



found

book #8 in
the vampire journals

morgan rice

The Vampire Journals

Морган Райс

Found

«Lukeman Literary Management Ltd»

2012

Райс М.

Found / М. Райс — «Lukeman Literary Management Ltd»,
2012 — (The Vampire Journals)

In FOUND (Book #8 of the Vampire Journals), Caitlin and Caleb awake in ancient Israel, in the year 33 A.D., and are amazed to find themselves in the time of Christ. Ancient Israel is a place of holy sites, of ancient synagogues, of lost relics. It is the most spiritually charged place in the universe – and in 33 A.D., the year of Christ's crucifixion, it is the most spiritually charged time. In the heart of its capitol, Jerusalem, lies the Holy Temple of Solomon, inside of which sits the Holy of Holies and the Ark of God. And in these streets, Christ will take his final steps to be crucified. Jerusalem teems with people of all religious backgrounds and faiths, under the watchful eye of Roman soldiers, and their Prefect, Pontius Pilate. The city also has a dark side, with its labyrinthian streets and maze of alleyways leading to hidden secrets and Pagan temples. Caitlin now, finally, has all four keys, but still, she must find her father. Her search takes her to Nazareth, to Capernaum, to Jerusalem, following a mystical trail of secrets and clues in the footsteps of Christ. It also takes her to the ancient Mount of Olives, to Aiden and his coven, and to more powerful secrets and relics than she's ever known. At every turn, her father is just a step away. But time is of the essence: Sam, turned to the dark side, has landed back in this time, too, and as he unites with Rexius, leader of the evil coven, they race to beat Caitlin to the Shield. Rexius will stop at nothing to destroy Caitlin and Caleb, and with Sam on his side, and a new army behind him, the odds are in his favor. Making matters worse, Scarlet arrives back in time alone, separated from her parents. She roams the streets of Jerusalem on her own, with Ruth, and as she begins to discover her own powers, she also finds herself in graver danger than she's ever been. Especially when she discovers that she is holding a great secret, too. Does Caitlin find her father? Does she find the ancient vampire shield? Does she reunite with her daughter? Does her own brother try to kill her? And will her love with Caleb survive this final trip back in time?

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Morgan Rice

Found

(Book #8 in the Vampire Journals)

*"I will kiss thy lips;
Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,
To make die with a restorative.
O happy dagger!"*

– William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

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Acclaim for the Vampire Journals

"Rice does a great job of pulling you into the story from the beginning, utilizing a great descriptive quality that transcends the mere painting of the setting... Nicely written and an extremely fast read."

– *Black Lagoon Reviews* (regarding *Turned*)

"An ideal story for young readers. Morgan Rice did a good job spinning an interesting twist... Refreshing and unique. The series focuses around one girl... one extraordinary girl!.. Easy to read but extremely fast-paced... Rated PG."

– *The Romance Reviews* (regarding *Turned*)

"Grabbed my attention from the beginning and did not let go... This story is an amazing adventure that is fast paced and action packed from the very beginning. There is not a dull moment to be found."

– *Paranormal Romance Guild* (regarding *Turned*)

"Jam packed with action, romance, adventure, and suspense. Get your hands on this one and fall in love all over again."

– *vampirebooksite.com* (regarding *Turned*)

“A great plot, and this especially was the kind of book you will have trouble putting down at night. The ending was a cliffhanger that was so spectacular that you will immediately want to buy the next book, just to see what happens.”

– *The Dallas Examiner* (regarding *Loved*)

“A book to rival TWILIGHT and VAMPIRE DIARIES, and one that will have you wanting to keep reading until the very last page! If you are into adventure, love and vampires this book is the one for you!”

– *Vampirebooksite.com* (regarding *Turned*)

“Morgan Rice proves herself again to be an extremely talented storyteller... This would appeal to a wide range of audiences, including younger fans of the vampire/fantasy genre. It ended with an unexpected cliffhanger that leaves you shocked.”

– *The Romance Reviews* (regarding *Loved*)

About Morgan Rice

Morgan Rice is the #1 bestselling author of THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS, a young adult series comprising eleven books (and counting); the #1 bestselling series THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY, a post-apocalyptic thriller comprising two books (and counting); and the #1 bestselling epic fantasy series THE SORCERER'S RING, comprising thirteen books (and counting).

Morgan's books are available in audio and print editions, and translations of the books are available in German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portugese, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Dutch, Turkish, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak (with more languages forthcoming).

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THE SORCERER'S RING



THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY



the vampire journals





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FACT:

Although the exact date of Jesus' death remains unknown, he is widely believed to have died on April 3, 33 A.D.

FACT:

The synagogue in Capernaum (Israel), one of the oldest in the world, is one of the few places that remain where Jesus taught. It is also where he healed a man "who had the spirit of an unclean devil."

FACT:

The current Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, one of the most sacred churches in the world, was built on the spot of Jesus' crucifixion, and on the supposed spot of his resurrection. But before this church was built, for the first 300 years after his crucifixion, paradoxically, this spot was occupied by a Pagan Temple.

FACT:

After the Last Supper, Jesus was betrayed by Judas in the ancient garden of Gethsemane.

FACT:

Both Judaism and Christianity hold that there will be an apocalypse, an end of days, during which a Messiah will come, and during which those who have died will be resurrected. Judaism holds that when the Messiah comes, the first to be resurrected will be those buried on the Mount of Olives.

Chapter One

Nazareth, Israel
(April, 33 A.D.)

Caitlin's mind raced with fast, troubled dreams. She saw her best friend, Polly, fall off a cliff, reaching out and trying to grab hold of her, but just missing her hand. She saw her brother Sam, run from her, through an endless field; she chased after him, but no matter how fast she ran, she couldn't catch him. She saw Kyle and Rynd slaughter her coven members before her eyes, chopping them into pieces, the blood spraying over her. This blood morphed into a blood-red sunset, which hung over her wedding ceremony to Caleb. Except in this wedding, they were the only two people there, the last ones left in the world, standing at the edge of a cliff against a blood-red sky.

And then she saw her daughter, Scarlet, sitting in a small wooden boat, alone on a vast sea, drifting in turbulent waters. Scarlet held up the four keys that Caitlin needed to find her father. But as she watched, Scarlet reached up and dropped them into the water.

"Scarlet!" Caitlin tried to scream.

But no sound came, and as she watched, Scarlet drifted further and further away from her, into the ocean, into the huge storm clouds gathering on the horizon.

"SCARLET!"

Caitlin Paine woke screaming. She sat up, breathing hard, and looked all around her, trying to get her bearings. It was dark in here, the only light source from a small opening, about twenty yards away. It looked like she was in a tunnel. Or maybe a cave.

Caitlin felt something hard beneath her and looked down to realize she was lying on a dirt floor, on small rocks. It was hot in here, dusty. Wherever she was, this was not Scottish weather. It felt hot, dry – as if she were in a desert.

Caitlin sat there, rubbing her head, squinting into the darkness, trying to remember, to distinguish between dreams and reality. Her dreams were so vivid, and her reality so surreal, it was becoming increasingly hard to tell the difference.

As she slowly caught her breath, shaking off the horrific visions, she began to realize that she was back. Alive somewhere. In some new place and time. She felt the layers of dirt on her skin, in her hair, her eyes, and felt like she needed to bathe. It was so hot in here, it was hard to breathe.

Caitlin felt a familiar bulge in her pocket, and rolled over and saw with relief that her journal had made it. She immediately checked her other pocket and felt the four keys, then reached up and felt her necklace. It had all made it. She was flooded with relief.

Then she remembered. Caitlin immediately spun around, looking to see if Caleb and Scarlet had made it back with her.

She made out a shape lying in the darkness, unmoving, and at first she wondered if it was an animal. But as her eyes adjusted, she realized it took the shape of a human form. She got up slowly, her body aching, stiff from lying on the rocks, and began to approach.

She walked across the cave, knelt down, and gently pushed the shoulder of the large form. She already sensed who it was: she didn't need for him to turn over to know. She could feel it from across the cave. It was, she knew with relief, her one and only love. Her husband. Caleb.

As he rolled over onto his back, she prayed he'd made it back in good health. That he remembered her.

Please, she thought. Please. Just one last time. Let Caleb survive the trip.

As Caleb turned over, she was relieved to see that his features were intact. She did not see any signs of injury. As she looked closely, she was even more relieved to see him breathing, the slow rhythms of his chest rising and falling – and then, to see his eyelids twitch.

She let out a huge sigh of relief as his eyes fluttered open.

“Caitlin?” he asked.

Caitlin burst into tears. Her heart soared, as she leaned over and hugged him. They’d made it back together. He was alive. That was all she needed. She wouldn’t ask for anything more from the world.

He embraced her back, and she held him for a long time, feeling his rippling muscles. She was flooded with relief. She loved him more than she could possibly say. They had come back so many times and places together, had seen so much together, the highs and lows, had suffered so much and had celebrated, too. She thought of all the times they almost lost each other, the time he didn’t remember her, his being poisoned... The obstacles in their relationship seemed to never end.

And now, finally, they had made it. They were together again, for the final trip back. *Did that mean they would be together forever?* she wondered. She hoped so, with every fiber of her being. No more trips back. This time, they were together for good.

Caleb looked older as he looked back at her. She stared into his glowing, brown eyes and could feel the love pouring through him. She knew he was thinking the same thing she was.

As she looked into his eyes, all the memories came flooding back. She thought of their last trip, of Scotland. It all came rushing back like a horrible dream. At first, it was so beautiful. The castle, seeing all her friends. The wedding. *My God, the wedding.* It was the most beautiful thing she could have ever hoped for. She looked down and checked her finger, and saw the ring. It was still there. The ring had made it back. This token of their love had survived. She could hardly believe it. She was really married. And to him. She took it as a sign: if the ring could make it back in time, through all this, if the ring could survive, then so could their love.

The sight of the ring on her finger really sank in. Caitlin paused and felt what it felt like to be a married woman. It felt different. More solid, more permanent. She had always loved Caleb, and she had sensed that he loved her, too. She had always felt that their union was forever. But now that it was official, she felt different. She felt that they were both truly one.

Caitlin then thought back and remembered what happened after the wedding: their having to leave Scarlet, and Sam, and Polly. Finding Scarlet in the ocean, seeing Aiden, hearing the awful news. Polly, her best friend, dead. Sam, her only brother, gone to her forever, turned to the dark side. Her fellow coven members slaughtered. It was almost too much for her to bear. She couldn’t imagine the horror, or a life without Sam in it – or Polly.

With a jolt, her thoughts turned to Scarlet. Suddenly panic-stricken, she pulled back from Caleb, searching the cave, wondering if she made it back, too.

Caleb must have been thinking the same thing at the same time, because his eyes opened wide.

“Where’s Scarlet?” he asked, reading her mind, as always.

Caitlin turned and ran to every corner of the cave, searching the dark crevices, looking for any outline, any shape, any sign of Scarlet. But there was none. She searched frantically, crisscrossing the cave with Caleb, canvassing every inch of it.

But Scarlet was not here. She was simply not here.

Caitlin’s heart sank. How could it be? How was it possible that she and Caleb made the trip back, but that Scarlet did not? Could destiny be that cruel?

Caitlin turned and ran for the sunlight, for the exit of the cave. She had to go outside, to see what was out there, to see if there was any sign of Scarlet. Caleb ran beside her, and the two of them ran to the lip of the cave, out into the sun, and stood at its entrance.

Caitlin stopped short, and just in time: a small platform jutted out from the cave, then fell off, straight down a steep mountain face. Caleb stopped short beside her. There they were, standing on a narrow ledge, looking down. Somehow, Caitlin realized, they’d landed back inside a mountain cave, hundreds of feet high. There was no way up or down. And if they took one more step, they would plummet hundreds of feet below.

Spread out below them was an enormous valley, stretching to the horizon as far as the eye could see. It was a rural, desert landscape, dotted with rocky outcroppings and the occasional palm tree. In the distance were rolling hills, and directly beneath them was a village, comprised of stone houses and dirt streets. It was even hotter here in the sun, unbearably bright and hot. Caitlin was beginning to realize that they were in a very different place and climate than Scotland. And judging from how rudimentary that village looked, they were in a very different time, too.

Interspersed between all the dirt and sand and rock were signs of agriculture, occasional patches of green. Some of these were covered with vineyards, growing in neat rows down the steep slopes, and among these were trees Caitlin could not recognize: small, ancient-looking trees with twisted branches and silver leaves that shimmered in the sun.

“Olive trees,” Caleb said, reading her mind again.

Olive trees? Caitlin wondered. *Where on earth are we?*

She looked over at Caleb, sensing he might recognize the place and time. She saw his eyes open wide, and knew that he did – and that he was surprised. He stared out at the vista as if it were a long-lost friend.

“Where are we?” she asked, almost afraid to know.

Caleb surveyed the valley before them, then finally, he turned and looked at her.

Softly, he said: “Nazareth.”

He paused, taking it all in.

“Judging from that village, we’re in the first century,” he said, turning and looking at her in awe, his eyes alight with excitement. “In fact, it looks like we might even be in the time of Christ.”

Chapter Two

Scarlet felt a tongue licking her face and opened her eyes to blinding sunlight. The tongue would not stop, and before she even looked over, she knew it was Ruth. She opened her eyes just enough to see that it was her: Ruth was leaning over, whining, and grew even more excited as Scarlet opened her eyes.

Scarlet felt a stab of pain as she tried to open her eyes further; struck by the blinding sunlight, her eyes teared up, more sensitive than ever. She had a bad headache, and peeled open her eyes just enough to see she was lying on a cobblestone street somewhere. People rushed by, walking past her, and she could tell she was in the midst of a busy city. People hurried to and fro, bustling in every direction, and she could hear the din of a crowd in midday. As Ruth whined and whined, she sat there, trying to remember, trying to figure out where she was. But she had no idea.

Before Scarlet could get her mind around what had happened, she suddenly felt a foot prodding her in the ribs.

“Move on!” came a deep voice. “You can’t sleep here.”

Scarlet looked over and saw a Roman sandal near her face. She looked up, and saw a Roman soldier standing over her, dressed in a short tunic, a belt around his waist, from which hung a short sword. He wore a small brass helmet with feathers on it.

He leaned over and nudged her again with his foot. It hurt Scarlet’s stomach.

“Did you hear what I said? Move on, or I’m locking you up.”

Scarlet wanted to listen, but as she opened her eyes further, the sun hurt them so much, and she was so disoriented. She tried to get to her feet, but felt as if she were moving in slow motion.

The soldier leaned back to kick her hard in the ribs. Scarlet saw it coming, and braced herself, unable to react quickly enough.

Scarlet heard a snarl, and looked over to see Ruth, hair standing up on her back, lunge at the soldier. Ruth caught his ankle in mid-air, digging her sharp fangs into it with all she had.

The soldier screamed, and his screams filled the air as blood poured from his ankle. Ruth would not let go, shaking it with all she had, and the soldier’s expression, so haughty a moment before, now turned to one of fear.

He reached down, into his scabbard, and extracted his sword. He lifted it high and prepared to bring it down on Ruth’s back.

That was when Scarlet felt it. It was like a force taking over her body, as if another power, another entity, were inside her. Without realizing what she was doing, she suddenly burst into action. She couldn’t control it, and she didn’t understand what was happening.

Scarlet jumped to her feet, heart pounding with adrenaline, and managed to grab the soldier’s wrist in midair, just as he was bringing down his sword. She felt power coursing through her, a power she had never known, as she held his arm. Even with all his strength, he could not budge.

She squeezed his wrist, and managed to squeeze it hard enough that, as he looked down at her in shock, he finally dropped his sword. It landed on the cobblestone with a clang.

“It’s OK, Ruth,” Scarlet said softly, and Ruth gradually let go of her grip on his ankle.

Scarlet stood there, holding the soldier’s wrist, keeping him locked in her deadly embrace.

“Please, let me go,” he pleaded.

Scarlet felt the power coursing through her, felt that, if she wanted, she could really hurt him. But she didn’t want to. She just wanted to be left alone.

Slowly, Scarlet released her grip and let him go.

The soldier, fear in his eyes, looking as if he’d just encountered a demon, turned and ran away, not even bothering to retrieve his sword.

“Come on Ruth,” Scarlet said, sensing he might come back with more soldiers, and not wanting to stick around.

A moment later, the two of them ran into the thick crowd. They hurried through the narrow, twisting alleyways, until Scarlet found a nook in the shade. She knew the soldiers wouldn’t find them here, and she wanted a minute to regroup, to figure out where they were. Ruth panted beside her, as Scarlet caught her breath in the heat.

Scarlet was scared and amazed by her own powers. She knew something was different, but she didn’t fully understand what was happening to her; she also didn’t understand where everyone else was. It was so hot here, and she was in a crowded city she didn’t recognize. It looked nothing like the London she grew up in. She looked out and watched all the people busting by, wearing robes, togas, sandals, carrying large baskets of figs and dates on their heads and shoulders, some of them wearing turbans. She saw ancient, stone buildings, narrow twisting alleyways, cobblestone streets, and wondered where on earth she could be. This definitely was not Scotland. Everything here looked so primitive, she felt as if she had gone back thousands of years.

Scarlet looked everywhere, hoping for a glimpse of her mom and dad. She scrutinized every face that passed, hoping, willing, that one of them would stop and turn to her.

But they were nowhere. And with every passing face, she felt more and more alone.

Scarlet was beginning to feel a sense of panic. She didn’t understand how she could have come back alone. How could they have left her like that? Where could they be? Did they make it back, too? Didn’t they care enough to come and find her?

The longer Scarlet stood there, watching, waiting, the more the realization sank in. She was alone. Completely on her own, in a strange time and place. Even if they were back here, she had no idea where to look for them.

Scarlet looked down at her wrist, at the ancient bracelet with the dangling cross that had been given to her right before they left Scotland. As they’d stood there in the courtyard of that castle, one of those old men in the white robes had reached out and slipped it on her wrist. She thought it was very pretty, but she didn’t know what it was, or what it meant. She had a feeling that it might be some sort of clue, but had no idea what.

She felt Ruth rubbing up against her leg, and she knelt down, kissed her head, and hugged her. Ruth whined in her ear, licking her. At least she had Ruth. Ruth was like a sister to her, and Scarlet was so grateful she had made it back with her, and so grateful she had protected her from that soldier. There was no one she loved more.

As Scarlet thought back to that soldier, to their encounter, she realized her powers must run deeper than she thought. She couldn’t understand how she, as a small girl, had overpowered him. She felt that somehow she was changing, or had already changed, into something she had never been. She remembered, back in Scotland, her mom explaining it to her. But she still didn’t quite understand it.

She wished it would all just go away. She just wanted to be normal, wanted things to be normal, back to the way they were. She just wanted her mommy and daddy; she wanted to close her eyes and be back in Scotland, in that castle, with Sam, and Polly, and Aiden. She wanted to be back at their wedding ceremony; she wanted everything to be right in the world.

But when she opened her eyes, she was still here, all alone with Ruth in this strange city, this strange time. She didn’t know a soul. No one seemed friendly. And she had no idea where to go.

Finally, Scarlet couldn’t take it anymore. She had to move on. She couldn’t hide here, waiting forever. Wherever her mommy and daddy were, she figured, it was out there somewhere. She felt a hunger pang, and heard Ruth whining, and knew she was hungry, too. She had to be brave, she told herself. She had to go out there and try to find them – and try to find food for them both.

Scarlet stepped out into the bustling alleyway, on the lookout for soldiers; she spotted groups of them in the distance, patrolling the streets, but they didn’t seem like they were looking out for her specifically.

Scarlet and Ruth squeezed their way into the masses of humanity, jostled as they headed down the twisting alleyways. It was so crowded here, people bustling in every direction. She passed vendors with wooden carts, selling fruits and vegetables, loaves of bread, bottles of olive oil and wine. They were adjacent to each other, crammed in the thick alleys, screaming out for customers. People haggled with them left and right.

As if it were not crowded enough, also filling the streets were animals – camels and donkeys and sheep and all sorts of livestock – being led by their owners. Amidst these ran wild chickens, roosters and dogs. They smelled terribly, and made the noisy marketplace even noisier, with their constant braying and bleating and barking.

Scarlet could feel Ruth's hunger mounting at the sight of these animals, and kneeled down and grabbed her by the neck, holding her back.

"No Ruth!" Scarlet said firmly.

Ruth reluctantly obeyed. Scarlet felt bad, but she didn't want Ruth to kill these animals and cause a huge commotion in this crowd.

"I'll find you food, Ruth," Scarlet said. "I promise."

Ruth whined back, and Scarlet felt a hunger pang, too.

Scarlet hurried past the animals, leading Ruth down more alleys, twisting and turning past vendors and down more alleyways. It seemed like this maze would never end, and Scarlet could hardly even see the sky.

Finally, Scarlet found a vendor with a huge piece of roasting meat. She could smell it from afar, the smell infiltrating her every pore; she looked down and saw Ruth looking up at it, licking her lips. She stopped before it, gawking.

"Buy a piece?" the vendor, a large man with a smock covered in blood, asked.

Scarlet wanted a piece more than anything. But as she reached into her pockets, she found no money whatsoever. She reached down and felt her bracelet, and more than anything, she wanted to take it off and sell it to this man, to get a meal.

But she forced herself not to. She sensed it was important, and so she used all her force of will to stop herself.

Instead, she slowly, sadly shook her head in response. She grabbed Ruth and led her away from the man. She could hear Ruth whining and protesting, but they had no choice.

They pressed on, and finally, the maze opened up into a bright and sunny, wide-open plaza. Scarlet was taken aback by the open sky. Coming out of all those alleyways, it felt like the most wide-open thing she'd ever seen, with thousands of people milling around inside it. In its center sat a stone fountain, and framing the plaza was an immense stone wall, rising hundreds of feet into the air. Each stone was so thick, it was ten times her size. Against this wall stood hundreds of people, wailing, praying. Scarlet had no idea why, or where she was, but she sensed that she was in the center of the city, and that this was a very holy place.

"Hey you!" came a nasty voice.

Scarlet felt the hairs rise on the back of her neck, and slowly turned.

There sat a group of five boys, sitting on a crop of stone, staring down at her. They were filthy from head to toe, dressed in rags. They were teenagers, maybe 15, and she could see the meanness on their faces. She could sense that they were hoping for trouble, and that they'd just spotted their next victim; she wondered if it was obvious how alone she was.

Among them was a wild dog, huge, rabid-looking, and twice the size of Ruth.

"What you doing out here all alone?" the lead boy asked in a mocking way, to the laughter of the other four. He was muscular and stupid-looking, with broad lips and a scar on his forehead.

As she looked at them, Scarlet felt a new sense overcome her, one she had never experienced before: it was a heightened sense of intuition. She didn't know what was happening, but suddenly,

she was able to read their thoughts clearly, to feel their feelings, to know their intentions. She felt immediately, clear as day, that they were up to no good. She knew that they wanted to harm her.

Ruth snarled beside her. Scarlet could sense a major confrontation coming – which was exactly what she wanted to avoid.

She leaned down and began to lead Ruth away.

“Come on Ruth,” Scarlet said, as she began to turn and walk away.

“Hey, girl, I’m talking to you!” yelled the boy.

As she walked away, Scarlet turned over her shoulder and saw the five of them jump down off the stone and begin walking after her.

Scarlet burst into a run, back into the alleyways, wanting to put as much distance between herself and these boys as she could. She thought of her confrontation with the Roman soldier, and for a moment wondered if she should stop and try to defend herself.

But she didn’t want to fight. She didn’t want to hurt anyone. Or take any chances. She just wanted to find her mommy and daddy.

Scarlet turned down an alley empty of people. She looked back, and within moments, could see the group of boys chasing after her. They weren’t far behind, and they were gaining speed fast. Too fast. Their dog ran among them, and Scarlet could see that in moments, they’d catch up. She had to make a good turn to lose them.

Scarlet turned another corner, hoping she’d find a way out. But as she did, her heart stopped.

It was a dead-end.

Scarlet turned slowly, Ruth by her side, and faced the boys. They were now maybe ten feet away. They slowed as they approached, taking their time, savoring the moment. They stood there laughing, cruel smiles on the faces.

“Looks like your luck has run out, little girl,” the lead boy said.

Scarlet was thinking the same thing.

Chapter Three

Sam woke to a splitting headache. He reached up with both hands and held his head, trying to make the pain go away. But it wouldn't. It felt like the entire world was coming down on his skull.

Sam tried to open his eyes, to figure out where he was, and as he did, the pain was unbearable. Blinding sunlight bounced off of desert rock, forcing him to shield his eyes and lower his head. He felt himself lying on a rocky, desert floor, felt the dry heat, felt the dust rising up into his face. He curled up in a fetal position and held his head tighter, trying to make the pain go away.

Memories came flooding back.

First, there was Polly.

He remembered Caitlin's wedding night. The night he proposed to Polly. Her saying yes. The joy on her face.

He remembered the next day. His going on his hunt. His anticipation of their night to come.

He remembered finding her. On the beach. Dying. Her telling him about their baby.

Waves of grief came rushing back. It was more than he could handle. It was like a terrible nightmare re-running in his head, one he could not switch off. He felt that all he had left to live for was stripped away from him, all in one grand moment. Polly. The baby. Life as he knew it.

He wished he'd died at that moment.

Then he remembered his vengeance. His rage. Killing Kyle.

And the moment that everything changed. He remembered Kyle's spirit infusing him. He remembered the indescribable feeling of rage, of another person's spirit and soul and energy invading his, possessing him completely. It was the moment Sam stopped being who he was. It was the moment he became someone else.

Sam opened his eyes completely, and he sensed, he knew, they were glowing bright red. He knew they were no longer his. He knew they were now Kyle's.

He felt Kyle's hatred, felt Kyle's power, racing through him, through every ounce of his body, from his toes, through his legs, up his arms, all the way to his head. He felt Kyle's need for destruction pulsing through every ounce of him, like a living thing, like something stuck in his body that he could not get out. He felt as if he were no longer in control of himself. A part of him missed the old Sam, missed who he was. But another part of him knew he would never be that person again.

Sam heard a hissing, rattling noise, and opened his eyes. His face lay flat on the rocks of the desert floor, and as he looked up, he saw a rattlesnake, just inches away, hissing at him. The rattlesnake's eyes looked right into Sam's, as if it were communing with a friend, sensing a similar energy. He could sense that the snake's rage matched his – and that it was about to strike.

But Sam was not afraid. On the contrary – he found himself filled with a rage not only equal to the snake's, but greater. And reflexes to match.

In the split second in which the snake geared up to strike, Sam beat him to it: he reached out with his own hand, grabbed the snake by the throat in mid-air area, and stopped it from biting him just an inch away from his face. Sam held the snake's eyes to his, staring at it so close that he could smell its breath, its long fangs only an inch away, dying to enter Sam's throat.

But Sam overpowered it. He squeezed harder and harder, and slowly drained the life from it. It went limp in his hand, crushed to death.

He leaned back and hurled it across the desert floor.

Sam jumped to his feet and took in his surroundings. All around him were dirt and rocks – an endless stretch of desert. He turned, and noticed two things: first, was a group of small children, dressed in rags, looking up at him curiously. As he spun towards them they scattered, hurrying back, as if watching a wild animal rise from the grave. Sam felt Kyle's rage rush through him, and felt like killing them all.

But the second thing he noticed made him change his focus. A city wall. An immense, stone wall, soaring hundreds of feet into the air, and stretching forever. That was when Sam realized: he had awakened on the outskirts of an ancient city. Before him sat a huge, arched gate, in and out of which streamed dozens of people, dressed in primitive clothing. They looked like they were in Roman times, wearing simple robes or tunics. Livestock hurried in and out, too, and Sam could already sense the heat and noise of the crowds beyond its walls.

Sam took a few steps towards the gate, and as he did, the kids scattered, as if running from a monster. He wondered how scary he looked. But he didn't really care. He felt the need to enter this city, to figure out why he had landed here. But unlike the old Sam, he didn't feel the need to explore it: rather, he felt the need to destroy it. To smash this city to bits.

A part of him tried to shake it off, to bring back the old Sam. He forced himself to think of something that might bring him back. He forced himself to think of his sister, Caitlin. But it was hazy; he couldn't really summon her face anymore, as much as he tried. He tried to summon his feelings for her, their shared mission, their father. He knew deep down that he still cared for her, that he still wanted to help her.

But that small part of him was soon overwhelmed by the new, vicious part. He could barely recognize himself anymore. And the new Sam forced him to stop his thoughts and to move on, right into the city.

Sam marched through the city gates, elbowing people out of the way as he went. An old woman, balancing a basket on her head, got too close, and he bumped her shoulder hard, sending her flying, knocking off her basket, fruit spilling everywhere.

"Hey!" yelled a man. "Look what you did! Apologize to her!"

The man marched up to Sam and stupidly, reached out and grabbed his coat. The man should have realized that it was a coat he couldn't recognize, black, and leather, and skin-tight. The man should have realized that Sam's garment was from another century – and that Sam was the last man he wanted to mess with.

Sam looked down at the man's hand as if it were an insect, then reached out, grabbed his wrist, and with the force of a hundred men, he turned it back. The man's eyes open wide in fear and pain, as Sam kept turning. The man finally turned sideways, and dropped to his knees. Sam kept turning, though, until he heard a sickening crack, and the man shrieked out, his arm broken.

Sam leaned back and finished the man off by kicking him hard in the face, knocking him, unconscious, to the ground.

A small group of passersby watched, and they gave Sam plenty of space as he continued walking. No one seemed eager to get anywhere near him.

Sam kept walking, heading into the throng, and was soon enveloped by a new crowd. He blended into the never-ending stream of humanity that filled the city. He wasn't sure which way to go, but he felt new desires overwhelming him. He felt the desire to feed coursing through. He wanted blood. He wanted a fresh kill.

Sam let his senses take over, and felt himself being led down a particular alleyway. As he turned down it, the alley became narrow, darker, higher, shut off from the rest of the city. It was clearly a seedy part of the city, and as he went, the crowd grew more sketchy.

Beggars, drunks and prostitutes filled the streets, and Sam brushed elbows with several roguish, fat men, unshaven, missing teeth, who stumbled by. He made sure he leaned over and bumped shoulders hard with them, sending them flying in every direction. Wisely for them, none stopped to challenge him, other than shouting an indignant: "Hey!"

Sam kept going and soon found himself in a small square. Standing there, in the middle, backs to him, was a circle of about a dozen men, cheering. Sam walked up and pushed his way through to see what they were cheering about.

In the midst of the circle were two roosters, tearing each other apart, covered in blood. Sam looked over and saw the men placing bets, trading ancient coins. Cockfighting. The oldest sport in the world. So many centuries had passed, yet nothing had really changed.

Sam had enough. He was getting antsy, and he felt the need to stir up some havoc. He marched into the center of the ring, right up to the two birds. As he did, the crowd burst into an indignant cry.

Sam ignored them. Instead he reached out, grabbed one of the roosters by its throat, lifted it high and spun it over his head. There was a cracking noise, as he felt it go limp in his hand, its neck broken.

Sam felt his fangs protract, and sunk his teeth into the rooster's body. He gorged with blood, and it poured out and ran over his face, down his cheeks. Finally, he threw down the bird, unsatisfied. The other rooster scurried away as fast as it could.

The crowd stared at Sam, clearly shocked. But these were rough, crude types, not ones to walk away easily. They scowled back, prepared for a fight.

“You ruined our sport!” one of them snapped.

“You will pay!” another yelled.

Several burly men pulled out short daggers and lunged at Sam, slashing right for him.

Sam hardly flinched. He saw it all happening as if in slow motion. His reflexes a million times faster, he simply reached out, grabbed the man's wrist in mid-air and twisted it back in the same motion, breaking his arm. Then he leaned back and kicked the man in the chest, sending him flying back to the circle.

As another man approached, Sam lunged forward, towards the man, beating him to it. He got in close, and before the man could react, sank his fangs into the man's throat. Sam drank deeply, blood squirting everywhere, as the man shrieked in pain. Within moments he drained his life, and the man slumped to the floor, unconscious.

The others stared, terrified. Finally, they must have realized they were in the presence of a monster.

Sam took a step towards them, and they all turned and sprinted away. They disappeared like flies, and in just a moment, Sam was the only one left in the square.

He had beaten them all. But it wasn't enough for Sam. There was no end to the blood and death and destruction he craved. He wanted to kill every man in this city. Even then, it would not be enough. His lack of satisfaction frustrated him to no end.

He leaned back, face to the sky, and roared. It was the shriek of an animal finally let loose. His cry of anguish soared up, into the air, reverberated off the stone walls of Jerusalem, louder than the bells, louder than the cries for prayer. For just a brief moment, it shook the walls, dominated the entire city – and from end to another, its inhabitants stopped and listened and learned to fear.

In that moment, they knew, a monster was among them.

Chapter Four

Caitlin and Caleb hiked down the steep mountain face, heading towards the village of Nazareth. It was rocky, and they slid more than walked down the steep face, stirring up dust. As they went the terrain began to change, the rock giving way to clumps of weeds, the occasional palm tree, then to real grass. They finally found themselves in an olive grove, walking amidst rows of olive trees, as they continued further down, towards the town.

Caitlin looked closely at the branches and saw thousands of small olives, shimmering in the sun, and marveled at how beautiful they were. The closer they got to the town the more fertile the trees were. Caitlin looked down and from this vantage point had a bird's eye view of the valley and the town.

A small village nestled amidst enormous valleys, Nazareth could hardly be called a city. There looked to be only a few hundred inhabitants, only a few dozen small buildings, one story high and built of stone. Several of them appeared to be built of a white limestone, and in the distance, Caitlin could see villagers hammering away at the enormous limestone quarries surrounding the city. She could hear the soft ping of their hammers echoing, even from here, and could see the light limestone dust lingering in the air.

Nazareth was encased by a low, winding stone wall, maybe ten feet high, which looked ancient even now. At its center was a wide, open arched gate. No one stood guard at the gate, and Caitlin suspected they had no reason to; after all, this was a small town in the middle of nowhere.

Caitlin found herself wondering why they had awakened in this time and place. Why Nazareth? She thought back and tried to remember what she knew of Nazareth. She vaguely remembered once learning something about it, but she just couldn't remember. And why the first century? It was such a dramatic leap from Medieval Scotland, and she found herself missing Europe. This new landscape, with its palm trees and desert heat, was so foreign to her. More than anything, Caitlin wondered if Scarlet were behind those walls. She hoped – she prayed – that she was. She needed to find her. She couldn't rest until she did.

Caitlin walked through the town gate with Caleb and entered with a great sense of anticipation. She could feel her heart pounding at the thought of finding Scarlet – and of figuring out why they had been sent to this place to begin with. Could her Dad be inside, waiting?

As they entered the town, she was struck by the vibrancy of it. The streets were filled with children running, screaming, playing. Dogs ran wild, as did chickens. Sheep and oxen shared the streets, ambling about, and outside every home there was a donkey or camel tied to a post. Villagers walked casually about, wearing primitive tunics and robes, carrying baskets of goods on their shoulders. Caitlin felt as if she'd entered a time machine.

As they walked down the narrow streets, past small houses, past old women washing laundry by hand, people stopped and stared. Caitlin realized they must have looked so out of place walking down these streets. She looked down and noticed her modern clothing – her tights, leather battle outfit – and wondered what these people must have thought of her. They must have thought she was an alien that had dropped down from the sky. She didn't blame them.

In front of each house was somebody preparing food, selling goods, or working on their craft. They passed several families of carpenters, the man seated outside the home, sawing, hammering, building things from bed frames, to dressers, to wooden axles for plows. Before one house a man was building a huge cross, several feet thick, and ten feet long. Caitlin realized it was a cross meant for someone to be crucified on. She shivered and looked away.

As they turned down another street, the entire block was filled with blacksmiths. Everywhere flew anvils and hammers, and the ping of metal rang throughout the street, each blacksmith seeming to echo the other. There were also clay pits with large flames roasting slabs of red-hot metal, on which they were forging horseshoes, swords, and all sorts of metal work. Caitlin noticed the faces

of children, black with soot, sitting by their father's sides, watching them work. She felt badly that the children worked at such a young age.

Caitlin looked everywhere for a sign of Scarlet, of her Dad, of any clue of why they were here – but she found none.

They turned down yet another street, and this one was filled with masons. Here, men chipped away at huge blocks of limestone, crafting statues, pottery, and huge, flat presses. At first, Caitlin didn't realize what they were for.

Caleb reached over and pointed.

"They're wine presses," he said, reading her mind as always. "And olive presses. They use them to crush the grapes and olives, to extract the wine and oil. See those cranks?"

Caitlin looked closely and admired the craftsmanship, the long slabs of limestone, the intricate metal work of the gears. She was startled to see what sophisticated machinery they had, even for this time and place. She was also startled to realize what an ancient craft winemaking was. Here she was, thousands of years in the past, and people were still making bottles of wine, bottles of olive oil, just like they were in the 21st century. And as she looked at the glass bottles, slowly being filled with wine and oil, she realized they looked just like the olive and wine bottles she'd used.

A group of children ran past her, chasing each other, laughing, and as they did, clouds of dust rose up and covered Caitlin's feet. She looked down and realized the roads were not paved in this village – it was probably, she figured, too small to be able to afford paved roads. And yet she knew that Nazareth had been famous for something, and it was bothering her that she could not remember what. Once again, she was kicking herself for not paying more attention in history class.

"It is the town where Jesus lived," Caleb said, reading her mind.

Caitlin felt herself redden once again, as he plucked the thoughts so easily from her mind. She withheld nothing from Caleb, but still, she didn't want him to read her thoughts when it came to how much she loved him. She might be embarrassed.

"He *lives* here?" she asked.

Caleb nodded.

"If we've arrived in his time," Caleb said. "Clearly, we are in the first century. I can see by their dress, by the architecture. I was here once before. It's a hard time and place to forget."

Caitlin's eyes opened wide at the thought.

"Do you really think he could be here now? Jesus? Walking around? In this time and place? In this town?"

Caitlin could hardly comprehend it. She tried to imagine herself turning the corner and running into Jesus in the street, casually. The thought seemed inconceivable.

Caleb furrowed his brow.

"I don't know," he said. "I'm not sensing he's here now. Maybe we missed him."

Caitlin was flabbergasted at the thought. She looked around her with a new sense of awe.

Could he be here? she wondered.

She was speechless, and felt an even greater sense of importance to their mission.

"He might be here, in this time period," Caleb said. "But not necessarily in Nazareth. He traveled a lot. Bethlehem. Nazareth. Capernaum – and Jerusalem, of course. I don't even know for sure if we are in his exact time or not. But if we are, he could be anywhere. Israel is a big place. If he were here, in this town, we would sense it."

"What do you mean?" Caitlin asked, curious. "What would it feel like?"

"I can't explain it. But you would know. It's his energy. It's unlike anything you've ever experienced before."

Suddenly, a thought occurred to Caitlin.

"Have you actually *met* him?" she asked.

Caleb slowly shook his head.

“No, not up close. Once, I was in the same city, at the same time. And the energy was overwhelming. Unlike anything I’ve felt before.”

Once again, Caitlin was amazed by all the things Caleb had seen, all the times and places he had experienced.

“There’s only one way to find out,” Caleb said. “We need to know what year it is. But the problem is, of course, that no one started counting the years, like we do, until long after Jesus died. After all, our calendar year is based on the year of his birth. And when he lived, no one counted the year based on Jesus’ birth – most people didn’t even know who he was! So if we ask people what year it is, they’ll think we’re crazy.”

Caleb looked around, carefully, as if searching for clues, and Caitlin did, too.

“I do sense that he’s in this time,” Caleb said slowly. “Just not in this place.”

Caitlin examined the village with a new respect.

“But this village,” she said, “it seems so small, so humble. It’s not like a great, biblical city, like I would imagine. It just looks like any other desert town.”

“You’re right,” Caleb answered, “but this is where he lived. It wasn’t some grand place. It was here, among these people.”

They continued walking and finally turned a corner and came to a small square in the center of town. It was a simple little square, around which were small buildings and in the center of which sat a well. Caitlin looked around and spotted a few elderly men sitting in the shade, holding canes, staring at the empty, dusty town square.

They made their way over to the well. Caleb reached out and turned the rusty crank, and slowly the weathered rope pulled up a pail of water.

Caitlin reached out, cupped the cold water with her hands, and splashed her face. It felt so refreshing in the heat. She splashed her face again, then splashed her long hair, running her hands through it. It was dusty and greasy, and the cold water felt like heaven. She’d give anything for a shower. She then leaned over, cupped some more, and drank. Her throat was parched, and it hit the spot. Caleb did the same.

They both finally leaned back, against the well, and surveyed the square. There didn’t seem to be any special buildings, any special markers or clues of where they should go.

“So where now?” she finally asked.

Caleb looked around, squinting into the sun, holding his hands to his eyes. He seemed as at a loss as she.

“I don’t know,” he said flatly. “I’m stumped.”

“In other times and places,” he continued, “it seemed like churches and monasteries always held our clues. But in this time period, there is no church. There is no Christianity. There are no Christians. It was only after Jesus died that people began to create a religion after him. In this time period, there is only religion. Jesus’ religion: Judaism. After all, Jesus was Jewish.”

Caitlin tried to process it all. It was all so complex. If Jesus was Jewish, she figured, that meant he must have prayed in a synagogue. Suddenly, she had a thought.

“So then, maybe the best place to look is the place where Jesus prayed. Maybe we should be looking for a synagogue.”

“I think you’re right,” Caleb said. “After all, the only other religious practice of that time, if you can even call it that, was paganism – the worshipping of idols. And I’m sure Jesus wouldn’t worship in a pagan temple.”

Caitlin looked around the town again, squinting, searching for any building that resembled a synagogue. But she found none. They were all just simple abodes.

“I don’t see anything,” she said. “All the buildings look the same to me. They’re all just small houses.”

“I don’t either,” Caleb said.

There was a long silence, as Caitlin tried to process it all. Her mind raced with possibilities.

“Do you think that my Dad and the shield are somehow connected to all this?” Caitlin asked. “Do you think that going to the places where Jesus was will lead us to my Dad?”

Caleb narrowed his eyes, as he seemed to think for a long time.

“I don’t know,” he said finally. “But clearly, your Dad is guarding a very great secret. A secret not just for the vampire race, but for all humanity. A shield, or a weapon, that will change the nature of the entire human race, for all time. It must be very powerful. And it seems to me, that if anyone was meant to help lead us to your father, it would be someone very powerful. Like Jesus. It would make sense to me. Maybe, to find one, we have to find the other. After all, it is your cross that unlocked so many keys to get us here. And nearly all of our clues we found in churches and monasteries.”

Caitlin tried to take it all in. Was it possible that her Dad knew Jesus? Was he one of his disciples? The idea was staggering, and her sense of mystery around him deepened.

She sat there on the well, looking around the sleepy village, stumped. She had no idea where to even begin to look. Nothing at all stood out to her. And even more, she was feeling increasingly desperate to find Scarlet. Yes, she wanted to find her Dad more than ever; she felt the four keys practically burning in her pocket. But she saw no obvious way to use them – and it was hard to even focus on him with thoughts of Scarlet in her mind. The idea that she was all alone out there tore her apart. Who knew if she was even safe?

But then again, she had no idea where to look for Scarlet either. She felt an increasing sense of hopelessness.

Suddenly, a shepherd appeared through the gate, walking slowly into the town square, followed by his flock of sheep. He wore a long white robe and hood covering his head from the sun and headed towards them, holding a staff. At first, Caitlin thought that he was walking right to them. But then she realized: the well. He was merely coming to get something to drink, and they were in the way.

As he walked in, the sheep swarmed all around him, filling the square, all heading for the well. They must have known it was watering time. Within moments, Caitlin and Caleb found themselves in the midst of the flock, the delicate animals nudging them out of the way so they could get to the water. Their impatient bleating filled the air, as they waited for their shepherd to tend to them.

Caitlin and Caleb moved aside as the shepherd approached the well, turning the rusty crank, and slowly raising the pail. As he went to lift it, he pulled back his hood.

Caitlin was surprised to see that he was young. He had a large shock of blond hair, a blonde beard, and bright blue eyes. He smiled, and she could see the sun lines in his face, crinkling around his eyes, and could feel the warmth and kindness radiating off of him.

He took the overflowing pail of water, and, despite the sweat all over his forehead, despite the fact that he appeared thirsty, he turned and poured the first bucket of water into the trough at the base of the well. The sheep crowded in, bleating, muscling each other out of the way as they drank.

Caitlin was overcome by the strangest feeling that perhaps this man knew something, that perhaps he was put in their path for a reason. If Jesus lived in this time, she figured, maybe this man would have heard of him?

Caitlin felt a pang of nervousness, as she cleared her throat.

“Excuse me?” she asked.

The man turned and looked at her, and she felt the intensity in his eyes.

“We are looking for someone. I’m wondering if you might know if he lives here.”

The man narrowed his eyes, and as he did, Caitlin felt as if he were seeing right through her. It was uncanny.

“He lives,” the man replied, as if reading her mind. “But he is in this place no longer.”

Caitlin could hardly believe it. It was true.

“Where has he gone?” Caleb asked. Caitlin heard the intensity in his voice, and could sense how desperately he wanted to know.

The man shifted his gaze to Caleb.

“Why, to the Galilee,” the man responded, as if it were obvious. “To the sea.”

Caleb narrowed his eyes.

“Capernaum?” Caleb asked tentatively.

The man nodded back.

Caleb’s eyes opened wide in recognition.

“There are many followers on the trail,” the man said cryptically. “Seek and ye shall find.”

The shepherd suddenly lowered his head, turned, and began to walk away, the sheep following. Soon, he was heading across the square.

Caitlin could not let him go. Not yet. She *had* to know more. And she sensed that he was holding something back.

“Wait!” she cried out.

The shepherd stopped and turned, staring at her.

“Do you know my father?” she asked.

To Caitlin’s surprise, the man slowly nodded back.

“Where is he?” Caitlin asked.

“That is for you to find out,” he said. “You are the one who carries the keys.”

“Who is he?” Caitlin asked, desperate to know.

Slowly, the man shook his head.

“I am merely a shepherd on the way.”

“But I don’t even know where to look!” Caitlin responded, desperate. “Please. I *have* to find him.”

The shepherd slowly broke into a smile.

“Always, the best place to look is right where you are,” he said.

And with that, he covered his head, and turned and crossed the square. He passed through the arched gate, and a moment later, he was gone, his sheep following.

Always the best place to look is where you are.

His words rang through Caitlin’s mind. Somehow, she sensed it was more than just an allegory. The more she dwelled on it, the more she felt that it was literal. As if he were telling her there was a clue right here, where she was.

Caitlin suddenly turned and searched the well, the place they had been sitting. Now, she sensed something.

Always the best place to look is where you are.

She knelt down and ran her hands along the ancient, smooth stone wall. She felt all along it, feeling more and more certain that something was there, that she had been led to a clue.

“What are you doing?” Caleb asked.

Caitlin searched frantically, scanning all the cracks of all the stones, feeling she was onto something.

Finally, halfway around the well, she stopped. She found one crack that was slightly larger than the others. Just large enough to get her finger in. The stone surrounding it was just slightly too smooth, and the crack was just slightly too big.

Caitlin reached in and pried it open. Soon, the stone began to wiggle, then to move. The stone came loose, out of the base of the well. Behind it, she was amazed to see, was a small hiding place.

Caleb came close, huddling over her shoulder, as she reached down into the darkness. She felt something cold and metal in her hand, and pulled it out slowly.

She raised her hand into the light, and slowly opened her palm.

She could not believe what was in it.

Chapter Five

As Scarlet stood there with Ruth, at the end of the dead end, her back to the wall, she watched in fear as the group of bullies set their dog loose on her. Moments later, the huge, wild dog was charging, snarling, aiming right for her throat. It was all happening so fast, Scarlet hardly knew what to do.

Before she could react, Ruth suddenly snarled and charged for the dog. She leapt into the air and met the dog halfway, sinking her fangs into its throat. Ruth landed on top of her, pinning her to the ground. The dog must have been twice Ruth's size, yet Ruth pinned her effortlessly, not letting her get up. She clamped her fangs down with all she had, and soon, the dog stopped struggling, dead.

"You little bitch!" screamed the lead boy, furious.

He burst out of the pack and charged right for Ruth. He raised a stick, sharpened at one end into a spear point, and brought it down right for Ruth's exposed back.

Scarlet's reflexes kicked in, and she burst into action. Without even thinking she sprinted for the boy, reached up and caught his stick in mid-air, right before it hit Ruth. She then pulled him towards her, leaned back and kicked him hard in the ribs.

He keeled over, and she kicked him again, this time in the face with a roundhouse kick. He spun around and landed face-first on the stone.

Ruth turned and charged the group of boys. She leapt high in the air, and sank her fangs into one boy's throat, pinning him to the ground. That left only three of them.

Scarlet stood there, facing them, and suddenly, a new feeling overtook her. No longer did she feel afraid; no longer did she want to run from these boys; no longer did she want to cower and hide; no longer did she want the protection of her mommy and daddy.

Something snapped inside her as she crossed an invisible line, a tipping point. She felt, for the first time in her life, that she didn't need anybody. All she needed was herself. Instead of fearing the moment, now, she relished it.

Scarlet felt herself infused with rage, rising from her toes, through her body, all the way to her scalp. It was an electric emotion that she didn't understand, one she had never experienced before. She no longer wanted to run away from these boys. She didn't want to let them get away, either.

Now, she wanted vengeance.

As the three boys stood there, staring in shock, Scarlet charged. It all happened so fast, she could barely process it. Her reflexes were so much faster than theirs, as if they were moving in slow motion.

Scarlet leapt into the air, higher than she ever had, and kicked the boy in the center, planting her two feet on his chest. She sent him flying back, like a bullet across the alley, until he smashed into the wall and collapsed.

Before the other two could react, she wheeled and elbowed one in the face, then spun and kicked the other in the solar plexus. They both collapsed, unconscious.

Scarlet stood there, with Ruth, breathing hard. She looked around, and saw all five boys sprawled out around them, not moving. And then, she realized: she was the victor.

She was no longer the Scarlet she once knew.

* * *

Scarlet roamed through the alleyways for hours, Ruth by her side, putting as much distance between herself and those boys as she could. She turned down alleyway after alleyway in the heat, getting lost in the maze of narrow side streets in the old city of Jerusalem. The midday sun beat down on her, and she was beginning to feel delirious from it; she was also feeling delirious from the lack of

food and water. She could see Ruth panting hard beside her as they meandered through the crowds, and she could see that she was suffering, too.

A child passed by Ruth and grabbed her back, yanking on her playfully, but too hard. Ruth turned and snapped, snarling and bearing her fangs. The child screamed, cried, and ran away. It was unlike Ruth to behave this way; usually, she was so tolerant. But it seemed the heat and the hunger was getting to her, too. She was also channeling Scarlet's own rage and frustration.

As much as she tried, Scarlet didn't know how to turn off her residual feelings of rage. It was as if something inside her had been unleashed, and she couldn't reign it back in. She felt her veins pumping, the anger pulsing, and as she passed vendor after vendor, displaying all manner of food that she and Ruth could not afford, her anger grew. She was also beginning to realize that what she was experiencing, her intense hunger pains, weren't just typical hunger. It was something else, she realized. Something deeper, more primal. She didn't just want food. She wanted blood. She needed to feed.

Scarlet didn't know what was happening to her, and she didn't know how to handle it. She smelled a hunk of meat and squeezed her way through the crowd, right up to it, staring. Ruth squeezed in, beside her.

Scarlet elbowed her way right to the front, and as she did, a resentful man in the crowd shoved her back.

"Hey girl, watch where you're going!" he snapped.

Without even thinking, Scarlet turned and shoved the man. He was more than twice her size, but he went flying backwards, knocking over several fruit stands as he fell to the ground.

He scrambled to his feet, shocked, looking back at Scarlet, trying to figure out how such a small girl could overpower him like that. Then, with a look of fear, he wisely turned and hurried away.

The vendor scowled down at Scarlet, sensing trouble.

"You want meat?" he snapped. "You have money to pay for it?"

But Ruth couldn't contain herself. She lunged forward, sunk her fangs into the huge slab of meat, tore off a hunk, and swallowed it down. Before anyone could react, she lunged forward again, aiming for another hunk.

This time, the vendor brought down his hand, as hard as he could, aiming to smack Ruth hard on the nose.

But Scarlet sensed it coming. In fact, something new was happening to her sense of speed, her sense of timing. As the vendor's hand began to descend, Scarlet found her own hand shooting up, almost without her, grabbing the vendor's wrist right before he hit Ruth.

The vendor looked down at Scarlet, wide-eyed, shocked that such a small girl could have such a strong grip. Scarlet squeezed the man's wrist, and tightened her grip until his entire arm started shaking. She found herself scowling back up at him, unable to control her rage.

"Don't you dare touch my wolf," Scarlet snarled back at the man.

"I'm... sorry," the man said, arm shaking in pain, eyes wide with fear.

Finally, Scarlet released her grip, and hurried away from the stand, Ruth by her side. As she hurried to get as far away as she could, she heard a whistling behind her, then frantic shouts for guards to come.

"Let's go, Ruth!" Scarlet said, and the two of them hurried off down the alleyway, getting lost in the crowd. At least Ruth had eaten.

But Scarlet's own hunger was overwhelming, and she didn't know if she could contain it any longer. She didn't know what was happening to her, but as they walked down street after street, she found herself examining people's throats. She zoomed in on their veins, saw the blood pulsing. She found herself licking her lips, wanting – needing – to sink her teeth in. She craved the idea of drinking their blood, and found herself imagining what it would feel like when the blood poured down her throat. She didn't understand. Was she even human anymore? Was she becoming a wild animal?

Scarlet didn't want to hurt anyone. Rationally, she tried to stop herself.

But physically, something was taking over her. It was rising, from her toes, her legs, through her torso, to the crown of her head and to the tips of her fingers. It was a desire. An unstoppable, unquenchable desire. It was overwhelming her thoughts, telling her what to think, how to act.

Suddenly, Scarlet detected something: in the distance, somewhere behind her, a group of Roman soldiers were chasing after her. Her new, hyper-sensitive hearing alerted her to the sound of their sandals slapping on the stone. She already knew, even though they were blocks away.

The sound of their sandals slapping against the stone only irritated her further; the noise mingled in her head with the sound of the vendors' screaming, the children laughing, the dogs barking... It was all becoming too much for her. Her hearing was becoming too intense, and she was too annoyed by the cacophony of noise. The sun, too, was feeling stronger, as if it were bearing down just on her. It was all too much. She felt as if she were under the microscope of the world, and about to explode.

Suddenly, Scarlet leaned back, overflowing with rage, and felt a new sensation in her teeth. She felt her two incisor teeth expand, felt long, sharp fangs growing, protruding from them. She hardly knew what the feeling was, but she knew she was changing, into something she could hardly recognize or control. She suddenly spotted a large, fat, drunk man, stumbling through the alley. Scarlet knew that she either had to feed, or to die herself. And something inside of her wanted to survive.

Scarlet heard herself snarling, and was shocked. The noise, so primal, stunned even her. She felt as if she were outside her body as she pounced, leapt through the air, right for the man. She watched in slow motion as he turned to her, eyes open wide in fear. She felt her two front teeth sinking into his flesh, into the veins on his throat. And a moment later, she felt his hot blood pouring into her throat, filling her veins.

She heard the man scream, just for a moment. Because a second later, he was collapsed, on the ground, she on top of him, sucking out all of his blood. Slowly, she began to feel a new life, a new energy, infusing her body.

She wanted to stop feeding, to let this man go. But she couldn't. She needed this. She needed to survive.

She needed to feed.

Chapter Six

Sam sprinted through the alleys of Jerusalem, snarling, red with rage. He wanted to destroy, to tear apart everything in sight. As he ran past a row of vendors, he reached out and swiped their booths, knocking them over like dominoes. He bumped people deliberately, as hard as he could, sending them flying every which way. He was like a wrecking ball, out of control, hurling down the alley, knocking over everything in his way.

Chaos ensued; cries rose up. People began to take notice and started to flee, to jump out of his way. He was like a freight train of destruction.

The sun was driving him crazy. It beat down on his head like a living thing, filling him with more and more rage. He had never known what true rage was until now. Nothing seemed to satisfy him.

He saw a tall, thin man and he dove for him, sinking his fangs into his neck. He did this in a split second, sucking out the blood, then hurried on, sinking his fangs into another person's neck. He went from person to person, sinking his fangs and sucking the blood. He moved so fast, none of them had time to react. They all slumped to the floor, one after the other, and he left a trail in his wake. He was in a feeding frenzy, and he felt his body begin to swell with their blood. Still, it was not enough.

The sun was driving him to the brink of insanity. He needed shade, and he needed it fast. He spotted a large building in the distance, a formal, elaborate palace, built of limestone, with pillars and huge arched doors. Without thinking, he burst across the square and charged it, kicking open the doors.

It was cooler in here, and finally, Sam could breathe again. Just getting the sun off his head made a difference. He was able to open his eyes, and slowly, they adjusted.

Staring back at Sam were the startled faces of dozens of people. Most sat inside small pools, individual baths, while others walked around, barefoot on the stone floor. They were all naked. That was when Sam realized: he was inside a bathhouse. A Roman bathhouse.

The ceilings were high and arched, letting in the light, and there were large arched columns all throughout. The floors were a shining marble, and small pools filled the vast room. People lazed about, apparently relaxing.

That is, until they saw. They quickly sat up, and their expressions morphed to fear.

Sam hated the sight of these people – these lazy, rich people, lounging about as if they hadn't a care in the world. He would make them all pay. He threw his head back and roared.

Most of the crowd had the good sense to scurry out of there, to hurry to grab their towels and robes and to try to get out as soon as they could.

But they didn't stand a chance. Sam hurled forward, lunged for the closest one, and sunk his teeth into her neck. He sucked the blood out and she collapsed to the ground and rolled into a bath, staining it red.

He did this again and again, jumping from one victim to the next, men and women alike. Soon the bathhouse filled with corpses, bodies floating everywhere, all the pools stained red.

There was a sudden crash at the door, and Sam wheeled to see what it was.

There, filling the doorway, were dozens of Roman soldiers. They wore official uniforms – short tunics, roman sandals, feathered helmets – and held shields and short swords. Several more held bows and arrows. They pulled them back and took aim at Sam.

“Stay where you are!” the leader yelled.

Sam snarled as he turned, rose to his full height, and began walking towards them.

The fire came. Dozens of arrows went hurling through the air, right for him. Sam could see them in slow motion, glistening, their silver tips heading right for him.

But he was faster even than their arrows. Before they could reach him, he was already high up in the air, leaping, somersaulting over them all. He easily covered the span of the entire room – forty feet – before the archers even relaxed their hands.

Sam came down feet first, kicking the center one right in the chest with such force that he knocked back the whole crowd, like a row of dominoes. A dozen soldiers went down.

Before the others could react, Sam reached over and snatched two swords out of two soldier's hands. He spun and slashed in every direction.

His aim was perfect. He chopped off head after head, then turned and jabbed the survivors right through the heart. He cut through the crowd like butter. Within seconds, dozens of soldiers slumped to the ground, lifeless.

Sam dropped to his knees and sank his fangs into each one's heart, drinking and drinking. He knelt there, on all fours, hunched over like a beast, gorging himself with blood, still trying to fulfill his rage, which was limitless.

Sam finished, but was still not satisfied. He felt as if he needed to battle entire armies, to kill masses of humanity at once. He needed to gorge for weeks. And even then, it wouldn't be enough.

“SAMSON!” shrieked a strange female voice.

Sam stopped, frozen in his tracks. It was a voice he hadn't heard in centuries. It was a voice he had almost forgotten, one he had never expected to hear again.

Only one person in this world had ever called him *Samson*.

It was the voice of his maker.

There, standing over him, looking down, a smile on her gorgeous face, was Sam's first true love.

There, was Samantha.

Chapter Seven

Caitlin and Caleb flew together in the clear, blue desert sky, heading north over the land of Israel, towards the sea. Below them the land was spread out, and Caitlin watched the landscape change as they went. There were huge swaths of desert, vast stretches of sunbaked dirt, littered with rocks, boulders, mountains and caves. There were hardly any people, except for the occasional shepherd, dressed from head to toe in white, a hood covering his head to protect from the sun, his flock trailing not too far behind.

But as they flew further and further north, the terrain began to change. Desert gave way to rolling hills, and the color began to change, too, from a dry, dusty brown, to a vibrant green. Olive groves and vineyards dotted the landscape. But still, there were few people to be found.

Caitlin thought back to her discovery in Nazareth. Inside that well, she had been shocked to find a single, precious object, which she now clutched in her hand: a golden star of David, the size of her palm. Etched across it, in a small ancient script, was a single word: *Capernaum*.

It had been clear to them both that it was a message, telling them where to go next. *But why Capernaum?* Caitlin wondered.

She knew from Caleb that Jesus had spent time there. Did that mean he would be awaiting them there? And would her Dad be there, too? And, she dared to hope, Scarlet?

Caitlin scrutinized the landscape beneath her. She was amazed at how under-populated Israel was in this time. She was surprised to fly over an occasional house, since the dwellings were so far and few between. This was still a rural, empty land. The only cities she had seen were more like towns, and even these were primitive, with nearly all the buildings a simple one or two stories, and built of stone. She hadn't seen any paved roads to speak of.

As they flew, Caleb swooped beside her and reached out for her hand. It was good to feel his touch. She couldn't help but wonder, for the millionth time, why they'd landed in this time and place. So far back. So distant. So different from Scotland, from everything she knew.

She felt deep down that this would be the final stop in her journey. Here. Israel. It was such a powerful place and time, she could feel the energy radiating off of everything. Everything felt spiritually charged to her, as if she were walking and living and breathing inside a giant energy field. She knew that something momentous was awaiting her. But she didn't know what. Was her Dad really here? Would she ever find him? It was so frustrating to her. She had all four keys. He should be here, she thought, waiting for her. Why did she have to continue to search like this?

Even more pressing in her mind were thoughts of Scarlet. She peered down at every place they passed, looking for any sign of her, of Ruth. For a moment she wondered if she hadn't made it – but quickly put that out of her mind, refusing to allow herself to go to such a dark place. She couldn't bear the thought of a life without Scarlet. If she learned that Scarlet were truly gone, she didn't know if she'd have the strength to carry on.

Caitlin felt the Star of David burning in her hand, and thought again of where they were going. She wished she knew more about the life of Jesus; she wished she had read the Bible more carefully growing up. She tried to remember, but all she really knew were the basics: Jesus had lived in four places: Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, and Jerusalem. They had just left Nazareth, and were on the way to Capernaum now.

She couldn't help but wonder if they were on a treasure hunt, following in his footsteps, if maybe he held some clue, or if one of his followers held a clue as to where her Dad was, where the shield was. She wondered again how they could be connected. She thought of all the churches and monasteries she had visited throughout all the centuries, and felt there was a connection. But she wasn't sure what.

The only thing she knew about Capernaum was that it was supposed to be a small, humble fishing village in the Galilee, along the northwestern coast of Israel. But they hadn't passed any towns

for hours – in fact there had hardly even been a soul in sight – and she had seen no sign of any water – much less a sea.

Then, just as she was thinking it, they flew over a mountaintop, and as they crossed its peak, the other side of the valley opened up before her. It took her breath away. There, stretching out forever, was a shining sea. It was a deeper blue than she had ever seen, and it positively sparkled in the sunlight, looking like a treasure chest. Bordering it was a magnificent shore of white sand, and the waves crashed against it, as far as the eye could see.

Caitlin felt a thrill of excitement. They were heading in the right direction; if they stayed along the shoreline, it must take them to Capernaum.

“There,” came Caleb’s voice.

She followed his finger, squinting into the horizon, and could just barely make it out: in the distance sat a small village. It was hardly a city, hardly even a town. There were maybe two dozen homes, and a large structure, nestled against the shoreline. As they got closer, Caitlin squinted, examining it, but could hardly see anyone: only a few villagers walked the streets. She wondered if it was because of the midday sun, or because it was uninhabited.

Caitlin looked down for any sign of Jesus himself, but saw none. More importantly, she did not sense it. If what Caleb said was true, she would sense his energy from far off. But she didn’t sense any unusual energy. Once again, she started to wonder if they were in the right time and place. Maybe that man was wrong: maybe Jesus had died years before. Or maybe he wasn’t even born yet.

Caleb suddenly dove down, towards the village, and Caitlin followed. They found an inconspicuous place to land, outside the village wall, in a grove of olive trees. Then they Walked Through The Town Gate.

They walked through the small, dusty village, and it was hot, everything basking in the sun. The few villagers who ambled about barely seemed to notice them; they seemed only intent on seeking shade, on fanning themselves. One old lady walked to the town well, raised a large spoon to her hand and drank, then reached up and wiped sweat from her brow.

As they traversed the small streets, the place seemed utterly deserted. Caitlin scanned for any sign, anything, that might point to a clue, to any sign of Jesus, or her father, or the shield, or Scarlet – but found nothing.

She turned to Caleb.

“Now what?” she asked.

Caleb looked back blankly. He seemed as at a loss as she was.

Caitlin turned, surveying the village walls, the humble architecture, and as she looked through the town, she noticed a narrow, well-worn pathway, leading down to the ocean. As she followed its trail, through a town gate, in the distance, she saw the glimmer of the ocean.

She nudged Caleb, and he saw it, too, and followed her as she walked out the town, towards the shore.

As they neared the shoreline, Caitlin saw three small, brightly-colored fishing boats, weathered, half-beached on the sand, bobbing in the waves. In one sat a fisherman, and standing beside the other two, ankle deep in the ocean, were two more fishermen. They were older men, with gray hair and matching beards, faces as weathered as their boats, suntanned, deeply lined. They wore white robes and white hoods to block out the sun.

As Caitlin watched, two of them hoisted a fishing net and dragged it slowly through the waves. They pulled at it, fighting the waves, and a small boy jumped out of one of the boats and ran to the net, helping them pull it in. As it reached the shore, Caitlin saw they had caught dozens of fish, squirming and flopping. The boy squealed in delight, while the old men were somber.

Caitlin and Caleb had snuck up on them so quietly – especially with the sound of the crashing waves – that they still didn’t know they were there. Caitlin cleared her throat so as not to startle them.

They all wheeled and looked her way, and could see the surprise in their eyes. She didn't blame them: they must have been a shocking sight, the two of them, dressed in all black from head to toe, in modern leather, battle gear. They must have looked as if they'd dropped straight down from the sky.

"We are sorry to bother you," Caitlin began, "but are we in Capernaum?" she asked the nearest fellow.

He looked from her to Caleb, then back to her. He slowly nodded back.

"We are looking for someone," Caitlin continued.

"And who might that be?" the other fisherman asked.

Caitlin was about to say "my Dad," but then stopped herself, realizing that wouldn't do any good. How would she describe him anyway? She didn't even know who he was, or what he looked like.

So, instead, she said the only person who came to mind, the only person they might recognize: "Jesus."

She half expected them to mock her, to laugh at her, to look at her as if she were crazy – or to have no idea who Jesus was.

But to her surprise, they didn't seem surprised by her question; they took her seriously.

"He left two weeks ago," one of them said.

Caitlin's heart skipped a beat. So. It was true. He was really alive. They were really in his time. And he had really been here, to this village.

"And all his followers with him," said the other. "Only the old folks like us and children stayed behind."

"So he's real?" Caitlin asked, in shock. She could still hardly believe it; it was almost too much to comprehend.

The boy stepped up, walking close to Caitlin.

"He fixed my grandpa's hand," the boy said. "Look at it. He was a leper. Now he's healed. Show her, grandpa," the boy said.

The old man slowly turned and pulled back his sleeve. His hand looked perfectly normal. In fact, as Caitlin looked closely, she saw one hand actually looked much younger than the other. It was uncanny. He had the hand of an 18-year-old boy. Pink, rosy and healthy – as if he'd been given a new hand.

Caitlin couldn't believe it. Jesus was real. He really healed people.

Seeing this man's hand, this man who was once a leper, perfectly healed, sent a chill up her spine. It brought it all home. For the first time, she had hope that she might really find him, and really find her Dad, and the Shield. And that they might lead her to Scarlet.

"Do you know where he went?" Caleb asked.

"Jerusalem, from what we hear," yelled out one of the other fishermen, over the sound of the crashing waves.

Jerusalem, Caitlin thought. It felt so far away. They had flown all the way up here, to Capernaum. And now, it was feeling like a wild goose chase. After all that, they would have to turn around and leave empty-handed.

But she could feel the Star of David burning in her hand, and she felt certain that there had to be a reason they were sent to Capernaum. She felt there was something more, something they needed to find.

"One of his disciples is still here," a fisherman said. "Paul. You can ask him. He might know exactly where they're going."

"Where is he?" Caitlin asked.

"Where they all spent their time. The old synagogue," the man said. He turned and pointed back over his shoulder with his thumb.

Caitlin turned and looked over her shoulder, and there, sitting on a hill, overlooking the ocean, she saw a beautiful, small, limestone temple. Even in this time, it already looked ancient. Bedecked

with intricate columns, it looked out over the sea, with a direct view of the crashing waves. Even from here, Caitlin could sense that this was a holy place.

“It was Jesus’s synagogue,” one of the men said. “It was where he spent all his time.”

“Thank you,” Caitlin said, beginning to walk towards it.

As she walked, the man reached out and grabbed her arm with his new, healthy hand. Caitlin stopped and looked at him. She could feel the energy pulsing through his hand, into her arm. It was unlike anything she’d ever felt. It was a healing, comforting energy.

“You’re not from here, are you?” the man asked.

Caitlin felt him looking into her eyes, and could tell that he was sensing something. She realized there was no use in lying to him.

Slowly, she shook her head. “No, I’m not.”

He stared back at her for a long time, then slowly nodded, satisfied.

“You will find him,” he said to her. “I can feel it.”

* * *

Caitlin and Caleb walked up the shore, waves crashing beside them, the smell of salt heavy in the air. The cool breezes were refreshing, especially after so much time in the desert heat. They turned and ascended a small hill, at the top of which sat nestled the ancient synagogue.

Caitlin looked up as they approached: built of a worn limestone, it seemed as if it had been here for thousands of years. She could feel the energy coming off the place; this was a holy place, she could tell already. Its large, arched door was ajar and creaked as it swayed in the wind, rocked by the ocean breezes.

As they hiked up the hill, they passed clumps of wild flowers, growing seemingly right out of the rock, in an array of bright desert colors. They were the most beautiful flowers Caitlin had ever seen, so unexpected, so unlikely in this desolate place.

They reached the top of the hill and walked right up to the door. Caitlin felt the Star of David burning inside her pocket, and she knew this was it.

She looked up and saw over the doorway, embedded in the stone, a huge, golden star of David, surrounded by Hebrew letters. It was amazing to think that she was about to enter a place where Jesus had spent so much time. Somehow she had expected to enter a church – but, of course, as she thought about it, she realized that wouldn’t make sense, since churches weren’t built, of course, until after he died. It seemed strange to think of Jesus in a synagogue – but then again, after all, she knew he had been Jewish, and a Rabbi, and so it made perfect sense.

But what relevance did all of this have for her search for her Dad? For the shield? She was increasingly feeling that all this was connected, all the centuries and times and places, all of the searching in all the monasteries and churches, all of the keys, all of the crosses. She felt that a common thread was sitting there, right before her eyes. Yet she still didn’t know what.

Clearly there was some holy, spiritual element to whatever it was she needed to find. Which also seemed strange to her, because after all, this was a world of vampires. But then again, as she thought about it, she realized this was also a spiritual war, between supernatural forces of good and evil, those who wanted to protect the human race, and those who wanted to harm it. And clearly, whatever it was she found would have huge ramifications not only for the vampire race, but for the human race as well.

She looked at the ajar door, and wondered if they should just walk in.

“Hello?” Caitlin called out.

She waited a few seconds, her voice echoing. No response.

She looked at Caleb. He nodded, and she could tell he also felt they were in the right place. She reached up, lay her palm on the ancient wooden door, and gently pushed it. It creaked as it opened, and they entered the darkened building.

It was cooler in here, protected from the sun, and it took Caitlin a moment for her eyes to adjust. Slowly, they did, and she took in the room before her.

It was magnificent, unlike anything she had ever seen. It wasn't grand, like so many churches she'd been in; it was actually a humble building, built of marble and limestone, adorned with columns, and with intricate carvings over the ceiling. There were no pews, no places to sit – just a large, open space. At the far end was a simple altar – but instead of a cross above it, there sat a large Star of David. Behind that was a small golden cabinet, with images of two large scrolls carved into it.

Only a few, small arched windows lined the walls, and while sunlight streamed in in places, it was still dim. This place was so silent, so still. Caitlin could hear only the distant crashing of the waves behind her.

Caitlin and Caleb exchanged a glance, then together walked slowly down the aisle, heading towards the altar. As they walked their footsteps reverberated off the marble, and Caitlin couldn't shake the feeling they were being watched.

They reached the end of aisle and stood before the golden cabinet. Caitlin studied the diagrams etched into the gold: they were so detailed, so intricate, they reminded her of that church in Florence, in the Duomo, of its golden doors. It looked as if someone had spent a lifetime carving this one, too. In addition to the images of scrolls, Hebrew letters were embedded all around it. Caitlin wondered what was inside.

“The Torah,” came a voice.

Caitlin wheeled, shocked to hear another voice. She didn't understand how anyone could have kept so quiet, managed to avoid her detection – and how anyone could, on top of it, read her mind. Only a very special person could achieve this. Either a vampire, or a holy person, or both.

Walking towards them was a man wearing a white robe, hood pulled back, with long, disheveled light brown hair and a beard to match. He had beautiful blue eyes, and a compassionate face, lit up with a smile. He looked ageless, maybe in his 40s, and walked towards them with a slight limp, holding a cane.

“They are the scrolls of the Old Testament. The five books of Moses. That is what lays behind those golden doors.”

He kept approaching until he was just a few feet away, then stopped before Caitlin and Caleb. He stared right at her, and Caitlin could feel the intensity coming off of him. Clearly this was no ordinary person.

“I am Paul,” he said, not extending his hand, which he rested on his cane.

“I am Caitlin, and this is my husband, Caleb,” she replied.

He smiled widely.

“I know,” he answered.

Caitlin felt foolish. Clearly, this man, able to read her mind so easily, knew a lot more about her than she did about him. It was an eerie feeling, that all these people, in all these centuries and places, knew about her, had all been waiting for her. It made her feel a sense of purpose, a sense of mission, even more. But it also made her even more frustrated that she didn't know what it was, or where to go next.

“We are sorry to intrude,” Caleb said. “But we were told that Jesus prayed here. That he was here recently. Is that true?”

The man nodded slowly, keeping his eyes fixed on Caitlin.

“They left for Jerusalem some time ago,” he said. “If you were one of the masses coming to be healed, I would tell you it's too late. But then again, I know you have not come to be healed. No. You have a very different purpose, don't you?” he asked, still staring at Caitlin.

Caitlin nodded back, sensing that this man already knew everything. And for the first time in her life, she had another feeling: that this man was close to her Dad. That he knew where he was. The feeling sent a chill through her body. She had never felt so close to him before.

“I’m looking for my Dad,” Caitlin said, and could hear her own voice trembling with anticipation.

The man smiled back.

“And he is looking for you.”

Caitlin’s eyes opened wide in surprise.

“Do you know him?” she asked.

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