for God alone.
And those who draw near, those who enter, they
will never go out again.

Christ Transformed

He was transformed into pure worship before me. It was as though He could not help Himself. Once begun, He could only enter in more deeply, express His love more

passionately, burn more intensely. The passion of His ardor came from complete understanding. It was love and praise that sprang from knowledge such that only complete union can bring forth.

As I watched, He had passed into an ecstasy of love and passion that was incomprehensible to me. The intensity and purity of His expression—His all-consuming zeal for His Father—was so far beyond my understanding that it was wholly "other."

He burned with a laser-white light. By being with Him, I was carried further in my own passion and zeal for God. It was as though the alabaster vial had been broken for the smell of costly spikenard accompanied this spiraling upward. He became pure, uncreated light.

Eventually, the white flame of His ardor for His Father subsided, like the intensity of a powerful light being reduced. He became the Lord I could comprehend. "Love God, Anna," He said. "He has invited you into His heart. Do not treat this as a trivial invitation."

Leaving the Garden

The wheel of fire stopped at the apex of its rotation. Suddenly Jesus became the white Eagle. "Climb onto My back," He said.

I did so, lying down and putting my arms around His neck as I had done many times. Then from the top of the wheel, He began to fly.

"The time has come," He said.

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Chapter 7

The Valley of the Shadow of Death



The great white Eagle plunged through the darkness. I held on to Him with all of my might, burying my face in His feathers and keeping my eyes tightly shut. With all that was within me, I concentrated on clinging to Him.

Although the dive was as harrowing as dropping miles in a vertical, greased chute, the white Eagle landed gently in the sheepfold within the second heaven. This dark, dank, spiritual realm is populated with demons of great grotesqueness. It is Satan's headquarters.

The Sheepfold

Within this corrupted spiritual territory, our Lord retains an outpost—His sheepfold. It is a safe haven for His own.

A stone wall encloses the protected area. The wall is topped with thorns, as it might be if it were actually a

desert sheepfold. A covered, though open, shelter and one wooden bench are within the wall. There is one gate only into this protected area. Although surrounded by defiling contamination, the sheepfold remains inviolate.

The Preparation

The white Eagle became Jesus. Strangely, He said nothing. Instead, He handed me a pair of porpoise shoes dyed red. I had worn these shoes before when the Lord had taken me into this territory. Now I sat clown on the bench near the gate and began to put them on my bare feet. I was puzzled.

He too sat down and began putting on a pair. As He put on the shoes, He spoke. "I asked you once before, Anna, and now I ask you again: Do you trust Me?"

"Yes, Lord," I answered. My reply was given with less assurance than the first time He had asked. I realized that before I had not lived up to my own expectations. Now, at least a grain of humility had been refined in me from the greater knowledge of my own frailty.

"I have need of you," He said as He rose to His feet. His shepherd's staff appeared in His right hand. With His left hand, He reached down to help me rise. He looked solemn. "When you were here before, I warned you to touch nothing. Now I tell you to speak nothing. Walk straight ahead of you, and when requested, do only that which I indicate to you." He searched my face. "Anna," He said, "carefully follow My instructions." He spoke with a quiet intensity that suggested great, perhaps fatal, danger.

I nodded. The gravity of His words made an audible reply impossible. As He opened the gate, He exhaled a breath as if centering Himself before a trial. We went out.

The gate closed behind us. I was nervous. I followed in His footsteps, holding on to the back of His garment.

The Descent

I expected to see what I had seen before when we visited this diabolical place. I did not. Instead we began a dark descent.

I could feel something sliding past my feet on the path. Primitive revulsion made me try to get my feet out of the way. After my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I could see by the light emanating from Jesus that vipers were slithering all over the wet incline.

I momentarily froze, losing my grip on the Lord's garment. I could not call to Him. All I could do was move forward. By His light I could see that the snakes fled from Jesus. But would they flee from me?

Everything within me was becoming fragmented. I knew that I had to center my focus. I stopped looking down. Instead I fixed my eyes on the Lord.

Now I could not see the snakes, but still I could feel them slither past me. I walked haltingly. Every part of my body was tense, almost rigid.

Test of the Soul—the Emotions

Suddenly I heard a familiar sound. It was our dog barking with excitement, as if he had heard me coming. We had raised this dog from the time he was a puppy. He was greatly loved.

Instinctively I turned my head in the direction of the welcoming bark. Just as quickly, however, I snapped it back to fix my eyes on Jesus. I knew that the darkness and

the slippery incline had disoriented me. I was trying to keep my attention centered.

Then I heard the sound of a speeding vehicle coming toward the sound of the dog's welcoming barks. The wheels of the vehicle squealed, as if to make an emergency stop. There was a bump, a sickening thud, and then the sound of the dog yelping as if he had been hit.

I stopped again, catching my breath in short gasps, my ears straining to hear the location of the sound. It sounded as though the dog was crying in pain. But because of his love for me, he was still trying to drag himself to me. It tore my heart out.

Then I heard my mother cry out. Her voice sounded near the dog's yelps. "Help!" she cried.

My breath almost stopped as I strained to hear. I could not call the Lord.

"Help the dog, Anna!" my mother's voice cried out.

Suddenly my emotions, which had been as scattered as a frightened bird loosed from a cage, snapped into a steely lucidity. Satan had overplayed his hand. The voice that had sounded like my mother's had called me "Anna." My real mother would not have called me that because on Earth my father and mother had named me Ann.

Everything had happened so quickly that I did not have time to think. Satan had bypassed my mind and engaged my emotions. But it was a lie…a lie!

Recovery

I began to move forward again with tiny, frozen steps. With recognition of the deception, the sounds ceased. But I was shaken from having my emotions shredded. Jesus was

ahead of me, but the distance between us was widening. I needed to move more quickly to catch up with Him.

Inwardly, I began to quote Scripture. “Unless you hate father and mother…,” I said, seeking to move more swiftly.

Test of the Soul—the Mind

Suddenly the small snakes became huge ones. I shuddered within myself, “O Lord!” I hoped that Jesus would turn around. These pythons had lettering on them, symbols or formulas.

One gigantic snake reared up to fling itself at me, to knock me down. I knew that if it knocked the breath out of me, it could wrap itself around me and squeeze the life out of me.

“Divination,” I said within myself. “Witchcraft, sorcery, the powerful black arts.”

Shock and fear scrambled my mind. I dared not scream or dodge its lunge. The incline had become steeper and slicker. I did not know if I could keep my footing. The snake lunged, barely missing me. Then three or four huge snakes reared up at the same time to lunge. I was frozen on the path, terrified.

Suddenly, horrible mutilations flashed into my mind in rapid succession. It was as though I was being dismembered and disemboweled. Pictures of horrible tortures assailed me, mixed with visions of being buried alive or falling from a plane.

Angels of Light

Swiftly the horrific pictures fled from before my eyes. In their place the huge snakes became giant, demonic

beings, richly attired.

They spoke to me, “There is greater power than you ever dreamed of having. Power,” they said together. “You can have anything you want. You can take it with this power.”

“They must have showed me the mutilations that will occur if I refuse their offer of demonic power,” I said within myself. “They want to terrify me, paralyze my mind.” I steeled myself. “I will not be afraid of them.” I continued to inch forward. “I will not be intimated.” Within myself I began to repeat, “‘Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord.” They were right in the steep path. I was getting closer to them. “‘Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord.”

The large demons were right ahead of me. I braced myself and kept moving ahead. Incredibly, I passed right through them. I was perplexed.

Recovery

“They are phantoms,” I said within myself. “Not real at all. They are a trick of the mind.”

I did not want to lose this clear understanding, for Satan had managed to take clarity and perspective away from me in this place. Since I was seeing more clearly I began to repeat the Word of God within myself again. I moved ahead more rapidly now that presence of mind had been restored. I dared not call to Jesus. I needed to remember that.

However, Jesus began to move ahead more quickly than I could keep up. He was disappearing into the darkness of the valley ahead of me. I wanted to cry out and run to Him. But I remembered His admonition.

"Surely He will sense that I have fallen behind," I said within myself "Surely….," I repeated frantically within.

Test of the Souls—the Will

I continued to place one foot ahead of another. Now, however, I was in total darkness—black, no light, no sound, nothing—nothing.

Blackness is terrifying. It is the kind of terror that makes you want to scream just to relieve the tension you are experiencing. I felt that I was suffocating with no escape. Evil pressed in on me.

I began to talk to myself within, trying to cling to a measure of sanity. "Any minute I will see His light ahead of me," I thought.

No, nothing. I was groping with my feet on the dangerous incline. I had to remain upright. I was alone. I could not sense His presence at all. I prayed within myself. The prayers were as heavy as stone. I quoted the Word within myself. But it seemed to have no power.

"O God," I thought, "don't leave me!" Suddenly I caught myself. "No," I said within. "I will not accuse Him of leaving me. I will not feel abandoned."

Nothingness

For the child of God who loves the light, darkness is torturous. For those accustomed to His presence, His absence is excruciating.

I thought, "In my Lord's agony on the cross, He must have experienced this blackness. Only He had all the sins of the world upon Him. Cruel demons must have been released to torture Him."

"They Overcame"

I began to confess within myself the benefits of the blood of Jesus and the victories He had won through His broken body. I testified within myself—to myself—of the attributes found within Him and of the victories won by Him.

Somehow, dishonoring God became more heinous than perishing. I did not want to put the Lord to open shame. I did not want to crucify Him to myself again. I did not want to cry out and disobey in this place where the enemy could win a victory and laugh Him to scorn again.

"No," I said within, "no accusations. No bitterness. No more 'whys.' No more a need to be pampered. By His grace I will walk the course He needs me to walk. Him… not me. His honor… not my safety. His glory, not mine. Him. Him. He alone is worthy. He alone is worthy.

"O my God," I sobbed within. "I love You so much. What does this matter? Though You slay me, yet will I trust You. What does it matter? If I live or die, I am Yours. That is all that matters. I love You beyond danger or mayhem or darkness or death."

Love

Suddenly, my heart cracked open. I was unable to contain the love that I now felt. I burst free, from what I did not know. It was as though love for the Lord had loosed me from a prison, as though I had pulled away from the gravity of the flesh. I loved Him. I loved Him more than I wanted to preserve myself.

It was a strange, exhilarating experience. It was as though I was loosed from self. Not that I did not realize, even then, that the cross would need to be applied to my

flesh nature daily to hold it in the place of death. But something had happened. I had broken free.

No longer would it be as easy to embrace the flesh. I would need to work deliberately at employing the flesh now, whereas before it had seemed inevitable. Now I was being drawn into the orbit of the Son of God. I could already feel myself moving toward Him more rapidly. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus was the new gravity that was drawing me into God Himself.

Love like a river began to rush through my heart—love unhindered, unstoppable, and unimaginable.

A Speck of Light

Quickly a tiny speck of light appeared in the path ahead of me. I made the calculation that if that light had been a little to the right or left, the darkness would have hindered me from seeing it. I continued to move forward. Within the light emanating from Him stood Jesus.

He was waiting for me in the valley. As I drew nearer, He smiled and opened both of His arms. I seemed to cover the distance between us supernaturally and was in His embrace. Even within His arms I dared not speak, for He had requested this. He likewise said nothing. His embrace said it all.

He within me, by the power of the Holy Spirit, had demonstrated His victory. The enemy did not entangle my emotions, corkscrew my mind, or pervert my will. Love, His love, was triumphant within me.

There was little time to rejoice, however, for past His shoulder I saw a very large black building brooding in the wet darkness.

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Chapter 8

Satan's Trophy Room

Jesus held me at arm's length, studying my face. He smiled, turned, and led the way toward the building.

The atmosphere in the valley was red as though the building was catching the light from a distant forest fire. It was eerie. It cast long shadows across the valley.

The shadows traveled up the building until they reached two enormous black marble dragons on top. These dragons were facing each other with their wings uplifted and touching like the cherubim over the mercy seat.

The building was a mockery of the ark of the covenant. It was deathly dark as if it were made from antimatter. The black marble exterior was wet, and the overbearing humidity made it difficult to breathe.

Shadow Warriors

Thousands of soldiers were standing shoulder to shoulder on all four sides of the building. They wore an ancient style of armor whose design I had never seen. These

warriors were camped around the building, just as the Levites were instructed to camp around the desert tabernacle. None of them moved when we passed through their numbers, however.

"Why?" I wondered. I glanced down their ranks to see if I could discern the reason for their inaction. The faces within the helmets were shadow. But their eyes tracked us.

I suddenly remembered how the two angels that were sent to rescue Lot had temporarily blinded the men of Sodom. Jesus, I thought, must have rendered these demons inert. They were alert. But they were incapable of action. They held their ranks like clay soldiers buried with early Chinese emperors.

The Approach

After passing through most of the ranks of the soldiers, Jesus approached the building. The structure had the appearance of a gigantic mausoleum. As we drew near, I could see that the black marble dragons were breathing. So were the black marble monkeys that formed a decoration around the top of the building. These leered down at us.

The massive double doors unlatched as we approached. They opened slowly. Each door was of great weight. They pictured Satan's supposed conquests. They were executed in bronze relief and were similar to the doors of European cathedrals that often depict the life of Christ.

Within

The doors opened outwardly to give us entry to a large, windowless room. The smell within the room was odious. The room, like the valley, seemed lit by distant fires. My eyes traveled up to a heavy raised cornice. It formed a

crown around the top of the room. A text was written upon it in an ancient language of wedges and triangles.

Jesus waved His hand, and the lettering changed so that I was able to read the inscription. The text proclaimed Satan's five "I wills" with which he intended to vault himself above the throne of God and crown himself king of the universe. I shuddered.

Hanging upside down from this cornice were half-female, half-batlike demons—the Lilith, the vampire demons that hunt at night. They were repugnant. I dropped my gaze and saw the reason for the stench in the room. Bat guano.

On Display

Display tables flanked either side of the room. These were covered with what seemed to be black velvet. The objects on display were shining with light from within. The objects were beautiful, not because of exquisite workmanship nor because they were encrusted with jewels. Instead, they seemed to have some beauty bestowed upon them by God. They were His, for His people had used them. Now they sat on display like war mementos. I quickly glanced over the tables in astonishment. This was a trophy room.

Stolen from God

Each article was labeled with a clay marker. The same wedges and triangular-shaped writing was on these markers as was on the cornice. Again, Jesus waved His hand. The language changed so that I could read the labels.

On display were the just measure, Miriam's tambourine, Bezalel's renderings for the workers (of the patterns given to Moses on the mount), the widow's bowl,

various musical instruments of ancient design, and on and on. We passed article after article that had been used by God in some extraordinary way and then stolen from Him. I could only suppose that these had been taken into the enemy camp because of the sins of God's people.

I was heartened, however, by the empty spaces on the tables. The labels showed articles that apparently had been rescued to be used by God's people again. Goliath's sword that was used by David was missing. David's harp had been retrieved. There was an empty space where once a banner had been displayed. As we neared the rear of the trophy room, I saw a white embroidered robe on a black clothes stand. It was luminescent. Satan had displayed it by itself, as if it were a prized acquisition.

The Fresco

Beyond this article on the rear wall was a vivid fresco. Before the fresco burned black candles. The flickering lights from the candles seemed to give the fresco a life of its own.

The fresco began at its base with recounting after recounting of brutal tortures of some of God's people. Those being tortured still seemed alive. The fresco was like none I had ever seen. It was similar to a hologram. Light from the candles caused the pictures to have progressive action, so that those suffering suffered again, with Satan supposedly gaining the victory again and again. Barbarous.

The Throne of Skulls

My eyes traveled up this mountain of slaughter to about one-third of the way to the ceiling. Here the fresco began to depict a mound of skulls. This mound rose to a throne of skulls upon which sat the goat-like legs of a satyr.

The enthroned creature had the torso and arms of a human but the head and horns of a goat. In this goat/mans left hand was held a picture of the world. In his other hand was the location for two keys. The outline of the keys was still there, but the keys of death and of Hades had been removed from his hand.

The fresco vaulted up until it covered the first half of the ceiling like a frightful canopy. It was Satan, goat-like, enthroned upon a mountainous pile of human skulls. He was gloating in sinister splendor. As God the Father is enthroned upon the praises of His people, Satan is enthroned upon his murderous savageries and sadistic cruelties.

A chill ran through me. Flickering light from the black candles caused Satan's face to move, seemingly to change before my eyes. His snake-like eyes glared at me.

The Embroidered Robe

Jesus touched my shoulder. I flinched. We began to walk toward the acquisition at the very back—the embroidered robe.

It was fall length with long sleeves. The design of the garment was simple. A man or woman could have worn it. Its richness lay in the embroidered work that was executed in white gold of exceptional purity. The embroidery arose from the robe. The pattern was intricate and exceptionally beautiful. As I moved a little before the garment, all the colors within the radiance of the Father seemed to play across its surface.

The weight and thickness of the various gold threads seemed to symbolize attributes of the Lord. The robe reflected these as if they had been woven into the garment.

The Embroidery

I had no idea a garment could communicate that which was of the character of Christ. Still, I wanted to move slightly before the embroidery to ascertain what was woven into the fabric.

I received the impression of "a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." The garment also reflected "bearing with one another" and "forgiving each other."' The thread that had the greatest weight and was the most frequently used was "love."

These were part of the character of Christ that Paul enumerated in Colossians 3:12—14. He had told the body of Christ alive at that time to "put on" this garment. If he had told them to put it on, they must have had it in their possession but were not wearing it. I gathered that sin had eventually allowed the garment to be taken from God's children. Sad. We had great need of it.

Jesus spoke to me quietly. "The garment is for the soul and heart. It is an inner garment that becomes visible through actions, through decisions that effect in unity [oneness in Christ]."

He continued, "I am the new, inner garment—others rather than self. The supreme Other is God [the Father] Himself—His rights, His needs, and His desires before all. I have purchased you for our Father. I have washed you and clothed you with garments of holiness and beauty, garments of salvation and righteousness. Anna, clothe yourself in Me—garments of salvation for the whole person [spirit, soul, and body]. Clothe yourself in Me—attributes of righteousness that are beautiful to God [the Father]."

I turned back to look at the robe. It was exquisite. The Lord's virtues woven into the garment had brought the body

of Christ into "the perfect bond of unity." Paul had said this. How we needed it now.

He continued, "The embroidered garment is to be worn by those who are the bride. It was handed down in our family. Those who were entering into fuller union with Me wore it. There is none like it. It belongs to our household."

As I looked at the robe, I realized that to enter into a deeper relationship with Christ meant to enter into a deeper covenant with His body. The two are inseparable.

The Recovery

"Carefully listen to Me," Jesus said softly. "I want you to remove the garment, then quickly climb onto My back." Without hesitation He placed His hand on the top of the velvet clothes rack.

I did not have time to think. Instantly I obeyed and began to remove the robe. The more I disengaged the garment, the harder He pressed on the top of the rack. I supposed He was compensating for some weight of glory in it. He continued to press on the top of the rack as I folded the embroidered robe so that it could be carried.

When the garment had been secured, I looked at Jesus. He gave the flicker of a smile, winked at me, and then removed His hand from the rack.

The Escape

Screams, sirens, and alarms of all kinds immediately arose together. All restraints were removed from everything within this realm.

Quickly the Lord became the white Eagle. Nervously I scrambled onto His back.

The vampire bat demons unfolded their huge wings. Their eyes were blood-red. They hissed through their fanged mouths. They were deranged with fury.

The doors to the front of the trophy room began to close. The white Eagle had to fly with His wings perpendicular to the floor to pass through the narrow opening. I tightened my arms and legs around Him, pressing the robe between my flattened body and His back. We passed through the opening like a single unit. With searing screams everything—bats, monkeys, dragons, soldiers—wrenched awake.

It seemed as though everything in the corrupted stratum breathed down upon us in the chase—screeching, squalling, shrieking, a cacophony of blood-curdling sounds raised behind us. They were a frenzied juggernaut.

The marble dragons wrenched free from the top of the building with all the cracking and tearing that accompany a structure being torn apart. The black marble monkeys violently ripped free to join in the hunt. The Lilith and shadow warriors rabidly pursued. Whether hoofed, winged, clawed, flightless, or airborne, they pressed us. They were a murderous horde of frenzy and rage.

Quickly demons from elsewhere in the second heaven joined these in the chase. The whole second heaven sounded like one dangerous, wounded animal. The bone-chilling cries that went up from that place made my blood run cold. Horrific.

I clung to the white Eagle. It was a wild ride. Wild!… but exhilarating. I threw back my head, gulping air and laughing silently. Let them roar. That was all that it was, a roar. A show. I was with Jesus, and Jesus had won the victory! Let them roar!

Saffron and Onycha

Suddenly there was a release of the fragrances of saffron and onycha. More costly than pure gold is the fragrance of saffron coming from the Lord's betrothed, for it symbolizes faith. Onycha means "roar," but it is the authoritative roar of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. These priceless fragrances released in the mid-heaven exhibited the Lord's overcoming victory.

The Flight

The white Eagle flew to the sheepfold. My porpoise shoes dropped from my feet as He swooped through the single gate and began to climb upward. The demons outside of the wall wailed in fury. They would be punished for allowing the garment to be taken. Both they and we knew this. The Lord continued to fly upward. There was great strength in the beat of His wings. The caterwauling became less distinct as we pulled away toward the third heaven.

While flying He spoke loudly to me so that I could hear Him. "You will wear this robe, Anna. It has been restored to the household of our Father. Now many will wear it."

With great power He continued to climb upward. Almost laughing He shouted to me, "Something old."

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Chapter 9

Something Borrowed, Something Blue

Swiftly, the white Eagle flew to the throne room in the third heaven. As He descended to the sea of glass, I noticed that there was no one in sight except my heavenly Father. I knew that others had to be there, but I could not see them.

I climbed from the white Eagle's back. Instantly, He became Jesus. He grabbed me around the waist, picking me up and swinging me around several times. He was laughing. I too was laughing. We were breathless from excitement when He set me down.

Presenting the Robe

"Come," He smiled, gesturing toward my Father. He put His left hand at the back of my waist to escort me forward.

I was still hugging the robe when we approached the

throne. Jesus indicated that I should hand it to Him, and I did. The Lord held it up, letting it unfold to its full length in all its lustrous beauty. Then He laid it on the sea of glass before our Father.

"The covenant garment has been returned, Father," He said. We both prostrated ourselves before Him.

"I am pleased," my Father said. "Place it in My hands."

We rose. Jesus lifted the garment to our Father's hands of light. God the Father received it, cupping it in both hands as you would a baby chick. His hands became laser bright. I diverted my gaze. When I looked again, the garment had disappeared.

"Thank you," my Father said to me.

Something New

"Now My sister, My bride," Jesus said, stepping between my Father and me. He turned to face me. "Look at Me," He said.

I did. My Father placed His hands of light on Jesus' shoulders. Then Jesus raised His right hand to my forehead. Light shot from His finger as He wrote upon me. It was a strange feeling.

"I write upon you My new name," He said.

"Sealed," said the Holy Spirit, who must have been present all along. I felt a stamped pressure over the area where Jesus had just placed His name.

Now I had two names on my forehead. My Father had placed His name there when He asked me to be His chancellor (secretary to a king).

Jesus smiled at me. "Something new," He said. "Now

you have something new that you will wear forever. You are marked and sealed, My sister, My bride." My Father removed His hands from the Lord's shoulders.

Departure

Jesus took my right hand in His. "I must go," He said. "When I return, I will give you your heart's desire. This, My love, will seal your heart." He continued looking deeply into my eyes. He was so remarkably handsome, so beautiful in holiness, that at times He took my breath away. "Anna, I am coming soon," He said. He kissed my hand and looked into my eyes again. "Soon," He said—then disappeared.

With My Father

There was a pause as my Father allowed me to savor all that the Lord had said to me.

Eventually, God the Father said, "My child, come up here." He picked me up and placed me on the armrest of the throne.

"Anna, who is beloved of My Son," He said, "I would not only feed you from My hand, but also I would feed you from My very heart. Purity and holiness are not words that describe My qualities. They are tangible in the person of My Son. He is not a shadow or a reflection—but My heart manifested."

He continued, "The spirit alone can understand this. For the spirit comes from Me and understands its own. The spirit transcends all boundaries necessitated on Earth. Its knowing is a pure knowing because, as in the giving of all such gifts, pure knowing comes from above."

From His Hand

He held out His hand. "Here, Anna, eat this. Not manna from above, I feed you from My very heart."

His hand of light held in its palm something that looked like—nothing. I could see nothing in His hand. I looked toward His face area, then back to His hand.

Suddenly, the center of His hand burst into flame. The blaze shot up very high, then reduced to a small fire. Then the flame disappeared entirely. In the center of His hand of light were tiny, smoldering nuggets. They were coals or smoldering light (if light could burn).

"Eat from My hand," He said.

I leaned over and ate from His hand. My Father seemed pleased. I wondered why this gave Him such joy.

The Father's Desire

He spoke, "It is My desire to raise up many white eagles, Anna, to raise up a bride who will love My Son more than his or her own soul life. I desire to raise up a priesthood that will be incense in My nostrils, breathed in as a sacrifice and breathed out carrying life to others.

"I am your Father. A father's greatest desire is to have children to whom he can give all. I have such a child in My only begotten Son. But I long to raise up those of My adopted children who will draw near to Me and will not be satisfied with less. When such a one longs to eat from My hand, I am given much joy."

My Father's House

"Anna," He said, "life in this household is a simple life—meals around the family table, concern over family

members, joy over births into the family, the celebration of anniversaries, the sharing of labors side by side. Simple."

I thought of the Lord's words, "Unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." It was as though we needed to reach some saturation point in complexity before we were ready to turn and simply seek Him.

He continued, "The splendor of My majesty lies in the depth of My love."

To Nest Above

"Your feathers are white now, My eagle," He said. "You are ready to nest above."

He waved His hand to allow me to see an ivory palace on a high mountain.

"This is yours, if you want it," He said.

"It is very beautiful, Father," I said slowly, not wishing to seem ungrateful. "But," I smiled wistfully, "I would never be there. I would always be away from home because I would want to be near You. You are my home, Daddy, just as You are my Beloved's home. It has taken me a great deal of time to realize this. But now I know that there is nothing on Earth or in heaven that I desire. I want only my Father. I want Jesus. I want my friend, the Holy Spirit. If I may live where I would be the happiest, allow me to live amid the coals of fire within You. Let me be a pillar in the temple of my God, never to go out again."

My Father gave a small cry of pure joy. "You have chosen," He said.

Aloes

Suddenly, there was a release of the fragrance of aloes. I knew that aloes meant "little tents" (so named for the intimacy of the bridal tent/chamber). I too had chosen intimacy. I had chosen nearness to my God.

I breathed in the fragrance. So did my Father. It was satisfying.

The Crown

My Father continued, "Anna, My child, you will need to borrow your crown for the ceremony. You will wear it for this special occasion. But it will not be placed into your hands until your service on Earth is completed."

A crown of gold came from my heavenly Father. He held it higher than my eye level. The crown had two gems. The large emerald that my Father had given me was in the center. The slightly smaller emerald given to me by Jesus was on the side. There were golden sockets for other jewels. No other gemstones were present at this time, however.

He continued, "I have added to your crown twenty-four sapphires." These immediately appeared, encircling the large emerald on the front.

"Thank You, Daddy," I said. I wondered how I merited these gems.

My Father answered my thoughts. "You cannot earn the uncreated," He said. "But you can grow up [into Christ] to manifest the uncreated. Something borrowed," He added, "something blue."

The Attendants

My Father continued, "Twenty-four stars attend this

crown. They will bring to you the covenant garment, your crown, and your veil. These will dress you and attend you at the ceremony."

I saw that the crown had twenty-four points around the top. I wondered if there was some connection between the points of the crown and the angelic attendants. But He did not give an explanation.

"Is there something that I need to do, Daddy?" I asked.

He answered, "Sleep with henna on the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet as an outward sign [of an inner grace]. My Son is coming," He said. "Be ready."

Twenty-four angels that looked like young women appeared on the sea of glass. They were dressed in white. My Father handed to them the crown, the covenant garment, and the veil. The gown and veil also came from His own person.

"My child," the Father continued, "you have My blessing." His glory came from Him and kissed my forehead.

"Thank You, Daddy," I said.

He picked me up and placed me in front of the twenty-four angels. "Go with your attendants," He said.

We all bowed. Then the angels parted to allow me to pass through their number. They escorted me from the throne room.

Instantly we were walking across the meadow in the Garden of God.

Henna

We walked to the tree of life. I was silent. I did not feel like talking. The angels were silent also. A very important

event lay before me. But I did not know what it was or even how it would look.

Once we reached the trunk of the tree, the attendants busied themselves applying henna paste to the palms of my hands and the soles of my feet. The air hung heavy with the smell of the spice.

I held on to the tree that was strangely warm. I did not watch the angels because I was nervous, distracted.

Wishing to encourage me, one of the angels said, "Henna is the last of the spices." It faintly registered with me that I had been carried through Esther's preparations.

When the statement did break through to my consciousness, I thought, "How right that I should enter the kingdom through the shed blood of Jesus, and now before this important event, an outward sign should be placed upon me." Within myself, I thanked the Lord for forgiving me. Then I continued aloud, "I ask for forgiveness for any sin that I have committed, and I forgive everyone for sins committed against me." I looked at the angels, "It says in the Word to confess your sins to one another." The angels looked bewildered. Then I realized that angels do not confess to one another. I changed the subject. "Does anyone know what I am to do here at the tree of life?"

Rest

"Rest," one angel said. "You have experienced much."

I laughed wearily. "Yes," I affirmed. "But I am very excited and nervous."

"Resting in the tree of life will strengthen you," another added. "We will lift you into its branches," said another. Before I could think about it, they lifted me. They began carrying me upward. It seemed as though the tree

accommodated us, for we struck no branches.

High in the tree, they lay me in a juncture that cradled me. It was very comforting to rest in its branches.

“We will return when you have rested,” an attendant said. “Thank you,” I smiled at them.

They were gone.

I lay there looking up into the branches of the tree, thinking of my Lover, my Friend. The soft lights of the leaves and fruit soothed me. I did not think I could rest. But I did.

Before falling asleep, I lifted my hands to look at them again. I spoke quietly, “O my Beloved, what is going to happen?”

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and

to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Ephesians 5:25-28 NIV



“I betrothed you to Christ

to present you as a pure bride to her one husband.”

2 Corinthians 11:2-3 RSV

Chapter 10

Consecration

Slowly my mind inched toward consciousness. I opened my eyes. Intense balls of light were hovering before my face. Within these lights were the outlines of spirits the size of hummingbirds.

I was too mellow from slumber to be startled. Instead, I was bemused watching them. While I was looking at these spirits, angels below me in the garden began to sing. Amazingly, they were addressing the rocks, hills, trees, and streams of the Garden of God.

Song of the Twenty-four Attendants

O, let us hear you sing of God,
The great Almighty One,
Whose fire of burning holiness
Is seen within His Son.
Come now, ancient hills, proclaim
And streams re-echoing,
And rocks and grass and trees burst forth.
Together let them sing.

His grandeur more than these can tell,
Ancient though they be.
While spanning time as if a day,
He, eternity
But let them sing and let them tell
For they too would proclaim.
They too would clap; they too would dance;
They too would bless His name.
O ancient hills, what do you know?
And trees, what will you sing?
And rocks, what virtues you extol?
And streams, what wisdom bring?
O, let us hear you worship God.
Enlighten through your praise.
Through your instruction, may we too
Behold with steadfast gaze
His splendor borne of purity
His beatific grace.
Passed all created, 'til like you,
We gaze upon His face.

The song ended. I reached up with my right hand toward the spirits within the balls of light. They scattered. I sat up.

"Anna," an angel called to me from beneath the tree. I peered down at her upturned face. It was one of the attendants. "We have come to take you to your consecration."

All twenty-four of the white-clad angels began to rise through the branches. They were standing on the air near the juncture in the tree where I had rested. They were smiling.

"Hello," I smiled back at them, thinking how odd it was that anything could stand on air.

"Hello," they answered, trying to contain their excitement. "Are you ready to go?"

"Yes," I answered. Suddenly my hands went to my face. Realization had rushed in on me. This was the time for which I had been waiting. But waiting for what? And how would it be accomplished? "Yes, I am ready," I reiterated aloud. I did not want to ask questions. I did not want to prattle. This was much too serious and my love for Jesus much too intense.

The angels helped me to rise. For a moment I was standing high in the tree of life with all of its shimmering leaves and fruit around me.

Instantly we were in a temple complex.

The Temple

I received only an overall impression of the temple, for I was intent upon that which lay before me. I saw neither side walls nor ceiling. That I do remember. I wondered where the temple stood, but I did not ask.

The Immersion Pool

The angels escorted me to a sunken pool that contained moving water. The water flowed into the pool from an invisible source beneath the floor and flowed out again just as mysteriously. It was accessed by stairs that extended beneath the water's surface.

The angels led me to the top of these stairs. Then they circled the pool holding above their heads a long sheeting of white linen. This portable curtain extended from their upraised hands to their feet, effectively providing privacy.

"I wonder what this might mean?" I asked within. I

had already been baptized after accepting Christ. “I do not need to show again that I have passed from death into life, do I?”

Before Major Events

Then I remembered that those being consecrated (before embarking upon priestly duties) passed through a washing. “Perhaps,” I thought, “a cleansing precedes all major events in one’s life, whether we know it or not.”

Even though I did not understand completely, I wanted to respond out of obedience to all that I believed the Lord was asking of me. I determined to enter the pool.

As I started to take my first step in faith, my robe disappeared. Carefully I descended the stairs, entering the pool. The water was about chest high.

The cool, clear liquid flowed passed me. It was soothing. I lowered myself completely beneath the water.

The Blessing

When I surfaced, I felt urged to bless the Lord aloud. I said, “Blessed be the Lord God, who cleanses us with the water of the Word.”

“Yes,” I said to myself, absolutely amazed by the revelation given by that act of obedience, that cleansing is continual.

I turned around and ascended the stairs. The angels remained holding the white fabric above their heads. They gathered around me closely. Together we walked toward the large altar of burnt offering. I was still hidden within the linen enclosure—dripping wet.

The Altar of Burnt Offering

The angels circled the bronze altar, holding the linen enclosure above their heads. I looked at the coals burning beneath the grate. They were hot.

Nothing was being offered upon this altar because our Lord was the sacrifice of the whole burnt offering on the cross. I looked at the burning coals. No one said what I should do. "It must be a puzzle whose answer I already know," I said within myself. I began to think. "If Jesus has paid the full price already, then the altar of burnt offering is not something you go around. You must go through it."

As strange as it was to me, I began to walk forward. I passed right through the bronze altar, coals, heat, and all. Incredible!

The Examination

On the other side of the alter my Father's voice spoke audibly within the temple. "Are you willing to live a life of purity, sanctified to Me alone?"

"Yes," I answered aloud, "the Lord being my helper."

"The linen breeches," He said.

Linen breeches appeared. I stepped into them. I supposed that they were a sign of the salvation that had been won for me on Earth. The priests had worn these to cover their nakedness.

Again my Father spoke, "Are you willing to be teachable, tender, pliable—to stand rightly before Me?"

"I will, Christ being these through me," I said.

"The tunic," He said.

A linen tunic dropped over my head from above.

Again my Father spoke aloud, "Are you willing to be made faithful?"

"Yes, Lord," I answered.

"The sash," He said. A sash encircled me.

My Father continued, "Are you willing that the whole head [representing the seer] be for Me alone: the mind of Christ, the sight of Christ, the hearing of Christ, the smelling and the tasting of Christ and the response to touch? Are you willing to be holy unto Me alone, with the covering of My Son upon your head?"

"Yes, Lord," I answered.

"The cap," He said.

The white linen cap enfolded my head.

Anointing oil was poured over my head. It ran down the garment to the hem. Suddenly blood appeared on my right earlobe, right thumb, and right toe. It had to be the blood of Jesus, for His is the only blood in heaven.

The angels dropped the linen enclosure. It disappeared from their hands. The twenty-four attendants indicated that I should move forward. They did not go with me.

As I moved forward, the weight of that which was won by Christ on the altar of the cross came onto my upturned hands. I could see nothing. But I felt this and lifted my hands to wave His sacrifice before the Father.

As I walked toward the entrance to the holy place, I heard the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures begin to sing.

Song of the Heavenly Council

Bring forth the priests unto our God,

He who sits as King.
Loose Your great power o'er the earth,
That Earth like heaven may sing
Holy God, our great delight,
Swallow sin in darkest night.
Begin, for mercy's sake, the fight.
O God, begin the end.
Praise to the King who reigns on high,
Zion above will sing.
We hold before You bowls of prayer;
Their tribute too we bring.
Release the seal that they may stand
Firstfruits here above,
Bloodwashed in the blood of the Lamb,
Gifts of His infinite love.
Our crowns we throw beneath Your feet,
Eternal God of might.
All power, love, and majesty
Are Yours, great God of Light.
Though standing still upon the earth,
Let them live above
To join us in continual praise,
Consumed, at last, by love.
Let them walk 'mid coals of fire;
Hear, great Yah, our prayer.
Let the circle be complete,
O King, beyond compare.
Let them hear and let them speak
To hallow Your great name.
Let Your glory be visibly seen.
Set their hearts aflame.
Release the Lamb to open above
The seal that seals the end,
That righteousness with purest love
Might dwell on Earth again.

Holy God, our great delight,
Swallow sin in darkest night.
Begin, for mercy's sake, the fight.
O God, begin the end.

Their song ended as I crossed the threshold to the holy place. The weight of the wave offering was lifted from my hands.

The Holy Place

As I passed into the holy place, I appropriated that which symbolized Christ there—the light of the golden lampstand, as well as the bread, wine, and frankincense on the table of showbread.

The Altar of incense

I came to the altar of incense before the holy of holies. Because I had passed through the bronze altar, I felt that I must pass through this altar also. It symbolized Christ's ministry of intercession.

As I began to move through the altar, the aromas of the smoking incense clung to me. I continued to move forward, lifting my hands.

The Holy of Holies

I passed the veil, which had been rent at the time of our Lord's death, and entered the holy of holies. The sprinkled blood of Christ's sacrifice was already on the mercy seat. The smoke of His fragrant intercession filled that chamber. The unburned spices of the incense that is most holy to the Lord were also present.

Since Christ had paid the full price to gain our access to the Father, I passed through the ark of the covenant.

Consecration

On the other side of the ark of the covenant, the blood of Christ as well as the holy anointing oil was sprinkled upon me and upon the priestly garments.

My heavenly Father spoke to me again: "You are ordained and consecrated unto Me this day, Anna, a priest forever. There is a time of being shut away, however, before you assume your duties."

The angelic attendants appeared after my Father's admonition.

Dressing for the Ceremony

As my Father had said, the twenty-four attendants brought to me the covenant robe, the veil, and the crown.

The headgear of a priest became internal. The breeches, tunic, and sash remained on me. As the angels prepared to dress me, one attendant said, "You come to this union with nothing but the Son of God's cleansing, His sacrifice, His blood, His aromas, and His anointing."

Suddenly, we heard the blast of a distant shofar. "He comes!" the angels said with much excitement.

The horn blew again.

Quickly they slipped the covenant robe over my head. The garment had the fragrance of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. Mingled with these aromas were those of the spices of the holy anointing oil, of the holy incense, and of the garden. Each aroma was intensified when the embroidered robe was worn. The fragrance was everywhere.

I noticed that the palms of my hands were still stained red from the henna. I supposed that the soles of my feet were still stained also.

The angels placed the borrowed crown of life upon my head. Together they raised the circular, full-length veil. I thought that they would release it to float down upon me. Instead, I realized that my heavenly Father was veiling me by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As it descended, He spoke a blessing over me: "Become thousands of ten thousands, My child."

Suddenly, we heard a shout. Then Jesus called to me from a distance, "Anna!" I turned to look for Him.

"He comes!" the angels said excitedly.

Immediately He burst into view. He was riding the most beautiful white steed I had ever seen. The horse was galloping at top speed. The sight of Jesus knocked the breath out of me. He was wearing white, with a gold crown on His head. He was every inch a king and every inch the desire of all nations.

The Catching Away

Without allowing the horse to break stride, He scooped me up and pulled me onto the horse to sit in front of Him. With His left arm He held me securely to Himself.

The angelic attendants clapped and jumped, spinning around with joy.

The white stallion began to climb, up and up over the terrain of Paradise. He galloped on the wings of the wind. It was glorious!

When we reached the sea of glass, the white horse began his descent. He came to a halt at the back of the throne room. All assembled raised a great shout of joy.

Then cutting through the shout, one lone angel near the throne began to sing:

Blessed is He who comes.
Blessed is He who comes.

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Chapter 11

Ceremony of Formal Betrothal

Jesus dismounted from the white horse. Immediately, He turned to help me dismount. Holding me around the waist, He lowered me onto the sea of glass.

As I passed in front of Him, He breathed in the fragrance released from the covenant robe. He said, "You have made My heart beat faster, My sister, My bride."

For a moment we stood looking at each other. Then both He and the white stallion disappeared.

Angelic Attendants

The twenty-four angelic attendants appeared near me on the sea of glass. They busied themselves preparing me for the ceremony. They smoothed the covenant garment and straightened the veil. As they worked, they smiled up into my face at times to reassure me.

Suddenly I realized that I was facing the entire

assembly of heaven. The collective splendor before me was overwhelming.

The Throne Room

The sea of glass was packed with angels and the redeemed. Angels also filled the atmosphere above. Everyone wore white. There were thousands upon thousands gathered. They shone like icicles on a sunny winter's day. They glistened.

Brighter than them all was the glory of my Father. His piercing white light at the center of the throne radiated out into a rainbow of vibrant colors.

The twenty-four stately elders flanked Him. Angels of His presence stood near the altar of incense before the throne. The four living creatures that are full of eyes were watching. The huge cherubim on either side of the throne peered through the intense light. The seven torches that symbolize the attributes of the Holy Spirit burned even brighter in front of my Father.

Planets and Stars

Amid this breathtaking splendor, images of the planets and stars were passing in review before their Creator. Creation itself was "trooping the colors," paying homage to its King.

Again, the one lone angel sang:

Blessed is He who comes.
Blessed is He who comes.

Canopy of Light

My heavenly Father laced together the fingers of His

hands of light. Slowly He stretched out His arms over the sea of glass. His hands cupped into a dome, a canopy.

Then Jesus, more beautiful than all creation, stepped beneath this canopy. He was dressed in white with a gold crown on his head.

The images of the stars and planets baked in place. The seven flames of fire swung around to circle the canopied area. Now Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were manifested together for the ceremony.

So extraordinarily thrilling was the site that the mighty assembly erupted into praise:

Glory to the Lamb.
Glory to the King.
Glory to the Three in One.
Let exaltations ring!

The Procession

The twenty-four attendants began to move forward by twos. There was awe in their reverence. I remembered the words of Psalm 2:11: "Worship the LORD with reverence, and rejoice with trembling."

The nearer these angels drew to the canopy of my Father's hands, the brighter they shone. I could understand why my Father called them stars. They were like brilliant lamps or torches.

Two of these angels remained with me to help me move forward at the right time. When the other attendants had stationed themselves outside of the seven flames of fire, the angels with me indicated that now I should move toward the canopy.

I swallowed hard.

I began to walk toward Jesus, feeling very small among this stunning assembly. I marveled that the stars and planets would be witnesses to the ceremony also. Then the entire gathering began to sing. As they extolled our God, I lost my nervousness; instead, my heart raced with expectancy.

Exaltation

Brighter than a thousand suns
Is the Son of Righteousness,
Through whom all things were begun,
In whom all things blessed.
Bow before His majesty
Th' created of the sod.
Glory to the One, yet Three,
Glory to our God.
Countless, countless thousands
Bow before His throne.
Countless, countless thousands
Worship God alone.
He created heavens and Earth,
Eternity's vast plan.
By His Word, He brought to birth
Blessings from His hand.
Power hides He in His hand,
Light within His Son.
Unfolding mercies like a span
Hail, great Three in One!

My Earthly Father's House

As I continued forward, I saw many whom I knew within the crowd. Some were relatives who had died in years past. My earthly father was among them. But my eyes

and attention were upon Him to whom I was going. I thought of Psalm 45:10—11: "Forget your people and your father's house; then the King will desire your beauty." I did feel that I was being transferred from my earthly father's house to the abode of my Husband.

Also among those gathered were the angels assigned to me. Some I knew. Some I did not know. But I could tell that these were angels assigned to help me because they were smiling broadly.

My Father's House

As I neared the little house of light created by my Father's hands, I wanted to share my consent. I wanted to say, "Yes, yes, I agree," to all three members of the Trinity. I felt as light as a wisp of air. I was a cornucopia of joy.

Jesus smiled at me as I passed one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit stationed around the perimeter of my Father's canopy.

My Assent

As I stepped beneath the canopy, I could contain my joy no longer. I began to walk through an acceptance. The movements were like a stately dance.

I circled Jesus three times, one encircling for each member of the Trinity. As I weaved gently between the mighty torches of the Holy Spirit, I overflowed with love for all Three.

Like Rebekah, I wanted to say, "I will go with this Man." I began to sing a new song.

Song of the Bride

Hear, Thou great Redeemer blessed,
Deep within my heart find rest;
You who birthed me from Your side,
Then called me forth to be Your bride.
I exult in You alone,
And take Your heart to be my home.
Lover, Friend, Redeemer, Son,
Eternal Husband, make us one.

A Private Moment

When the third circuit had been completed, I took my place at the right of Jesus. I had publicly given my consent before a multitude of witnesses.

He looked deeply into my eyes and spoke privately to me:

Set Me as a seal upon your heart,
As a signet ring upon your finger.

Under His Covering

Gently a tallith settled over our heads. Jesus spoke again, this time in a manner that would bear public witness to all:

I betroth you to Me forever.
I betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,
In loving-kindness and in compassion,
I betroth you to Me in faithfulness—and you will know God.

A Ring More Precious than Gold

Then lifting my veil slightly, He took my right hand

into both of His. He held my right index finger encased within His right hand as He spoke:

Behold, you are consecrated to Me.

A golden light encompassed my right index finger. From my finger the light spread over my whole being.

My Father's hands of light became a brilliant cocoon. Besides Jesus, the only other one I could see was the Holy Spirit manifested in flaming towers. The light became more and more intense. I saw two white eagles cart wheeling.

Mahanaim

Then slowly, as in a ritual dance of birds, I felt suspended within the dazzling light and fire. It was as though Jesus and I began a stylized, courtship dance. I felt that I was vapor that could be inhaled, vapor that could be carried into fire and light.

This was light that could be breathed. It was light that was alive. It went through me as if I was not there at all. I became one with the light—in a dance with it. It was as though within the light and fire, I too became light and fire.

We were vaporous—blending, circling, homogenized yet distinct, fused but separate. The two became entirely one, then separate again.

Although this dance began slowly, it accelerated to a lightning speed. The dance was lightning—lightning, fire, and light, glorious in the extreme.

Lullaby to Creation

Then, as if in some suspended silence, I began to hear my Father sing. It was creative sound, a lullaby from the heart of Him who sings to His creation, from Him who holds

all things together by the word of His power.

He had given the universe its sounds so that all might sing back to Him. In this rare, suspended silence, I could hear that singular sound released from all creation. From deep within Himself, our God, like a father rocking his child, sang lovingly to His universe.

I sensed the perfect unity within the Godhead, their harmony. By being brought into the Godhead, I began to experience their unity. I shared in their oneness. Jesus was giving me the desires of my heart. As He had sworn, in greater measure I began to "know God."

Return to the Ceremony

From this suspended place, I became conscious again of the ceremony. My Father's canopied hands, the seven torches of fire, Jesus, the attendants, the angels, and the redeemed all came back into focus. I was once again under the canopy with Jesus.

A jubilant shout came from those assembled. Together they proclaimed:

Consecrated!

Celebration

The throne room erupted into celebration. Dancers began careening past us, reaching out to wish us well. Jesus touched hand after hand. I was smiling but somewhat dazed.

Jesus looked over at me.

Then speaking with affection to those who were reaching toward us, He said, "Please excuse us."

Smiling, He took my hand and said, "Come."

Chapter 12

The Spirit and the Bride

Instantly Jesus and I were walking on a path in Paradise.

"I was a little overwhelmed," I sighed wistfully. Then, rallying with unexpected speed, I smiled, "People come and go so quickly here."

Jesus laughed. He put His arm around my waist. "I wanted to be with you privately before your return," He said. "They will understand."

"I want to be with You, too," I said. His answer made me feel very loved. I leaned my head on His shoulder.

Separated Unto Christ

I noticed that the covenant robe and the golden crown I had worn were gone. Again I was wearing the plain, white robe. Although I could barely see the veil, it remained. It was more of an indication than a noticeable presence. I felt that it was a sign of being separated unto Christ. I supposed that I would be seen after we were fully married.

The Rose of Sharon

The path we were walking topped a hill. From there, other hills lay before us. Each was covered with the rose of Sharon. The rolling terrain was a vivid red.

We walked in silence. I could sense that something was on His heart.

Sharing His Heart

"Anna," He said finally, "divisions are coming." He looked out over the hills. "For those who embrace the fear of the Lord and follow His precepts, His golden goodness will pour upon them.

"But for those who do not embrace the fear of the Lord," He continued "who scorn His precepts and His ways, that which they already have will be taken from them. God is not mocked, Anna, and the ways of the flesh are not condoned."

The Sunshine of His Face

He continued, "But the sunshine of His face will shine upon the righteous. He will set the captives free. He will nurture them with loving-kindness, and they will eat the fat of the land. For He is a Father who has mercy upon His children, and He will not hide His eyes from their distress.

"He is from everlasting to everlasting, My love, and His goodness stretches as far as His never-ending presence."

Fellowship With God

"For those who embrace His precepts," He continued, "He will open every door to His storehouses. No good thing will He withhold. They will swim; they will float on the fat of

the land. They will stride from mountaintop to mountaintop measuring off their inheritance and celebrating His ever-present nearness."

He continued, "He will take these aloft. They will sit with His Son and sup with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He will bring together those who fear His name, and they will have fellowship in Him."

The Unrepentant

"Those who are swindlers and liars also will find each other," He said, "and their fellowship will be with their father.

"Those who love themselves more than they fear the Lord will have their old nature as their companion. Fretting and self-righteousness will be their reward. They will face closed doors to God's glory at every turn. Grace will slam its door in their faces. The wall between them and God's goodness will be too high to climb, and they will spend their days searching for God as a blind man gropes in a foreign land."

A Canopy of Glory

He continued, "But for those who hold to His ways and fear His name, a canopy of goodness will be their shelter; a canopy of glory will be their home. Not even a toe will poke its way from beneath the mercy and loving kindness of the Lord."

He tilted His head back as if to proclaim over the hills.

Proclamation

"Rejoice, O righteous ones, your God is coming down to you. You will walk with Him as at the dawn of creation,

and He will share with you as a man shares with his dearest friend. He will reveal mysteries to you and fling open the portals of heaven, allowing you to walk among the stars. From forever to forever, He is. From forever to forever, His goodness will be savored by those who love the Lord. Rejoice, you people of God. He is coming down to you, the light of His glory shining from His face, and you too will share His goodness with others to the glory of His name."

He continued, "Prepare, for He comes, and all eyes will see Him in you [His people], and you will be hidden, enfolded in the wings of His love—never to come out again. Let the righteous rejoice!"

Living Above

He turned to me, "As for you, Anna, you have begun to live above. You will no longer call Earth your home. When each day ends, you will return to your Father's house. There you will rest.

"We will be together, My love. We will go into the fields that are white for harvest and into the vineyards to inspect the vines." His hand reached out to me. "My beautiful bride, My chosen one," He said.

I took His hand, kissed it, and held it to my cheek.

He continued, "There is much to see, know, and understand. You have only begun, Anna. We will go higher, My love, ever higher.

"Right now," He said, "your work on Earth awaits." He bent down and gathered an armful of the rose of Sharon. "For you, My bride," placing them into my left arm.

"Thank You," I whispered, pressing the flowers to me.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit appeared on the path. He was turning gently, as an upward spiral of smoke might rise.

"The Holy Spirit has come to escort you, My love," He said. "Are you ready to return?"

"I am ready," I said to Jesus. I still was holding His hand. Reluctantly, I released it.

However, He held on to my hand. Looking deeply into my eyes, He said, "You have ravished My heart, My sister, My bride. You have ravished My heart." Both of our eyes filled with tears. He released my hand. I took a step backward to show that I was ready to leave.

The circling wind of the Holy Spirit enveloped me. Instinctively, I closed my eyes. Through the whirling sound, I heard Jesus call, "You are My beloved!"

I responded, "And You are my Friend!" I was choking back tears.

The Holy Spirit picked me up. Suddenly, He went "swish" down through the turf of Paradise. I did not want to look.

On Earth

When I opened my eyes, I was standing in the living room of our apartment in Florida. The flowers were gone. But the hope chests were piled up to, and then through, the ceiling as before.

The Holy Spirit swirled around me. His whirlwind left circles of supernatural fire on the floor. I held out my hands to feel the tiny, brilliant lights that whirled within the funnel. They tickled like sparks from sparklers.

"Oh, my Friend," I said to the Holy Spirit, "we will work together, will we not?" The light within the funnel brightened immensely in response. "I already miss Him," I confided. I reflected a moment. "It says that the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" He joined me in saying, "Come [to Christ]."

This seemed to please Him greatly. The sparklers plumed into a fiery whirlwind of God. He began to ascend through the ceiling. As He rose, He burned through the roof, opening the entire apartment to heaven.

I watched Him rise. He was spectacular. I thought of the children of Israel and the pillar of fire by night.

Then I realized that the Holy Spirit had left behind Him flames of fire on my head and on both of my shoulders. They formed a canopy. Jesus had spoken of a covering of goodness and of glory. Was this canopy of fire an anointing that would rest upon those who fear the Lord? Had the time come for His bride to call Him down? As the heavenly council had prayed, was it time for the Lord to begin the end?

I exploded with hope and joyous anticipation. Looking into the open heavens, I affirmed:

Declaration

The weight of glory of our God
Rests upon His head.
And keys of the greater David
Are on His shoulders spread.
Fire is burning up above
And fire on either side.
Beneath this canopy of Love
His presence does abide.

Call of the Bride

Come down, our glorious Majesty!
Come down, our righteous King!
Descend in holy fire once more
With hosts past numbering.
I raised my arms toward the open heavens
And with great yearning, called again:
Come down, our glorious Majesty!
Come down, our righteous King!
Descend in holy fire once more
With hosts past numbering!
“Come, Lord Jesus.”

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Spices for the Bride's Preparation



Below are a list of spices and their descriptions used in the preparation of the bride. There is also an extensive notes section in the printed book for each chapter, but it is not included here. Esther's preparations

Myrrh: Obedience Unto Death

The spice myrrh comes from a thick gum that flows from the pierced bark of a knotted, thorny tree. The gum hardens into red drops called "tears."The word myrrh comes from a primary root in Hebrew meaning "bitter suffering." It represents the bitter sufferings of Jesus as a man on Earth.

The Greek word denotes a spice used in burial. In the New Testament, the Magi brought gifts to the Christ child, including myrrh, a foreshadowing of His suffering and bitter death on the cross (Matt. 2:11).

The original sense of the word is that of "distilling in

drops"–a slow process of purification. Christ lived a life of distillation, for "although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Jesus emptied Himself of His own will, and this culminated in obedience to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:7–8). Likewise, each child of God is called to smell of the myrrh of distillation day after day by denying his or her own self life and walking in obedience to the will of Christ alone (Matt. 16:24–25; 6:10).

Cinnamon: Holiness of Heart

The primary root of the word cinnamon means "emitting an odor."The spice is harvested in quills of the fragrant, inner bark of a tree of the laurel family.

In the Song of Solomon, cinnamon grows in the locked garden that Jesus says is "my sister, my bride" (Song of Sol. 4:12–14). The new heart of each believer is a garden with fragrant spices–a heart enclosed and set apart for the Lord Jesus alone–as the heart of Jesus is undivided in His consecration unto the Father alone (2 Chron. 16:9; Luke 10:22).

In Proverbs 7:10, the adulterous woman, "dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart, has sprinkled her bed with fragrant spices that also include cinnamon (Prov. 7:17), a counterfeit of the heart of the bride. She flings her heart open to embrace every sort of spiritual adultery.

In both instances, cinnamon emits an odor: either of consecration in holiness unto the Lord (Lev. 8:12), which is sweet in the nostrils of God, or the corrupted odor of deception and seduction (Prov. 7:17–19), which is a stench to Him.

Cinnamon is one of the spices in the holy anointing oil

that was used to set apart people and things as holy for God's use alone (Exod. 30:23–25, 30). Jesus and those in Him are priests who are "holy to the LORD" (Exod. 28:36).

Cassia: Homage to God Alone

Cassia is also from the laurel family, smelling and tasting somewhat like cinnamon but considered inferior to it, a humbler plant. God exalts this lowly tree to provide one of the four spices used in the holy anointing oil (Exod. 30:23–25). Its name, representative of its properties, comes from a root word meaning "to bow down," "to stoop," "to pay homage," depicting the humility of Christ before His Father. Jesus said, "I honor My Father…I do not seek My glory" (John 8:49–50). Although as believers we are to show ourselves humble before others (1 Pet. 2:17; 5:5), we are to bow down in worship to God alone (2 Kings 17:35–36; Matt. 4:10).

The word homage means "to show a reverential fidelity and respect" (Exod. 34:8). We, like Jesus, are to reverence our Father with holy fear and veneration, treating Him as sacred in the sight of others (Num. 20:10–12; Ezek. 36:22–23) and in the depths of our hearts (1 Pet. 3:15).

Calamus: Uprightness

Calamus is a fragrant oil derived from a marsh plant known as sweet flag. The Hebrew word for this spice means "a stalk or a reed (as erect)," or upright. We see a biblical meaning of upright in the first instance of that Hebrew word in Scripture, being translated "right in [God's] sight" (Exod. 15:26). God's poetic name for His people Israel was "Jeshurun," a word meaning "upright one" (Isa. 44:2). In His Father's eyes the Lord Jesus was upright in Himself (Ps. 25:8), in His words (Ps. 33:4), and in His ways (Isa. 11:4).

The second biblical meaning of upright includes also that of being smooth and straight, that is, without deviation, a true and direct course. Everything about Jesus Christ is in true alignment with who the Father is. There is no obstruction or unevenness in Him to hinder the clear revelation of God (John 5:30; 14:9). Christians, like John the Baptist, are to "make straight the way of the Lord" (John 1:23), so that God's Son may be seen and heard through them without any obstacle of their "flesh" (Rom. 7:25; Gal. 6:8). Isaiah cried, "O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level" (Isa. 26:7), so that their walk is straight toward God. Christ alone is upright or righteous in the Father's eyes, and we in Him (2 Cor. 5:2 1; Rom. 10:3–4).

Henna: Forgiveness

Henna, translated "camphire" in the King James Version, comes from a tree whose leaves yield a stain used as a red dye. The Hebrew word means "to cover, a redemption price, a ransom." The primary root of the word means "to forgive" (Song of Sol. 4:13; Isa. 43:3). Therefore this fragrant spice signifies the shed blood of Christ on Calvary as our ransom from sin and death (1 Tim. 2:6).

In the Middle East on the night before a wedding, the bride has henna paste bound to the palms of her hands and soles of her feet. In Christian symbolism her hands (works) and feet (walk) are to exude the sweet smell of forgiveness and show forth the red stain of His shed blood on the cross. Christ calls His bride to walk continually cleansed through the forgiveness won for her by her Bridegroom (1 John 1:9) and to pass that forgiveness on to others (Mart. 6:14–15).

Aloes: Intimacy

The word aloes is from an Arabic word meaning "little tents," descriptive of the three-cornered shape of the capsules of the lignaloes tree whose resin is fragrant.

The small, pointed tent is the type spoken of in 2 Samuel 16:22, meaning a "pleasure tent on the housetop" or a "bridal tent": a place of intimacy. Outside the camp Moses pitched a private tent of meeting where God spoke to him face to face (Exod. 33:7, 9, 11). David also erected such a tent on Mount Zion for the ark of the covenant, where he could be as close as possible to the presence of the Lord (2 Sam. 6:17).Jesus has perfect intimacy with His Father, an intimacy for which the Holy Spirit is preparing us and into which we are being perfected:"As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thou, that they also may be in Us" (John 17:21, 23). Our constant heart's cry should be to go with Him into the intimacy of the bridal tent that He might know us and we Him (John 10:14–15). Only through intimacy in spirit with Jesus do we bring forth spiritual children for His kingdom (1 John 1:3; Gal. 4:19; 1 Cor. 4:15).

Nard: Light

Pure nard is a very costly and precious spice (John 12:3). It is produced from the hairy dried stems of a plant grown at heights up to thirteen thousand feet in the Himalayas in the purer, stronger light of the sun. The word nard (spikenard in the King James Version) is from the Hebrew root meaning "light."

God's reality in heaven is visible by the pure, uncreated light of His nature. He is light, and there is no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5). His Son, Christ Jesus, is the true light from the Father (John 1:9)–the reality of God made visible in a human being (John 1:14). There is no

darkness of sin in Him, for He walks in the light of His Father (John 8:29; 1 John 1:7).

Christians are to become partakers of the divine nature and manifest the light of Christ (2 Pet. 1:4; Matt. 5:16), living their lives before God and man truthfully, being the same person outwardly as they are within their hearts. We are to be the transparent lamps through which the heavenly light of Christ shines (Rom. 13:12). As bearers of His light, we are to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He takes His stand against all darkness within us (Eph. 5:8). Eventually even our shadows are to be so infused with the light of God that as we pass, the sick are healed (Acts 5:15).

Saffron: Faith

Saffron is a very expensive spice. It is collected from the three tiny, orange–red stigmas of the flowers of the crocus sativus. About two hundred twenty-five thousand of these stigmas must be picked out by hand to produce one pound of saffron. This extremely valuable spice is yellow-gold in color when dried, and it is literally worth its weight in gold. Medicinally it strengthens the heart. For these reasons, saffron is symbolic of the faith Jesus Christ held in His heart toward His heavenly Father (Heb. 2:13). His faith in His Father's words to Him was tested and perfected (Heb. 12:2) throughout His ministry years on Earth, beginning with the first temptation in the wilderness (Mart. 4:3–4).

The Son imparts His faith to His disciples, and it is by grace through faith we are saved (Eph. 2:8). By faith we live (Hab. 2:4), and it is perfected faith that Christ is seeking when He returns. "However, when the Son of man comes, will He find (persistence in) the faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8, AMP). Therefore we rejoice in trials so "that the proof of [our] faith, being more precious than gold which is

perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1:7).

Frankincense: Purity

Frankincense is a gum resin that flows from the inner wood of a tree resembling the mountain ash. The word in Hebrew comes from a root meaning "pure" or "white" because of the glittering, milk-white, resin "tears." These tears, when burned, give off a strong, balsam odor. The finest incense contains pure frankincense, rising in white smoke to symbolize the prayers that ascend to the throne of God (Rev. 8:3–4). Frankincense was part of the holy incense used in the desert tabernacle (Exod. 30:34–35). It represents the purity of the consecration of the resurrected Christ in His ministry on our behalf before the Father (Rom. 8:34). Our Lord Jesus has sanctified or set Himself apart (John 17:19) unto the Father as the "holy, innocent, undefiled" high priest (Heb. 7:25–26) in order to "redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession" (Titus 2:14).

When Christ appears in glory, "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2–3).

Onycha: Authority

The Hebrew word for the rockrose, onycha, comes from the root meaning "to roar" or "a lion." The resurrected Lord is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who has been given all authority in heaven and on Earth (Rev 5:5; Matt. 28:18), with power "to subject all things to Himself" (Phil. 3:21). The Father's authority through Christ is symbolized in the

roar of the lion in Hosea 11:10–11: "They will follow behind Yahweh; He will be roaring like a lion–how he will roar!...and his sons will come speeding from Egypt like a bird, speeding from the land of Assyria like a dove" (JB).

The smell emitted by onycha in the holy incense not only testifies to Christ's authority, His lordship here on earth, but as it rises through the mid-heaven, daily it reminds Satan that he is a defeated foe. Christians share in Christ's authority "to tread upon... all the power of the enemy" in His name (Luke 10:19).

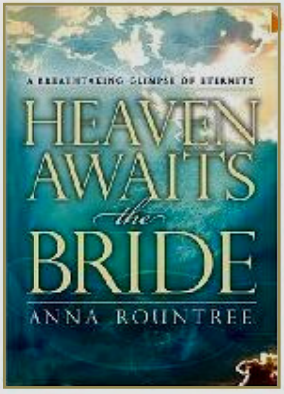
Galbanum: Worship, Praise, Adoration, and Thanksgiving

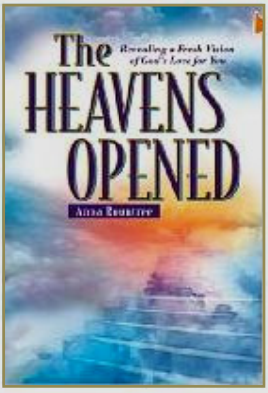
The Hebrew for the word galbanum is from a primary root meaning "fat" or "the richest or choicest part" or "the best." The spice is a gum resin collected by slicing the stems of the plants of the ferula family. Fat was one of the two parts of the animal sacrifice that was entirely reserved for God (Gen. 4:4; Lev. 3:16–17). It signified the finest offering that could be given to Him, that which was beyond all else in pleasing Him: joyful worship "in spirit and truth" (Deut. 28:47; John 4:23) and joyful praise and thanksgiving to honor the Father by His Son and by His disciples (Ps. 50:23; Heb. 2:12; 13:15).

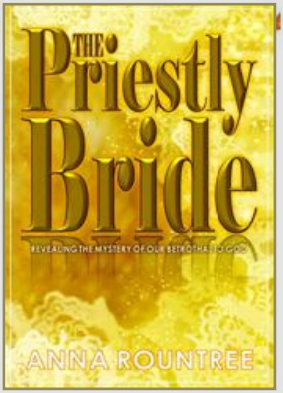
Satan promised "the kingdoms of the world and their glory" to Christ in exchange for His worship (Matt. 4:8–9). The enemy drives unbelievers to seek "the fat" of this age–to receive praise, worship, gratitude, and adoration for themselves (John 5:44). In direct opposition to the Word of God (Isa. 42:8), many in the body of Christ are spiritually overweight from taking to themselves that which belongs to God alone: the fat.

Stacte: Truth With Mercy

Stacte is from the root meaning "to fall in drops" gently or "to prophesy" words from God. Since "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10), the holy incense (of which this spice is a part {Exod. 30:34–35]) prophesied of Christ to God, but it also struck terror into those who were enemies of Christ (Josh. 2:9–11). The aroma of the incense rising from the tabernacle ascended to the throne in heaven and went throughout the camp. It also could be smelled for miles, even across the Jordan by the Canaanites (2 Cor. 2:15–16). It testified to the truth of salvation in Christ alone (John 14:6), for our Father wishes all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3–4). The truth of Christ, of which stacte prophesied, "fell in drops" or softly, mercifully. Proverbs 16:6 says, "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (KJV). Rahab the harlot must have been among those who smelled this prophetic testimony of Jesus–the Way, the Truth, and the Life–and who feared God and believed into the salvation He provided (Josh. 2:11–13).









"Anna" is a husband-and-wife team. After graduation from seminary at Yale University, Albert Rountree spent most of his adult life in the pastoral ministry with his wife, Ann. Following their retirement, they moved to a large metropolitan area to help bring pastors from many denominations and diverse ethnic backgrounds together for monthly prayer and daily gatherings. They now live a quiet life apart with the Lord in a mountain cabin.

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