

Excerpt from

*The Horseman's Heritage*

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Prologue

“You want me to interfere in my own father’s life?”

They walked along the narrow fuselage of the time ship, Phase.

“Not so much interfere as intervene.”

“Same thing,” Gabe argued.

Shaking his head, Sam laughed. “I suppose it is. I understand your reluctance.”

Sam was a man of commanding presence, standing six foot, four inches tall with wide shoulders. Gabe, tall enough at six-one himself, had to stretch his strides to match steps with Sam. The Guardian -- not a formal title -- but that’s what the team called Sam. To a man and woman, they all respected and trusted him, following his lead through some strange and surreal paranormal missions.

“I do understand,” Sam went on. “It’s like asking a surgeon to operate on his father, but you can do it, son.”

“Damn. Can you assure me there’s no risk to my father’s mental health to have a son he thinks dead turn up? A son who’s aged twenty-five years in only five of his years?”

“You won’t so much turn up ... as communicate with him.”

“Oh, right, much better. A disembodied vocal message from his dead and now grown son.”

Sam glared at him. “We all do our jobs. The time angle is damn hard to explain, I grant you. Never understood it well myself and I’ve seen it work.” He looked thoughtful. “Reese Caldwell may feel you were cheated of your childhood.”

“I *was* cheated of my childhood. I was also cheated of my family.”

“You don’t mean that. You know the work you do is crucial. I think of you as my own son.”

Gabe stopped in his tracks. “I ... ah ... thanks, Sam, I appreciate that. Means a lot to me.”

Sam stopped too, turned to face Gabe and slapped him on the back awkwardly, then hugged him more awkwardly. “Hell, you get to live forever now, man. A fair trade I think. Don’t you?”

With that he walked on. Gabe followed, jogging to catch up.

“I don’t know. Endless years of missions like the last two may take a toll on a man.” Gabe grinned. “I barely made it back from the last mission with my hide in tact. Nearly rode a volcano out of there.”

“There were some surprises there.”

“You think?”

“You used your brain, did your job, warned the village.”

Gabe nodded, remembering the grateful expressions of the children he’d saved.

“The Peacewatcher People on Earth are ... largely inactive,” Sam continued.

“They have the same paranormal gifts we have, but no formal training these days. No focus, no leadership. They’ve lost the technology to sustain their lives to immortality. They have the occasional true dreams and some heed them, do something to help others ....”

“Like Aunt Josie?”

“Yes. A good woman. She managed to let us know you were in immanent danger. Her telepathic messages are unusually strong.”

“I bet she thought she was praying for me?”

“Yeah, she did think that. She was. The ones like Josie are not as efficient as before the American Civil War. Man, we failed there. Not in the results, the results were good, but it cost too much in loss of life.” He shook his head. “Damn shame. We can do better than that. We finally have complete communications with Earth back up and running. We can’t do it all. We need to enlist their help, the help of the Peacewatcher descendants.”

Sam had told him before that Sam had been born into the Earth Peacewatchers in 1846. Many of the team on Phase were ancient souls.

“Why not send a new colony there?” Gabe asked.

“Travel back and forth is too risky for now. We’ve lost too much technology over the years. The ability to travel is more limited now than when Peacewatchers first arrived on Earth many, many years ago. We need to reignite the existing colony to--”

“I traveled here from Earth,” Gabe interrupted.

“Yes, at great risk to your safety. You were stolen by a renegade mad woman in a high-jacked time machine. Don’t get me wrong, I’m glad you’re here. Aylie’s compassion is greater than her sanity at times. That trip was not authorized by Command and Control.”

Gabe laughed and gave Sam a sideways look. “She’s your wife and you know you love her.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“Neither of you ever told me of the danger involved in my rescue.”

“No reason to tell you that before now. Let’s move. We need to get you to the communications room. Now. They tell me things are happening fast. Your father is nearing a major crossroads in his life. Another tragedy ... or a good life. Yet to be determined. You can help secure the best outcome--for him and the future of Earth’s Peacewatchers.”

“I don’t know about this Sam. What if I screw up? Send someone else.”

“You don’t mean that. Your work is exemplary.”

“Yeah, well, because you always suck me in with some sad story. Assure me I alone can fix it and save the universe as we know it.”

“You have a sister.”

“Aw, hell. That would do it.”

“Suck you in, did I?” Sam flashed him a devilish grin.