

Chapter II *The Greedy Hands of Demons*

Half the story has never been told . . .
- Bob Marley



Dreams of Ancient Jericho

The night sky is always a deepening shade of reds, then purples. It comes in slowly and surely, without concern for those who still need the light of day. In times before electricity, the stars were enough. There was nothing else to turn to; rockers on porches were front row seats. And in earlier times, you slept under the sky. It brought you just enough light to guide you into bed, just enough to wonder at the brilliant display of stars above. A campfire would light your evening meal and keep you warm, or at least mesmerized, until the night closed in, and you found that path into the dream realm. This is where we begin to open, and accept our own destiny, in dreams of futures, and dreams of past, in dreams of glory or failure.

Now settle in, for I begin in a manner that may seem strange until you find the rhythm of the theme of this particular story. This is the sum total of the history of a breath that passed through life, or through light; and then through a darkness so dense that it could never have been penetrated without shedding the personality first. You are about to shed your skin, and become breath only. For *skin* is a very human state, and to shed your skin is really just what this story is all about. Once death takes a life away, is it possible to remain in the world as a ghost, or a phantom vibration, felt but never recognized as being once of human origin?

It is time now to return to the place where all faces are understood as only the masks of the roles we play for the sake of living in the human frame of mind. When the impulse overtakes you, step in and add your own version of the story. After all, this is why we all tell our stories, whether they are heard from that distant place we think of as heaven, or from places too dark to mention. I will shine a light for you in this dark hell, but now by the light of the full moon, listen as I tell you the story of a child, doomed to fall into the greedy hands of demons that rake the coals of hell. Imagine the light beginning to open the shadows in your vision. And never turn your face away again, for only by facing this life once lived will you ever be free of its sad effect.

We begin in a setting not so much a desert, as an ancient city. The city is walled, and the gates lead out in every direction but the one we will take, as the time-traveler comes to be the focal point in this part of your

story. Assuming that you can actually know the ways of living in such a place, do look around, and see the city in its false appearance. For this is but one of many such places in your memory, a fact you have already considered. To be a traveler through time, you must prepare for Time to be an existing place. If this is possible in your thoughts, you can be in many places at one point in time! So barring any unfound stations which we have not yet aligned to visit, we know our destination to be this ancient city, in a distant land called Samaria.

As we travel in thought to that place of your birth, see yourself again in a moment of crying for the mother you never knew. For you already understood that she was gone. Abandoned by both father and mother, you were left to die or live by your own wits. It matters that you lived. A deep inner yearning is your childish way of partaking in life. You look for food and shelter with the sunrise, and lay awake looking at the stars at night, wondering what living is all about.

Today we see an ample supply of water being hauled up from the well. Today, at least, you live with water enough to survive. Think of all life as depending upon the water supply, as this was and always will be a fact of existence. In troubled times of drought, you are called an extra mouth. In times of abundant water, you are as if invisible.

In the days we are speaking of right now, you are all the more willing to leave this place of poverty and death, for a chance to live among the ones who wander in the desert in search of water. They always seem to find it when they need it. Or so it seems to you, a child with a point of view already stronger than she knows. A mother with a brood will never leave a child behind. And this is the way you seek to leave the city. If you join, or follow close enough behind, you will be included in the brood. No other way comes to mind.

Off then we walk, following behind a family too large to know one child from another. This of course is not true, but in your young mind it seems to be so. Walking out with complete confidence lasts only so long. Your legs are smaller for the lack of food; your endurance has never been tested in this environment. Soon you lag behind, and soon you vanish from sight. You were in the desert all alone by nightfall, a very dangerous place for a child to be. Starvation was not your worry; but water was, as always, a necessity. This you knew without having to be told. Night fell, and loneliness set in. A child who lived among the city throngs had little experience with being so completely alone.

You sensed the presence of danger. And it took the form of a beast - but of the human kind. This beast was watching for just such an opportunity, a child alone at night. The experiences of a lifetime are always joined together by a common thread, and your thread was chosen on this night. It was a bitter moment: to know you were about to be unfettered from this earth, and then to find yourself alive still, moaning in a voice not seemingly your own. If "pillage" is thought of as a word from a past time, then "rape" transcends all time, for rape is still with you today. You turned as the death blow was delivered, and it was misdirected, for no purpose but to pain you further. And the murderer became the one to torture a child long into her life, as your broken body, still alive, was left to be eaten by the dogs. The last sight you glimpsed in that moment was of a night sky brilliantly lit by stars, and by the full moon. The darkness came to your rescue, and Time had no more hold upon your mind.

Alive is our key to the story now. Without a moment to lose, a man with a certain way of finding the lost and the forgotten came upon you, the child in our story, and hauled your broken body to a campfire still smoldering at dawn. Now shall we tell you of this savior, or do you need more time to feel the pain of being still alive?