

A single decision that will effect a man,
his family, and the fate of humanity.



Precipice

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a short story by

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The white room engulfed him.

White table. White chairs. White walls. They said it was soothing. It had all been precognitively chosen and placed with precision into the SafeSpace, including Jan and his family. Everything down to the antiquated white clock hanging on the north wall. Mechanical clocks were no longer manufactured. They said it was there as a piece of art more so than anything functional—except it was functional. *Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.* Supposedly the sound, too, was soothing. Something to bring the mind back to the present moment when it wanders into dark corners. The entire room was prearranged to instill inner calm in the face of outer turmoil, or so they said.

To Jan, the clock was a reminder that every passing minute meant more empty bodies. A reminder of why he was chosen. *Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.* Time was an enemy in this space. He glared at it, as feelings of fear and anger, which were also antiquated, gnawed at him from the inside out. *Only three hours left.*

They knew what they were doing when they fashioned the SafeSpace, but their choices were not without a sense of irony. Everything was white. Immaculate. Peaceful. Everything, except the one thing they did not want him to forget—the outside world. The WallGazer, permanently set to transparent, filled the entire west wall of the SafeSpace. The building stood at the edge of the SafeZone, forcing a clear and constant view of the decaying city.

Only 3 months and 3 weeks ago, the virus began devastating humanity. Over a billion people had already perished, leaving behind piles of expired, decomposing bodies. It was spreading exponentially. More people had expired in the last 11 days than over the last 11 weeks. It had only been 3 days since Jan and his family were granted sanctuary inside the SafeZone, but it felt like an eon.

No one should have to make the choice Jan was given. No one. The edge of his fist slammed against the table for the third time, now warm against his skin. He laid his palms against the smooth white tabletop, and abruptly pushed himself to his feet. The white chair jerked, falling back onto the cold, white tile.

With one hand, Jan gently set the chair back upon each of its legs and stepped nine paces to the WallGazer. The silhouette of his body appeared minuscule against the massive window. In front of him, past the clear, shatterproof viewing wall, was the remains of a once pristine and peaceful society. The summer sun was getting low, and a shadow loomed in the distance from an approaching storm. Sealed inside this confined space, he watched the chaos and despair outside. A tear escaped his tired eyes.

His fingers folded shut, forming another fist. Slamming it against the everglass wall, the sound echoed throughout the room. He had never felt such extreme emotions before. Such anger, sadness, and guilt. Jan stood alone in his feelings. Who could understand the magnitude of emotions that accompany such a dire decision? Could the fate of humanity—at least, what was left of it—depend on his choice alone? One thing he knew for certain—whatever

choice he made affected his family forever, however long forever would be.

A presence entered behind him. Even through the anguish of his emotions, he knew her soothing presence, but he didn't turn. His gaze remained focused on the expired bodies laying in the street. She walked steadily across the room, pausing just behind him. With one last step, she allowed her chest to press softly against his back. As her arms slid around his torso, her left hand paused against his chest. His powerful heartbeat echoed against her palm. Her head lowered allowing her cheek to find comfort against his shoulder.

"You do not have to do this," her gentle voice assured.

For a moment, the world inside was more important to save than the world outside. The natural color returned to his hand as his fingers slowly unfolded. His hand slid atop hers, interlacing fingers. Another tear fell.

"Easy for you to say," he whispered.

"No, Jan. Nothing about this is easy," she replied. "Do you think my wanting you to stay means that I do not understand your torment? I understand very clearly what is at stake."

"Then you understand why I must volunteer. Even in our nightmares, we never would have imagined a sight like this." He nodded at the desolate streets below. It was no longer safe for the workers to be outside in the open air, even with their regulatory breathing masks. Few chanced it. Even fewer survived it. Only the andro-sweepers were out, slowly loading lifeless bodies one by one.

Thunder rumbled in the distance. Ashley's eyes gazed past the glass to the outside world then focused on his

ghostly reflection. “Do you think I am blind to what is out there? I see it all, Jan.”

“Then the choice should be clear,” he replied.

“Nothing is clear. The will of Creator will manifest, regardless of our choices. Humanity’s fate does not rest on any one person, nor does it rest on you alone.”

“This choice was given to me by the Chancellor himself. Is it not Creator’s will if the Council is guided to ask for volunteers?”

She lifted her head off his shoulder. “I no longer assume the Council speaks for the will of Creator, and neither should you.”

“Do *not* start this again,” he exclaimed, as his muscles tensed throughout his body. “I trust the Chancellor with my life, and this may be the only chance at a cure. I need all your mental and emotional energy supporting this choice. It is the only way to be in the vibrationally harmonic state needed to produce the cure. Our single decision holds the possibility to save all of us!” He leaned in, closing the gap between them. Becoming aware of his intensity, he allowed the tension to ease out of his body, and he softened his voice. “You *have to* support this choice, or I could sacrifice myself for nothing. How do you not see that?”

“I see 11 possible cures. 10 others with the same choice, my Love. We only need 1 volunteer of pure mind and body to produce a cure. Let the others volunteer,” she said compassionately. “It does not have to be you, and there is no guarantee that any one of you will produce a cure.”

“It is not that simple, and you know it. We could all volunteer and the possibility of failure still exists. One volunteer only has an 11% chance of success. None of us are willing to leave the fate of humanity to that high of a

failure rate. This is about numbers, not just faith. The more of us who volunteer, the greater the chance of producing a cure and stopping this.” He pivoted away from her, focusing again on the world outside as it faded to crimson from the rays of the setting sun. “I did not ask to be given this choice.”

“Then do not make it,” she replied, her words still soft. She gently pressed her palms against his shoulders, attempting to turn him. He resisted. “Jan, please look at me.”

“You know what I look like. Maybe you should keep your eyes on what is out there.”

“I know what it looks like outside. I am focused on what I see inside,” she replied. “There is no shame in abstaining. No reason for guilt. Do not empower such destructive feelings. Focus your thought energy on something more positive—on your family.”

He turned to her, soulfully searching her eyes. “Every thought around this choice *is* for my family, not just to save others.”

She breathed out of her tired body. “I am only trying to help, my Love. I simply wish they would let you volunteer one at a time. Let the ones go first who have the least to lose. That is a rational request.”

“Damn it, Ashley!” His fist re-emerged, pounding the everglass. “NO!” Startled, she stepped back. He reached out, grabbing her arm. “My choice has to be made independently of the others. We have to go through the procedure without knowing who else is so we are not affected by individual outcomes. The Council explained at length every aspect of this choice, so do not speak

ignorantly.” Frozen in the shadow of his outburst, she was at a loss.

He continued, “You know how this works, but I will say it again, and again if I have to. Any biosynths harvested under duress or fear will not produce a viable cure. If we volunteered one at a time, or even in groups, every time someone fails to produce a cure, even if they survive, doubt and fear flood our minds, and the odds of success decrease dramatically.”

“I know,” she interrupted.

“And you know the rest. If a volunteer’s body expires from the procedure without producing a cure, we all have to re-rationalize the choice again, now with the very real fear of expiration, and the ripple is exponential. That is with just one expired body. All it takes is 3, Ash. 3 out of 11 of us to expire, and the chance of a cure is lost.”

“This is beyond numbers, Jan.”

“It is beyond any of us, but what else are we to do? Volunteering is the most logical choice, but it will be all for nothing if you do not support me. If I go in worrying about you and the family, I could sacrifice myself for nothing.” He sighed. “You know how powerful fear is. You know *all* this, and yet you do not stand by my conviction.”

“I stand by your life, Jan.”

“You and the kids *are* my life. I am making this choice to save you. I feel it is what I must do. Do you hear me? I *feel* it. This is a calling.”

“Feeling is only one of the Trinity. If you had at least two of the Trinity, if you *knew* you would cultivate the cure and your life would save everyone, I would support your choice with all of my being. You do not know if you will

produce a cure *or* if you will survive,” she said, her eyes brimming with tears.

“I cannot stand here, looking out there, and do nothing. I simply cannot.” He lowered his head, gently shaking it from side to side.

She slid her hands down along his arms, clasping his hand. “Is watching this,” she said, acknowledging the outside world, “helping your viable biosynths? Is the weight of this decision bringing peace to your neurosenses? Look at this room. We are not permitted to even shut off the WallGazer for three minutes. And yet you believe the Council has orchestrated this space for *our* benefit? They want you to stay focused on what is happening out there. But I need you to stay focused on what is in here.” She guided his hand to her chest, allowing him to feel her steady heartbeat.

“Seeing what is out there does not frighten me. The thought of doing *nothing* does. Only 11 people were chosen, Ash. 11 out of almost 1 million people who are within this SafeZone were presented with this opportunity, and I am one of them. I do not make this choice lightly. If I do not volunteer, and no cure is harvested from the others, how do I live with myself? This is logical *and* feels right. This must be the right course of action.”

“The simple fact that the Council does not have a Unity, or at least a Trinity, on this should concern you enough to abstain.”

“And you are being stubborn and selfish, and mistrusting of the Council.”

She shook her head. “Something does not feel right with how the Council is handling this. For the love of Creator, they placed a mechanical clock on our wall, ticking away,

disallowing us the sacred peace of silence. I am tired of hearing that—that thing. I am tired of being forced to watch the world perish. And I am tired of all their subtle manipulations. They are not all pure of mind and heart anymore. They do not remain unaffected in the face of our demise. My Love, trust my words... the Council *has* lost their way.”

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.



A surge of divine energy jolted his body, awakening the Chancellor from his vision. He had experienced visions many times before, but nothing as palpable as this. He breathed deeply, stretching and aligning his spine, re-centering his energy, body, and mind. He slowly peered around the room at the other councilors, seated comfortably on their respective perches. He merged with each of their energies, one by one, as they opened their eyes. Once all councilors were fully present and aware, eleven including himself, he began.

“I consistently speak first, however at this time, I am guided to share my vision last. His eyes circled the space again, making direct contact with each councilor. I do not sense a Trinity present, but please share among us any visions and intuitions you have experienced.”

Councilor 3 spoke first. “A concern builds inside my being. I am not feeling a cure will be harvested from the

procedure tonight. If this plan of action does not produce a viable cure, we do not have the space or resources in the SafeZones to save more people. Too much doubt and fear are swelling within the people around our current course of action, and there is too much unrest outside. People are desperate. Humanity has not been this divided since the last great war. We are torn. The Survivalists are reckless and put other lives at risk trying to save their own. The Risers are even more dangerous. They believe the plague is a great Phoenix sent by Creator to purge humanity—leaving only the chosen to rise from the ashes of our loss. They are willing to do *anything* to stop a cure. The Survivalists may put lives at risk, but if my feeling is correct, the Risers have evolved their plans and are now willing to extinguish lives to stop a cure.”

“How can you speak of such a thing as murder,” exclaimed Councilor 8. “Has humanity regressed so far so quickly?”

“Yes, it has,” chimed in Councilor 4. “Look at the numbers. Humanity thrived in peace for 111 years, and in less than 6 months we have reached the precipice of our decimation. 11% of humanity has expired. 1 billion, 11 million, 11 thousand, and 1 hundred gone in only 111 days and the expiration rate among those outside the SafeZones is exponential. We have all felt it. If the procedure tonight fails to produce a cure, or if the Risers stop it, we cannot save the rest of humanity. And if they compromise SafeZones...” He looked up, “Creator have mercy.”

“I do not wish to admit this,” added Councilor 6, “but I feel the chaos of the people has reached critical mass and disrupted our own auric fields. We are incapable of

reaching a Unity, and without one, we have no clear path to salvation.”

“Let us not give in to the panic and fear of unknown futures that are pervading the common minds,” interjected the Chancellor. “Rational and faithful. That is how we live. That is how we thrive. Let us pause and speak our decree.”

In unison, all councilors spoke aloud. “I serve the will of Creator above my own. Creator’s will be done.”

They paused, taking a deep breath, and the Chancellor continued. “Thank you. It is indeed a day of great duality and importance. Terrifying, yet exuberating. Grave, yet miraculous. Creator works within this duality and serves us miracles through synchronicities. It is an unmistakable sign that today the energies of the world, both faithful and faithless, are converging. 111 years to the day was the first Communion, Trinity, and Unity among the First Council, who are now the Elders. We cured disease and created everlasting life. Today is also the 111th day since the plague began, and humanity is called upon again at its precipice to save itself. The numbers have aligned. Even if we do not hear, see, or feel the answer, Creator is with us. The volunteers must choose tonight. The procedures will begin precisely at 11 pm to harness the power of the divine sequence Creator has revealed.”

“We understand this, Chancellor,” Councilor 10 replied, “but this is the first time we have asked the people to take such drastic measures without a Unity to assure divine guidance.”

“You speak in truth, and yet, what choice do we have? Gather all the faith left among you, now is the time for it.”



“Ash, how can you accuse the Council of such things after all they have done to save what is left of humanity—and our own family? I am immune, and being admitted to the SafeZone has saved your life, and the children’s. Please, do not fall prey to such adverse thought energy about the Council.”

“I do not mean for my present concerns to diminish all they have done. It’s just, I do not trust that—”

“Just nothing!” He interrupted, slamming his fist against the everglass a third time. “The Elders were guided in a Unity to create the First Council and changed the world for good. Wars and killing ended. Fear and hate eliminated. Disease and bodily decay eradicated. How was disease cured, Ash? Because they were guided to uncover and harvest biosynths from harmonic volunteers. Volunteers, Ash. Cures were administered for every disease plaguing humanity. We have lived in optimal health and peace and flourished for over a century—and we owe it all to the Council. And now they are being guided again to find volunteers and end this plague. Guided to ask *me* to put the needs of the many above the needs of the self, to serve humanity at its time of need, at its precipice.”

“I am very well aware of our history. I am speaking of here and now. I do not dismiss the past wonders and accomplishments of the Elders and the First Council, nor am I putting down the current Council’s past deeds. But I have amplified concerns over their ability to lead us through *this*.” She paused, caressing the side of his face.

“You may disagree, but you must hear my words, my Love. They do not have clear guidance. There has been no talk of a Unity.”

She peered at the clock and continued. “This is a true test of humanity’s resilience and presence, and we are all failing.” She looked back at her husband. “Do you know the PeaceKeepers were given authority to use their stunners? Imagine someone so emotional they have to be stunned, Jan. It is unheard of. What violent force will be approved next? It is all falling apart. A cure may save our lives, but that does not guarantee it will save our future. There must be another way other than you risking your life. There *has to be*.”

“The Council has led the way for humanity to right itself before, and they will continue to do so.”

Ashley’s eyes fixated on the horizon, watching the darkness of the looming storm devour the sky. “Jan, just look at the illustrious world humanity has created,” she beamed to the dimming landscape. “Not a tree in sight. It is 50 miles to the nearest preserve. I do not think *this* is how Creator intended us to live. We ignorantly continued to destroy more of Mother Gaia every day. It was my job to prevent this, and after presenting my new data and recommendations, the Council did nothing. How could they be so naïve, thinking they could take so much of the earth without consequence? Humanity has done this to itself, Jan. The Mother has sent a reaper to rebalance life. Our very own biology is now our destroyer. Maybe *this* is Creator’s will. Maybe there is no cure. Maybe the only way to create more nature is to have less of humanity. This is the price for living without giving.”

“So now you believe we all deserve this massacre? Has Creator decided innocent children should expire to pay for the arrogance of the masses?” Tension soared through his body again. “You sound like a Riser,” he muttered through clenched teeth.

She snapped a finger at his face as a roll of thunder reverted through the room. “Do not dare compare my faith in Creator with the righteous motives of those—those maniacs.”

Jan sighed. “Then do not speak as they do. It is no small matter to undo the damage we have caused Gaia. The Council only expedites extreme actions when guided in a Unity. We have all been working to heal her. Every day, unfolding new methods of accelerated growth to rebuild what we destroyed. The new technology and standards of living have drastically cut down our footprint, and—”

“And it was too little too late.” A flash of light streaked across the sky. “Mother Gaia has created her own solution.”

“Perhaps, but regardless, we are in this moment now, faced with this choice. Past blame cannot help, only present action. The Council is guiding us to a new future and they choose me, among the few, to change the course of history.”

“No, Jan. The Council has failed to guide us. They were blind to what was coming, or worse...they foresaw this and did not disclose this impending massacre. I truly believe they can no longer reach a Unity nor offer divine guidance. They have pieces of a puzzle that they cannot see completed.”

“Ashley, please. They saved millions by swiftly fortifying these SafeZones. You and the kids are alive right

now, thanks to the guidance of the Council. You expect too much from them.”

“And you accept too little,” she snapped back. “Do not sacrifice yourself for nothing.”

“You are so sure you are making the right choice, Jan.” She closed her eyes, bowed her head, and took a breath. “I am sure of something, too.” She looked up, deep into his eyes, then turned, staring out into the oncoming darkness. “If you volunteer for this procedure, you will not return.”

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.



“There has already been so much loss, and now we are asking for more,” came Councilor 2’s overwhelming concern. “The amount of biosynths needed to produce the cure weakens the body to the point of expiration. We ask for husbands to give up wives. Children to lose parents. The chosen volunteers are immune to the virus, so they are guaranteed a long and continued life if they abstain, and we ask that they now almost assuredly relinquish their life to volunteer for an uncertain outcome. We have no Unity on a cure, and yet we arrogantly assume the will of Creator by willingly taking their lives.”

“That thought alone,” added Councilor 3, “will lower their harmonic vibrance countering the procedure, and yet we are proceeding.”

“Agreed,” Councilor 5 concurred. “If we proceed and fail, we will multiply the wave of doubt, fear, and resentment against this Council, and may lose the faith of all who still support us.”

Mumbles of recognition and nods of agreement surrounded the room.

“What choice do we have, councilors?” Questioned Councilor 8. “What other guidance is there? We sit here squabbling amongst ourselves. It is unheard of. We used to speak, think, and act in unison, with or without a Unity. We do not see the outcome, but until we have new guidance, we proceed as planned, as the Chancellor has advised. Now put aside doubt, shelter your fears from the people, and act like the Council we have been in the past.”

“Even if we all agreed the procedure is the will of Creator,” rebutted 10, “I do not feel the volunteers will be able to release this level of emotional discordance and reach the state of harmonic resonance needed to survive the procedure and cultivate the cure, as Councillor 3 has already felt, along with so many of us. This is too great of a hurdle in too short a timespan.”

“It is a great hurdle, indeed, but I do not feel that time is the obstacle,” objected Councilor 9.

“Than what is?” asked the Chancellor.

“Fear. And it can only be overcome with truth and reassurance,” he uttered with a tone of certainty.

“Ah, light has pierced our darkness,” praised the Chancellor. “And your recommended course of action, Councilor 9?”

“They are facing extreme and disturbing fears about the future. Doubts about their survival. Uncertainty for the safety of their families. We must personally assist them to

see deeper truths around each emotion, and around this decision, so they may fully embrace and release them. This must be coupled with full reassurance that if they expire, their families will be supported and cared for as our own. They are already losing faith in us. If we hide any truths from them now, it will create mistrust. This is the only way they can reach the needed state of harmonic peace and resilience.”

“Agreed. We must personally guide each volunteer and their families to a final decision,” added Councilor 7.

“Agreed,” all chimed in unison.

The Chancellor stood. “Agreed, however before we adjourn to visit the volunteers, it is time for me to share my vision. We truly need a miracle tonight to save humanity. Perhaps my vision will shed some light.”



Dimness crept through the window as the dark clouds blocked out the remainder of the setting sun. The white room slowly turned to gray. “How certain are you?” questioned Jan, as a feeling of dread overcame him.

She remained silent. A flash of lightning filled the sky.

“You must tell me!” Thunder cracked around them.

“Was it merely a dream or one of your visions? If it was a vision, that changes everything. And the cure? Did you see the cure?”

“I...I did not want to sway your decision in this way. You *must* make it of your own volition.” A tear rolled past

her quivering lips as she turned away. Outside, rain began slowly tapping on the glass.

“It is too late for that. You have planted a seed that will consume me. Reveal your truth,” he demanded as a blinding bolt of lightning pierced the sky. “The world is falling apart out there. I cannot have it fall apart in here as well. Not now. Was there a cure? Was this a vision?”

“Yes.” Her eyes returned to his, “It was a vision, Jan. A divine premonition. You volunteered and expired. I saw it. I felt it as if I were there. And I assure you, I *know* it.” Thunder crashed again, shaking the building. “You know what that means.”

“It means it was a mistake to keep this from me.” His fist crashed against the WallGazer as rain barraged it from the other side. “It means I am here pacing in anguish.” Again his warm flesh met the cold barrier. “It means you could have revealed this to me hours ago!” A third time he pounded, even harder. He didn’t care how hard he hit it, it wouldn’t break. The reverberating resonance filled the space. A deep sigh exited his body as he sank to his knees.

“Vision, feeling, knowing... a divine Trinity. Creator, have mercy on us.” He raised an arm wiping sweat from the side of his brow. “I will accept your vision as divine truth. If I volunteer, I will expire. And you *still* did not say about a cure. Do I—”

A shadow in the hall caught their eye. Ash turned, focusing on two small, worried faces. “Come out children, It is OK,” whispered Ashley, nodding with approval.

A pair of small bodies hesitantly stepped into the room.

Jan’s anger became displaced by guilt. “I am sorry, children,” his voice cracked. “It truly is a frightening

sight.” He beckoned them over. “It is Ok. Please, Mommy and Daddy need hugs.”

Trina and Jay turned to each other, silently giving each other consent, and came barreling into their parents, nearly knocking them over.

Jay into the arms of his mother, and Trina into the arms of her father. He embraced her, lovingly wrapping her into his arms. He buried his face into her soft hair, allowing it to gently wipe his tears. “I am sorry, little love. Never in my lifetime have I dealt with such extreme emotions.”

“It is OK, Daddy. That is why we have Expression Sessions. Maybe you need another. We verbally express so we do not physically stress,” she chimed with a smile.” She turned to her mother. “Mommy, too.”

Ashley smiled and chuckled. “I think mommy has had enough sessions. But you are right, that is what they are for. Daddy did not mean to scare you. All is well. Please return to your room, and I will be in soon. Allow me and Daddy to finish our conversation and decide if another session is needed. Does that sound good?” she asked, with an approving nod.

“Yes,” the twins replied in unison. They squeezed their parents one more time and scurried off back into the dim hallway.

As Jan watched his children disappear, emptiness filled his eyes. “I will not survive this.” His body collapsed against the everglass. “I...why...why would you wait until now to reveal this Trinity? *Knowing* I have no chance of returning to those two precious beings?” He peered up at her. “The cure? Why have you not mentioned the cure?”

She knelt beside him on the hard floor. “It was not revealed to me. I do not know if you produce a cure.”

Sadness overwhelmed her being. “That is why I kept it from you. The choice is difficult enough, and now if you volunteer, you do so knowing you will not return. I was hoping you would change your mind without me revealing this truth. But you are stubborn, and if you would not change your mind, I wished for you to hold onto the hope of returning to us.”

Tears streamed down her soft, precious skin. “Now, without hope of returning, that knowledge alone may prevent you from producing the cure. This is why I said nothing. I—I am sorry, Jan. Truly. It was a mistake to reveal any of this.”

“I understand, my Love.” Jan gently wiped away the tears from her delicate face. “Now I know. If I do this, I do not return to you and the children—but I still may save you. Save everyone. That is what *I feel*. I am willing to sacrifice myself to save you and the children and give humanity a new hope. If a cure is produced, that alone will shift the collective feeling around the Council, and produce a pathway to peace. It is clear to me. We are being asked to sacrifice to ignite a new flame and carry humanity forward through this darkness.”

She stood, offered a hand to her husband, and helped him to his feet. They wrapped their arms around one another, standing heart to heart, physically and energetically embracing. They stood there, timeless, holding one another until they both felt it was time to let go. Jan relaxed his arms and took her hands in his. “*I will save you. I feel it.* I know that is not enough for you, but it is for me.”

“I do not wish for you to deny your feelings and intuition, my Love, but one of the Trinity is not enough to

risk your life. And for a very good reason—I believe the cure would have been in my vision if you were destined to produce it. Maybe one of the others will produce a cure, Jan. They have a chance to do so *and* survive. All we know is that you will not.”

A bright flash of lightning filled the sky, illuminating the SafeSpace for an instant before returning it to darkness.

Tick. Tick. Tick.



“This was indeed a divine vision,” continued the Chancellor. “Jan and his family are the key to our survival, but to what end, I do not know. The path to a cure was not revealed.” He let out a tiresome sigh. “Nothing is certain. We have no Unity, and too many emotions are clouding the collective mind of the people... and this Council. If the people cannot keep their faith in us, fear will overtake the masses, and they will revert to the old ways. My vision also revealed that further disaster will befall us. The Riser’s will seek to infect everyone within the SafeZone so only the immune survive. The Survivalists will take up arms to protect themselves, and war will ensue. Even if we can fortify the SafeZones, fear and panic will deteriorate them from within. Humanity will be lost regardless of whom survives.”

“By Creator’s light, we have come so far over the century only to be led here,” shared Councilor 8. “I feel

abandoned by Creator and a sense of great sorrow is growing within me.”

The Chancellor nodded. “I thank you for so clearly expressing that feeling, number 8. Even though many of you have not expressed it, I sense your sorrow and hopelessness. I feel it as well. We are scheduled to address the masses tonight prior to the procedure. I do not feel it is wise to share our fears or remind the people of our lack of a Unity. This will only lead to more fear, doubt, and mistrust.”

“Chancellor,” Councilor 11 burst out, “you cannot possibly imply that we are to delude the people until after the results of the procedure? We must maintain transparency to hold their trust!”

The chancellor breathed in, expanded his body, and slowly exhaled. “You are the newest councilor here, 11. I understand you do not have the luxury that comes with experience, and I am very aware of the thoughts of mistrust growing amongst the people. Be assured, deceit is not a motive here. We must play out our plan for tonight before a new path is revealed. *That* was clear to me. I am not trying to buy trust, I am simply buying us time.”

“I am in agreement with the Chancellor,” acknowledged Number 3, “I advise we delay the announcement. Far too many heightened emotions are already overruling people’s minds.”

“I disagree,” argued Number 4. “We have only grown as a society and a Council through the utmost transparency, expression, and transduction.”

The Chancellor listened and observed as the fear of the people was reflected through the Council. “Peace!” he bellowed in a commanding voice. “We have work to do and

volunteers to assist. Put your differences aside, center yourselves, and go be of service. We will reconvene after our Sessions with the volunteers. I will personally visit Jan and his family.”

He closed his eyes and breathed in... *I serve the will of Creator above my own. Creator's will be done.*



The entryway intercom initiated with a pleasant tone. The soft enhanced voice spoke out. “Attention. You have a visitor.” Jan looked towards the south wall and raised his voice to the air. “Com on.”

“Peace to you. This is PeaceKeeper 111, 11th Keeper of the Council. The Council has ended its session and the Chancellor himself has offered to see you if you desire a Session.”

“Thank you, PeaceKeeper. Give us a moment. Com off.” Jan locked eyes with the deep longing of his wife’s. “The Chancellor wishes to have a Session with me. I cannot pass up such an opportunity.”

“If it brings you peace, speak with him, but know that only your own heart can make this decision, my Love.”

“The Chancellor is here to listen, not to sway any choice, no matter the consequence.”

“Just remember, Creator’s plan always prevails, regardless of our choices.” Keeping her gaze locked on his, she closed the gap between them. Her lips gently pressed against his. She held them just long enough, then slowly

released. “I know you trust him. All this is still causing you much anguish.” She nodded, smiled, and stepped back, her hand still lingering in his. “I will check on the children.” Raising her chin upward, she called out, “Com on... Jan welcomes an Expression Session with the Chancellor. Thank you 111.” Her hand slipped from his grip as she walked off into the shadows of the corridor.

“Very good,” came the PeaceKeeper’s reply. “The Chancellor anticipated this answer and is already here. Door. Open.” At his command, the thin outline of a rectangle 7 feet high and 5 feet wide appeared as a portion of the south wall detached and silently slid into itself. Two figures stood silhouetted on the other side of the open entryway.

To the right, stood the tall, muscular PeaceKeeper. Across his upper left chest was the UNE crest encircled by the words United Nations of Earth and the number 111 across it. The handle of his sword peered out from behind his left shoulder, and a stunner hung from his waist on his right thigh. After the Peace and Safety decrees were universally accepted, weapons were no longer fashioned, needed, or carried. The PeaceKeepers, however, were granted permission to still carry them as part of their uniform but did not use them as weapons. For the first time since the new laws were passed, the use of their stunners had again been granted to these stoic keepers of the peace.

To his left stood the Chancellor. He was slightly taller than the PeaceKeeper with a slender and toned body. He stood straight, head held high—regal and confident. His eyes expressed a softness of compassion and love, yet reflected the fortitude of his posture. “Peace to you, Jan.

May I enter your space?” His voice was calm, assured, and soothing.

“Yes. I welcome your presence, Chancellor,” Jan responded, acknowledging the Chancellor with a nod of agreement and respect for an Elder.

“Thank you, Janus. I welcome this time with you.” The Chancellor returned the nod.

“Please, no need for such formality, Jan is fine.”

“Of course, Jan.” With that, the Chancellor proceeded through the entryway. He took three steps in and paused. His eyes shifted away from Jan’s for a moment, surveying the space. Jan’s gaze remained on the Chancellor, watching for any subtle change of expression. He was offered nothing. Jan assumed the Chancellor had seen the SafeSpace prior to the arrival of him and his family. The surveillance of the room proved otherwise.

“The space serves its purpose well. The intentional design emulates peace within while facing the turmoil that surrounds you. This is a mirror of your challenge. You must focus on and find peace within while enveloped with destructive feelings and irrational thoughts. That is why we set the WallGazer to transparency, among other choices.”

Jan had wished to question the design and motives behind the SafeSpace, but the Chancellor was one step ahead, as usual, intuitively answering questions before they were asked.

“Now, to the reason for my visit. I am here to serve in any form that may bring comfort and peace to you and your family during these extremely challenging times. This is not an ordinary decision nor are these ordinary emotions to process.

“Thank you, Chancellor.” Jan extended his arm toward the white table and chairs directly in the center of the room. “Please, sit.”

The Chancellor stepped toward the table, moving with grace, each foot lifted and placed down without a sound. He paused at the table before sitting. As the fingers of his left hand wrapped themselves around the chair, his right hand extended and circled above the surface of the table. His expression did not change, only the speed of motion of his arm. It slowed over the side Jan had sat moments earlier, feeling the residual energy, then continued its path back to the other side, completing the circle. The Chancellor glided the chair away from the table and lowered himself into the seat opposite Jan’s chair.

Jan nervously grabbed the edge of his chair, jerking it out. A low screech bellowed from the legs scraping the hard floor. The Chancellor did not flinch.

“Before we get into a Session,” began the Chancellor, “I wish to share some concerning news.”

“Please, share. Being quarantined to this space we are cut off from the NewsFlow.”

“That is also intentional. The volunteers need to focus on themselves and their families when making such a monumental decision. News of the outside world only distracts the mind. I feel, however, it would be detrimental to your trust if something were to happen that you were not forewarned about. I am also here to reassure your confidence in the Council.”

“What would happen? Are we in danger?”

“You are already aware that widespread fear has led to desperation outside these walls. The people who were not yet granted sanctuary for various reasons have regressed to

a mental and emotional state that is now considered dangerous for others. It is like nothing ever witnessed since before the time of the Elders. While many have faith in our decision to call on brave volunteers to risk their lives for a cure, this action does not sit well with certain factions.”

“The Risers.”

“Precisely,” continued the Chancellor. “Risers are attempting to break in, stop the procedures, and prevent a cure at any cost. They claim we are no longer aligned with the will of Creator, which is ironic, as negating the Law of Life *is* going against Creator’s will. The PeaceKeepers have already detained several risers, but we believe more are attempting to penetrate this SafeZone. All PeaceKeepers have been put on high alert for the first time in over a century to assure your protection. I know you can appreciate this measure of safety just as I know you can appreciate the importance of the choice at hand.”

Jan stared in shock, attempting to collect his thoughts. “I—I am sure the PeaceKeepers will do their job well. I am surprised this has not caused panic within the SafeZone. I have not felt any significant energetic shifts.”

“That is because we chose to cut off the NewsFlow to the rest of the SafeZone, not just to you. I had hoped not to have to share that information, but today the Council has been forced to make many unwanted decisions, which we hope will be undone come tomorrow with the announcement of a cure.”

“Chancellor, I beg your pardon.” Jan’s fingers began to twitch as he recalled his wife’s concerns about the Council. “Do you not feel it is important for all within the SafeZone to know our safety and lives may be compromised?”

“I feel truth is very important, as it is the backbone of who we are. Here is the dilemma—this information itself compromises your decision, Jan. Feeding information to the masses that will incite more fear, and possibly riots, would undoubtedly compromise our chance at a cure. Believe me, the Council has been faced with choices we never imagined we would face again. We are not attempting to bring deceit back into human awareness, however, we need to exercise unwanted control over this particular situation. The divine sequences and energies have aligned for tonight. It is our best chance for a cure. You do understand how important tonight is, Jan?”

“Of course I do, Chancellor. That is why I am here, willing to volunteer.”

“Good. Then you understand the extreme importance of putting controls in place to protect you while the volunteers and their families make the final decision. And I wish to be as open as possible with you, Jan, that is why I divulge this news. Imagine if your trust in the Council were to be compromised? Any chance at a cure would be lost, and we would undermine our survival. We would not want that, would we, Jan?”

“Of course not, Chancellor,” Jan replied as he began drumming his fingers against the table. The Chancellor had an overwhelming power of persuasion and direction, but as he spoke, doubts began to poison Jan’s mind. The words and fears of his wife echoed in his head. *The Council has lost its way*. “I appreciate your honesty, however, it concerns me to hear that transparency with the people is being compromised by fear.”

“Yes, and it should concern you. And it concerns me. Believe me, Jan, this decision was not made lightly. Nothing we have decided lately has been light.”

“Where does it end? What’s next, Chancellor? Will the PeaceKeepers be permitted to draw swords on the Risers in the name of the cure?”

The Chancellor smiled. “I understand and always value your concerns, Jan. You have been physically, mentally, and energetically exhausted, and I feel this choice is taking a toll on you and your family. This table has certainly felt its share of your frustration and anxiety. Perhaps sharing this information is too much for you to process at this late hour. It has shifted you from what is paramount...the safety of you and your family.”

“ I apologize. I—”

“There is no need to apologize, dear soul. But as you know we are limited on time, so please, let us focus on what is most important. Not the Risers. Not the PeaceKeepers. You. You are why I am here, Jan.”

“Yes, of course,” Jan acknowledged, nodding in agreement. “You are very wise.”

“As are you. It is your wisdom I wish to tap into now.” He glanced at the white clock. “Please, let us focus on the choice at hand.” Leaning back, the Chancellor placed his hands on the table, palms up—the receptive posture. “Please, share with me. Express, release, and be at ease with your decision. There is no judgment. Now, let us begin.”

Tick. Tick. Tick.



The sleeproom entryway slid open revealing her two little, precious twins. Each sat at a small white desk in opposite corners of the room. Their hands paused, halting their color sticks in mid-stroke, as they simultaneously turned to see who was entering.

“Did Daddy decide?” Trina asked, her words quivering with fear and anticipation.

“No darling, not yet. The Chancellor is here.”

“The Chancellor?” Both children chimed in unison. Popping up from their little white seats, they scurried toward the open entryway. “Can we see him, Mommy? Please, please?”

“Not now, darlings. They are engaging in an Expression Session. It is most important your father have this time alone with the Chancellor to help him through his emotions.” She knelt, connecting eye to eye with her children. “In the meantime, perhaps we can have our own Expression Session. How does that sound?”

“Great!” they exclaimed. “I wanna go first,” they replied again in unison.

“I am three minutes older. It is only proper I express first,” Trina said with a stern nod, finally breaking the resonance between them.

“Fine,” Jay retorted. “But I do not think it is a very good reason,” he added under his breath.

A smile crept across Ashley’s face as a laugh bellowed out. She swept up the children, one in each arm, and

squeezed. "I wish I had this much enthusiasm for expressing when I was your age! Now, shall we begin?"



"I understand why I was guided to personally visit you, Jan," acknowledged the Chancellor. "A trinity cannot be denied, and this adds an infinitely more difficult dimension to your choice. Even within my own vision, I was not presented with an outcome. If you volunteer, it truly is a leap of faith. How does that make you feel?"

"I am not used to expressing such feelings. I'm not sure I even have the words to describe them."

"Even a lack of words can be an expression of how you feel. But do not *think* about how you feel. Quiet your mind, tune into your heart, and express whatever you find there."

Jan closed his eyes and inhaled deeply. He re-centered his energy and slowly raised his eyelids. "My wife refuses to allow me to sacrifice myself. If I volunteer, it will break her heart. If I abstain, it will break mine. It is a hopeless choice." His head sank as sadness overtook his expression. "Without her support, I have no chance of producing a cure, and I would relinquish my life for nothing. I—I feel betrayed by my wife."

"There it is," assured the Chancellor. "What other wisdom does your heart reveal?"

He averted his gaze, delving into his thoughts and emotions. "I feel deep anger arising inside me. Anger

because I am not supported. Because I am not loved.” Tears streamed down his face.

“Thank you, dear one. Thank you for opening up to this pain. Allow yourself to feel it. Allow me to process it with you.” The Chancellor outstretched his arms and closed his eyes. He breathed in deeply, in unison with Jan, filling his body and slowly exhaling.

After the tears had run their course, Jan looked up at the Chancellor. “She is holding too much attachment to me. To us. To an ideal family.” His jaw began to clench as the peace of heart was overtaken by anger. “She is putting one family ahead of the remainder of the human race! And I—I resent her for it!” he snapped, smacking his hand against the cold tabletop.



“Well, Trina continued, “It *is* logical for Daddy too, what is the word? Oh, I remember, sacrifice. It is logical for Daddy to sacrifice himself to save everyone. It is also brave. So I should not be sad if that is what he wants.”

“Of course it is logical and brave, Trina, but we are not having Logician Sessions, are we?” Jay let out a giggle and quickly covered his mouth, as not to interrupt.

“I am expressing how I feel about something making sense, Mommy! In school, they say: To do what is best, make it logical for all the rest.” She emphasized with a nod. “So I will love Daddy no matter what he does,” she said, as

her eyes began to well up. “We—we can start Jay’s session, now,” she muttered, carefully trying to wipe her tears.

“Yay,” exclaimed Jay, then once again covered his mouth, realizing Trina would not get off that easy.

Ashley looked over at her son and smirked, then returned her focus to her daughter. “Logic does not override emotion, Angel. We feel the emotions, not repress them. Only in expressing, do we reach truth and clarity. And my dear intelligent child, please do recite the rest of that saying. You think I do not know it?”

Trina pursed her lips and huffed out a sigh. “And we know it is right if it feels good for a night,” she continued, bobbing her head from side to side in time with the rhyme.

“That is right, dear. Logic *and* feeling. Balance between mind and heart. It is too easy to hide behind the logical choice. Logic is not always right. *That* is why we express.” She leaned in. “Please tell me, Trina, if Daddy expires during the procedure, how do you *feel* about that?”

Trina lowered her chin again and the tears began to fall, her voice shaky. “Sad. I will be happy if he saves everyone, but sad if he is not here. And you will be sad. That makes me more sad. Then I will be double sad. I do not want to be double sad.”

Ashley embraced her daughter, as empathetic tears rolled down her cheeks. “I do not want you to feel any amount of sadness, Angel.” She leaned back and softly guided her daughter’s chin up, looking deep into her pair of watery eyes. “And do you know what?”

“What?”

“I do not want to feel sad either. So what are we going to do about that?”

Her head began to sink again. Just as her eyes met the floor, her face brightened with a new thought within. Popping her face back up, her lips wide and happy. “If Daddy expires *and* saves everyone *and* meets Creator, he will be a, what’s the word you said? Savior. He will be the first savior anyone knows!” She sniffled. “But I will also be sad he expired. I don’t like these feelings. This is why logic is better.”

“Bless your beautiful heart, my child. *If* Daddy volunteers, and *if* he expires, we hope he produces a cure and saves everyone. But we do not know if that will happen, *or* if he will meet Creator. Now here is an even more challenging question—What if Daddy expires for no reason? What if he expires and we still do not have a cure and we do not know if he meets Creator? How do you feel then?”

Jay raised his hand, then quickly put it back down. As tempting as it was for him to interject during Sessions, each individual continued until all emotions were cleared.

Ashley looked at her son and smiled. “Thank you, Jay. You will have all the time you need to express when it is your turn.” She looked back at Trina. “That is a very possible outcome, and it is important to express how you will feel about it.”

“How would you feel, Mommy?”

“Ahhh, but you are the Expresser right now. Mommy can have her turn another time.”

Tick. Tick. Tick.



“I am sorry for such outbursts and extreme reactions.”

“I would like to offer a reminder in truth,” comforted the Chancellor. “The feeling is not who you are, it is something you feel. *You* do not resent her. You simply *feel* resentment. To allow yourself to become the emotion tears you away from the truth and only causes more resentment.”

Jan shifted in his white chair. “I *feel* resentment.” He allowed a smile to break through. “It is amazing how such a small change of words shifts the energy around it. I am doing my best to choose the right words to express my feelings.”

“I appreciate the concern, Jan. However, words are not so important. They are only a small measure of how you express yourself. I immediately understand what you feel simply being in your presence. You are expressing yourself wonderfully. Are there other feelings surrounding this choice?”

Jan rubbed his jaw, allowing the growing stubble to distract him before a moment of clarity set in. “It is not what to choose that scares me most, it is having *to* choose. No matter what choice I make, it will be wrong.”

“Good, Jan. Very good.”

“Good? What is good about that? What is good about any of this?” Jan jerked to his feet, his chair flinging to the ground behind him. “I cannot make this decision! Do you understand that? No choice will be right!”

The Chancellor smiled. “This is why we are here. We do not wish you to leave behind fatherless children nor a wife

in misery. Nor do we want you to abstain and live a life of regret. Detach yourself from the outcomes but acknowledge the *feelings* they bring. Use this moment, now, to allow yourself to understand your emotions. Scream. Pound. As long as you allow them to flow through you, not become you, we are on the path to peace and clarity.”

Jan’s head wobbled from side to side. “It is so easy to allow the emotions to take over. They are so strong. How did people live with them?”

“They could not. That was the reason for so much violence. For all the killing. For suicide. It was a dark time indeed. Remember, Jan, there is no obligation to volunteer and no shame if you do not. I offer one last truth to help bring you peace—Even if you are the key and the only possibility of a cure through this procedure, and you do *not* volunteer—Creator’s will *will* find another way. All I ask is that you not allow your emotions to cloud your choice. Clear your mind and shift your awareness. It is within the space of the heart and the confronting of truth, that clarity and the voice of Creator are heard.”

Jan turned to the outside world again, slowly running his fingers through his hair. “I feel I have to try, and yet if I volunteer and expire in the process without harvesting a cure, I fear my wife will spend the rest of her days regretting my choice for me. I cannot volunteer on pure mind knowing I would leave her in such distress. I am at an impasse.”

The chancellor nodded, placed his palms upon the table, and gently rose to his feet. “Jan, I would normally never end a Session until there is complete peace for the Expresser, however, these are not normal times. You and your wife must express again, she is holding onto too

much, and that is holding back your final choice. Time is of the essence.”

“Then I will call her at once, and you can oversee our Session yourself.”

“Normally, I would welcome such an invitation, however—”

“These are not normal times,” Jan added with a smile.

“I do not believe my presence at this time is what your wife needs in order to fully open and release what she is holding onto. I do feel, however, the children have a part to play in all this. They may take my place at the table. Peace to you in your final hour. I will remain near, available if you need.”

Jan rounded the table and embraced the Chancellor.

“Thank you, Chancellor.”

“No, Jan. Thank you.”

They stepped to the south wall. Jan raised a hand, palm facing the entryway. Waiving it to the right, the door dismounted and disappeared as it slid into the wall.

The Chancellor stepped through the threshold into the light of the hallway and turned. “Remember, Jan, Creator’s will finds a way. We honor any choice you honor for yourself. I have faith you will illuminate the way to the right decision. Good day, if it may.” He nodded and waved his hand from left to right.

Before Jan could return the nod, the door slid closed.

Tick. Tick.



Rain continued to pour down. Another hour had passed since the Chancellor first arrived. Each of the four white chairs was filled, one with each member of the family. In the center of the table was a bowl of sunnut butter, now half full. Jan's eyes connected with those of his wife and children. A stillness sat in the air, broken only by the crunches of apples and carrots, after they had been dipped, of course.

"I understand you two had your own session with Mommy while I was with the Chancellor. Is that right?" With mouths still full, both children nodded. "How did it go?" he asked, looking towards his wife.

She looked at each child, then back to her husband, and smiled. "We have such wonderful, expressive, brave little children."

"Wer nod widdle," came a mumbled retort from their full mouths.

"Of course," interjected Jan. "Our brave, *big* children!" Trina smiled and nodded in compliance. "And how was it for you?" He asked, turning to his wife.

Ashley's eyes widened as she stared blankly at her husband. "How was what?"

"How was your Session with the children?"

"Well, I wanted the children to express, and they hoped to see the Chancellor before he left, so I did not express."

"Of course. I understand. Luckily we are all here now. I am sure the children would appreciate witnessing you express. Right kids?"

“Ummm hmmm.” They nodded in unison, still chewing.

Jay peered over at his mother, grinning, exposing all the spots of sunnut butter still stuck in his teeth. “Mommy’s turn to express!”

“I am not sure there is anything more for me to say.”

“Oh, no, no,” interrupted Jan. “After all these years, you are still trying to get out of Sessions. The children expressed with you. I expressed with the Chancellor. It is your turn to share with us.”

Trina swallowed. “Mommy, please?”

She looked at the pleading faces of her family and nodded. A combination of empathy, fear, and sorrow filled her expression. Placing her hands on the table, palms up, she took a deep breath. “OK. You win. What kind of mother would I be asking my children to express, and not do the same?”

Jan and the children finished chewing and held their hands palm up. “Let us begin.”

A thin coating glazed her eyes. Water filled each corner. She looked at her family—husband, daughter, and son. Her hand reached out, interlocking with that of her husband’s. A faint trace of a smile grew as tears began falling.

“I love you so much. I do not know what to do if you are gone. I feel like part of me will expire with you, and what is left will not be the same. If your heart expires, so does mine.” One by one, her tears gathered into a pool on the table as she poured out her heart and soul. Once she finished and the hugs were done, only her puddle of sadness was left to be wiped away.

Tick. Tick.



Jan sat alone in a white chair, at a white table, in a white room, watching the white clock. He was out of options, and out of time. Only 33 minutes remained to make a decision and get prepped in time for the procedure, were he to volunteer. The storm had passed leaving droplets of water slowly crawling down the everglass. It was now dreamtime for the city, and all exterior lights had turned off to conserve energy. The WallGazer was still transparent, but the stark contrast of the inside lighting left only a glare against the glass. The outside world had faded to black and Jan could only see a dim reflection of himself.

Ashley sat alone on the edge of the bed in her darkened sleeproom, A feeling of emptiness surrounded her. She had purged all her bottled-up emotions, but she still could not find peace in sending her soulmate to his demise. Light pierced the darkness as the entry panel shifted into the wall. Two little silhouettes stood in the entryway as light overtook the blackness and flooded in around her.

“Mommy,” they said in unison, “We have the answer.”

“Oh, have you now, Angels?” Trina looked at her brother, and they nodded simultaneously. “Well then, I can stop worrying and call the Chancellor.” She tried her hardest to smile and waved her hand, beckoning them to her. “Tell me, my little geniuses, what answer do you have?”

They apprehensively stepped into the room, holding onto one another’s precious hand. “Please do not be mad, Mommy,” Trina started, “but we already video-commed the

Chancellor to tell him first.” She paused, as her expression wavered between excitement and nervousness. “Because we wanted to ask him if we were bad children for knowing the answer.”

“And he said no,” confirmed Jay. “He said we were good children, and amazing, and brave, and said he would take care of us himself, and—”

“Wait!” She anxiously looked back and forth at her children, desperately trying to make sense of their words. She wasn’t sure where this was going, but it was already too much for her tired soul to process. “Why would you think you are bad? Why would he have to take care of you? What kind of answer is this?”

“We think,” Trina continued, “we think you should expire with Daddy and you can both be with Creator.” She nodded, reaffirming her testament.

“It is the only way, Mommy. Creator said so,” added Jay, with a twinge of excitement in his voice.

Ashley scanned the faces of her children with bewilderment, hoping for signs of jest, but there were none. They were as serious as she. “Why would you say such a thing?”

“Because you cannot live without Daddy, and he cannot save us without you. It is the only way. It is logical *and* feels right,” she said with a gentle nod of her head.

“And Creator said so,” repeated Jay.

Ashley fell to her knees. Eyes wide open. “How is this your solution? How could you even imagine such a disturbing answer? It is one thing for Daddy to sacrifice himself for a cure, but both of us? Leaving you orphans without parents?”

“It was not our idea,” answered Jay.

“We meditated together,” Trina chimed in, “and we were with Creator, and we *saw* it, and we *felt* it, and we *knew*.”

“Both of us at the same time, Mommy,” continued Jay. “We were with Creator, together!”

“We had a Unity!” they both exclaimed in unison.

Ashley remained frozen in shock, speechless.

“It is so exciting, Mommy,” blurted Trina, speaking faster and faster. “I mean, it is also very sad. Please do not think we would not be sad, but we have never had a Unity before.” Tears began streaming as her eyes wandered into the universe. “I still feel it. I wish you could feel it too, Mommy. It was so amazing! It has to be the answer!”

“Daddy has to save us. *He has to!* Creator said so,” hollered Jay.

Ashley looked back and forth at her children, as they took turns trying to convince her. Tears fell faster than she could wipe them as she listened in disbelief. “You said Daddy will not come back,” Trina added. “He said he will find the cure,” added Jay. “Please do not be mad, Mommy,” pleaded Trina. “It’s the only way,” insisted Jay. “Creator said so!” they echoed again.

Ashley finally found the strength to speak. “I do not know if I should be extremely happy or upset that this is your solution?”

“Happy!” They echoed together, along with a third voice joining in. Surprised, Ashley turned to see her husband standing in the doorway.

“I heard the excitement and was listening from the corridor,” said Jan. “The world needed a miracle to save it, and we have two miracles right in front of us.”

Jay jumped in, “We are trying to save the world, Mom!”

“OK, OK!” Interrupted Ashley as she continued wiping the tears from her face. She paused, trying to take in the immense sacrifice her children were willing to make because she could not let go of her husband. She embraced them both, one arm around each child, drawing them in close. “How did you become such brave little souls? It is bad enough Daddy will not come back, and you are willing to sacrifice us both to save humanity.”

“Yes,” they chimed one last time. “Are you mad?” Trina questioned.

“I could not be more proud.” The tears would not stop. She had never released so much emotion. Heartbreak, fear, doubt, joy, and relief uncontrollably poured out. Her lips shuttered as words tried to escape, but she could not speak.

As insane as it was, she could not argue against a Unity with Creator. If she could not fully accept her husband’s sacrifice, they were at an impasse. This was the only other way.

“It is time. Let us call the chancellor.”

Tick.



Only the low humming sound of the hoverbed filled the hall as padded shoes fell undetected. Jan lay still, being prepped for the extraction, gliding weightlessly towards the operating wing. Ashley caught a glance of another

volunteer being glided down a separate hall. She turned to the nurse. “How many oth—”

The nurse swiftly cut Ashley off. “Even we do not know. This is as it was directed. As it should be.”

Ashley nodded and pressed on alongside her husband as he floated into a white, sterile room. The operating space was devoid of sound. Silent monitors filled the space as the surgeons, nurses, and andro-assistants cautiously shifted about. Every movement was graceful, slow, and calculated. There was motion everywhere, but the sound was minimal. There were no ticking white clocks. There were no clocks at all. Time was devoid here. They worked at the pace they needed to, to best accomplish their goal.

An andro-assistant secured the hoverbed into position. The head surgeon checked it and turned to Ashley. “It is time for your last words before we sedate him.”

“Thank you.” She leaned over and lovingly gazed at her husband. “Imagine, I thought you were brave for wanting to sacrifice yourself to save humanity. I am still in shock at our amazing children.”

“I guess we did too good of a job. They do not even need us,” he acknowledged with a smile.

She smiled back, caressing his face with her delicate fingers. “Just when I thought it impossible to choose, our little angels chose for us.” The tears began to fall. “Their bravery shifted my entire being. They understood so deeply, that they were willing to be orphaned to bring salvation. They reminded me what true selflessness is and gave me the strength to let you go, to be here supporting your choice at the end, and be able to return home to raise them. I’m not sure they have anything else to learn from me, but I’ll do my best.”

“I know you will. But it’s not too late to join me,” he smiled. “Meet Creator together? Take a step into the unknown side-by-side? Come on, expire with me,” he laughed.

“Stop with the jokes. This has been hard enough.”

“Honestly, though, I am glad you decided our children were important enough not to leave motherless.” He chuckled again.

“Well, funny man, I’m glad at the hour of your expiration you are filled with such joy.” She smiled. “After all, we need to get those viable biosynths going!” They both laughed, causing even more tears. “Goodbye, my Love. I just—”

“Ash, no,” he interrupted. “We already discussed this. No sappy goodbye. Like you said, I have to keep my biosynths vibrant. Everything you could possibly say to me, I already know.” Tears streamed down both sides of his face. She reached over and wiped them into her hand. She nodded, leaned over, and passionately kissed his lips. “See you on the other side, my Love.”

“Don’t even think about it.”

Ashley looked up at the head surgeon and nodded. He, in turn, nodded at Jan. It was time. Needles were painlessly inserted, connecting to tubes of clear liquid that began flowing into his body.

“Relax,” came a calm whisper from above. “You’ll be asleep in a moment.” Jan felt his eyes getting heavy. The strength in his body faded as he struggled to hold onto his wife’s hand. She let it slip away, as she caressed his face one last time.

BOOM! A defining sound filled the air as the room shook. Surgical tools clattered in a disharmonic symphony

as they rained down upon the floor. Ashley fell backward, hitting her head against the wall. A surge of adrenaline filled Jan, momentarily snapping him out of his anesthesia, as he watched his wife sink to the floor. He reached out in horror, but it was too late. His arm flopped to the side as his eyelids shut.

Ringling in their ears muffled the screams coming from the other side of the entryway. The head surgeon regained his balance and rushed to Ashley's side. He gently raised her torso to assess her wound. Warm blood began running down the back of her neck. "What—What happened?" She asked, still dazed from the blast.

"Com on," shouldered the surgeon. "PeaceKeeper 111, What is the status? Peacekeeper?"

Unfamiliar voices responding screamed back across the com. "Only the Chosen will rise!"

BOOM! Another explosion rocked the operating room. Ashley fell back again, this time knocking her unconscious.



Outside Jan's operating room, glass and debris rained down across the floor from the first blast. Smoke and dust overtook the air. The interior lights flickered in and out of darkness, as Peacekeeper 111 scrambled to his feet.

Other Peacekeepers swarmed the surgical wing, blocking off every entryway. Each held a stunner in hand, prepared to enforce the peace. Through the gaping hole in the corridor, two Risers emerged, dusty and shaken from

their own explosion. The one on the right stumbled through first, pausing at the intimidating sight of the PeaceKeepers. “Stop this abomination,” he cried out. “Only Creator and Mother Gaia give and take life!”

PeaceKeeper 111 charged ahead, drawing his stunner, and leaping over the rubble between him and the two Risers. He stopped a few feet from them, unhinging his sword, revealing a glint of the unbreakable metal that was hidden within its sheath. “Surrender immediately,” he commanded.

“It is not up to you to decide who lives!” screamed the first Riser. “The plague was sent to cleanse the world of humanity’s sins against Creator. Only Creator will judge the worthy.” He reached behind, extracting something from the back of his tattered outfit. He raised his right arm, revealing a broken shard of glass in his hand, dripping with blood from his wounded palm.

The PeaceKeeper quickly drew his sword, allowing the sound of reverberating metal to fill the corridor. “PeaceKeeper 111,” echoed a distant voice from the left, accompanied by the sound of swiftly approaching footsteps. “Remember the Chancellor’s instructions—no bloodshed!”

111 held his gaze upon the Risers, shouting back, “There is already bloodshed!” To the right, the voice of the head surgeon called out, diverting the PeaceKeeper’s attention. “PeaceKeeper 111, What is the status?”

PeaceKeeper 111 looked towards the operating room entryway. The Risers seized the distraction and lunged towards the Peacekeeper, screaming, “Only the Chosen will Rise!”

111 instinctively reacted without hesitation. Simultaneously, he fired his stunner with his right hand as he swung his sword with the left. Another explosion rocked the building, knocking everyone back to the ground. The PeaceKeeper's sword slipped from his hand and flung across the corridor.



The intercom initiated throughout the building. “The SafeZone is momentarily compromised. Please remain in your current rooms. The SafeZone is momentarily compromised. Please remain in your current rooms.” With that, the operating room entryway auto-locked.

“For the love of Creator. Mercy be with us,” called out the surgeon as he scrambled again to Ashley’s aid. The andro-assistants gently raised her torso disinfecting and cleaning her wound. “She’s unconscious, but she’ll be fine,” he called out to the others. “How is the volunteer?”

“He’s fine, physically,” replied the nurse. “I’m not sure how much he witnessed before he faded out. His biorhythms are spiking and unsteady. He could be in shock. The procedure could be compromised. Do we wait or abort?”

“This could be our only shot. We have to proceed,” replied the surgeon.

“We do not have the authority to make such a decision,” rebutted the nurse.

“We do not know what is happening out there or the extent of the damage. I am giving myself authority. We must complete the procedure. I need you with me. What say you?” He peered around the room, connecting with each staff member. One by one, they slowly nodded in agreement.

“OK, work fast, work flawlessly, and pray to Creator one of these volunteers produces a cure.”



Outside the entryway, among the rubble, lay the two Risers. One stunned, unconscious, the other holding his ribcage, broken from his fall, slowly attempting to rise to his feet. With one hand holding his waist, he pushed himself to his knees. With the other hand scrambled for a shard, rock, or some sort of weapon. A glint of metal caught his eye. He reached out and grabbed the handle of the PeaceKeeper’s sword. He slowly pushed himself up, raising the sword into the air. “Only...the Chosen...will rise!”

Still on the ground, PeaceKeeper 111 swiftly aimed and pulled the trigger of his stunner. “Not today.” The shockwave knocked the Riser back to the ground, rendering him unconscious.

A silhouette appeared through the dust, charging towards him. It took 33 seconds between shots for a stunner to recharge. Watching as the lights illuminate one by one,

he rose to his knees, and took aim, hoping the stunner would charge in time. “Halt!”

A familiar voice rang out. “Peace to you, my friend.” A PeaceKeeper emerged, stepping aside to reveal the Chancellor. His hand reached out, assisting the PeaceKeeper to his feet. “Thank you for your service, my loyal protector. Are the volunteers safe?”

“No one entered the room, but I do not know what damage may have occurred from the blast.”



Inside, Ashley and Jan’s bodies lay there, motionless. All worked tirelessly in unison to accomplish their goal. Speaking seldom, nodding and pointing, they moved in a flowing symphony of technology and biology. They worked as fast as they could, careful, precise, and focused.

“Phase 2 is nearing completion,” the head surgeon called out. “Prepare for final phase 3. This is the last extraction.”

As the syringe vacuumed the last biosynths, a blinking red light grabbed the attention of each of the scientists. In unison, their heads turned. “We are losing him,” the nurse called out. Organized chaos seized the room. Bodies pushed by each other while arms lifted and fell. Hands motioned, grasped, and twisted.

“We lost him,” called out the head surgeon. “Beginning 1 of 3 revivers to pull him back. Ready number 1. Go.”

A flash of light filled the room as a shockwave reverberated throughout Jan’s lifeless body. “Nothing.”

“Ready number 2. Go.”

“Nothing.”

“Ready number 3. This is our last chance. Go.”



The children’s heads popped up as the entryway slid open, revealing a tall figure. This time, the Chancellor did not ask permission to enter and came running in. Tears filled his eyes as he beckoned the children from their seats. “Children, come. You are OK, Yes?”

They ran towards him, followed closely by the andro-nanny left to care for them during the procedure. Trina nervously grabbed her brother’s hand and drew a breath. “We are OK. What happened?” They both peered past the Chancellor. Only a PeaceKeeper stood in the entryway. “Where is Mommy?” asked Jay. “She said she was coming home,” added Trina. “Did Daddy produce a cure?” They echoed together.

Bending down on one knee, the Chancellor aligned his eyes with theirs. “Let me speak fully and I will answer all your questions. There was an accident and—“

“Mommy is not coming home?” interrupted Trina as worry overtook her expression.

“Yes. No. I mean, yes, she is coming home. Dear children. Let me speak! She was injured from the explosion and—“

“Explosions!” They gasped. “I thought they were earthquakes,” added Jay.

“Yes, explosions, which interrupted the procedure—”
“Daddy expired without a cure?” Trina blurted out, as the tears began to stream.

The Chancellor raised his voice with a commanding bellow. “Children! Be at peace!” They froze, never feeling such power from the Chancellor. Seeing their shock, he softened his voice. “Please, be still and allow me to speak. Yes?”

They nodded in agreement. Trina’s grip tightened around her brother’s little fingers, and she drew him close to her side. Her voice wavered. “W—We’re sorry.”

His lips extended into an enormous smile. “Brave children, I apologize to you. You have been through much. *All* will be well.” He reached out, taking a hand of each child in his. “Now I tell you, *both* your parents are alive! And I tell you today is a *miraculous* day! One that will be retold throughout the new history. Your mother was injured and is OK. Your father is alive and attending to her. They will be here very soon. They sent me ahead to let you know what happened.”

Trina’s hand released her brother’s as she flung her body into the Chancellor. He wrapped his arms around her precious torso and squeezed.

Jay stood motionless. Instead of joy, worry filled his mind. “There is no cure?”

The chancellor released the hug and drew Jay near. “Dear child, I apologize again. I have not told you the most miraculous part. Your father *has* met Creator, and—”

“You said he was alive!” Interrupted Jay. Trina sternly looked at her brother, jerking his hand. “Yes, Jay! Let him speak.”

A laugh escaped the mouth of the Chancellor. “Thank you, dear Trina,” he acknowledged. “I tell you in sincere truth. Your father *is* alive, *and* he has met Creator. We have witnessed a true miracle, and will have a cure by morning.”

“He had a Unity? Like we did?” Trina inquired.

“His experience was beyond even that!” Both their small faces stared in wonder as the Chancellor continued. “I will explain at length, dear children, and you will understand. I promise. There were explosions as a few unfaithful men tried to stop the procedure. You felt the blasts. The explosion hurt your mother and compromised the procedure. Your father’s body indeed expired during this chaos. Once a heart stops beating, there are three chances to revive it. On the third attempt, your father was revived, and during the time his body expired, his soul directly communed with Creator!”

The twins remained still, shock and wonder filling their eyes. “Your father returned to his body with the cure and a message directly from Creator. We will all be saved!”

The echo of footsteps filling the hallway stopped the Chancellor’s next words. Outside the entryway, the PeaceKeeper reacted, grabbing the handle of his sword with one hand and unholstering his stunner with the other.

The Chancellor stood and command rang out. “Peace!”

The PeaceKeeper immediately released the weapons, returning to a neutral stance. The Chancellor laughed once more. “You have marvelous reaction times, 111, but we need to work on your intuition. The ones approaching are definitely not Risers. I can feel their beautiful energy from here.”

The footsteps grew louder and faster. The PeaceKeeper stepped aside as Jan and Ashley emerged in the entryway.

They rushed in, dropping to their knees, embracing the children in their arms.

“Is it true, Daddy? You really met Creator?” They asked together in typical fashion.

“Yes. It is true, my angels.”

“And he gave you a message?”

“Yes. That is also true. He told me we already have the cure.”

“Not me,” Trina rebutted, bewildered. “Where is it?”
Asked Jay, looking around.

He chuckled. “Yes, as a matter of fact, you do, Trina. And so does Jay. And Mommy, and everyone. It is something we all possess.”

“Then why are people dying?” Jay asked.

“Creator said all life is created to survive all things, and that we are created as miraculous beings. We already have everything we need within us. It is simply dormant. The cure has been with us all along, sleeping inside our very own cells. And now I know how to awaken it. I have already told the scientists, and they have confirmed it. We will all be OK. No one else needs to expire unless they choose to.”

“Why would someone want to expire?” asked Trina.

“To re-merge with Creator and return in a new body, and begin the journey of life all over. There is so much I wish to tell you, but I think you need some rest first, especially Mommy.”

Watching the family filled the Chancellor’s heart with joy. “And there is so much I wish to hear as well, but I will also take leave for the night.” He stepped to the entryway, turned, and paused. The white clock caught his eye. The

hands had stopped at 11:11, frozen by a power surge from the explosion.

Jay stood and approached, embracing the Chancellor. “Thank you, Chancellor, for all you have done.”

“And I, along with the world, owe you gratitude for your unwavering faith and fortitude, as well as that of your wife.” He nodded to Ashley, then turned his gaze to Jay and Trina. “And I especially acknowledge the bravery of these miraculous children. It is the understanding, strength, and love within this family that I believe has led to this miracle. You are honored more than you can imagine. I bid you all a welcome, and much deserved, good night’s sleep.

The Chancellor took a step back into the corridor. “I will reserve an hour in the morning with the Council to record a full account of your experience, Jan.”

“That will not do, Chancellor.”

“I apologize,” the Chancellor replied, with a hint of surprise. “Are you saying you do not wish it to be in the morning, or you will not be recording an account of your experience?”

Jan chuckled. “No. I am saying it will take more than an hour.”

“Very well, I will reserve the afternoon as well.”

“Chancellor, no disrespect, but you may want to reserve the week, possibly longer.”

For the first time, Jan saw a look of shock on the Chancellor's face. “Jan, according to the log, you were only separated from your body for 33.3 seconds. How much could you learn in such a short amount of time?”

Jan smiled as an immense peace overtook his being. “Everything.” He raised his hand. “Goodnight, Chancellor.” With a wave of his arm, the door closed.

About the Author



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