

Chapter 1

The first time Paul Abrams died was the strangest. For the first time in his life he was capable of being in two places at once. The hard surface of the pavement lay beneath his head. At the same time he was relaxed and floating, looking down on his body lying at the edge of the road. A growing cold crept over his skin, yet his bones were warm and fuzzy, like he'd had a shot of whisky. In the distance he could hear the sound of sirens.

Above him appeared the face of a divine woman. Hanging honeyed locks framed an almost porcelain visage.

The sound of the sirens encroached upon the vision in front of him. Lots of sirens.

He tried to push the sound away in order to concentrate on the beautiful apparition before him.

What's happening? He tried to ask, suddenly not sure how to move his lips, or if it even mattered anymore. Realisation dawned. The sirens were for him. It occurred to him for the first time that he was dying, but he was okay with this.

So this is what it feels like?

Ironically he scarcely felt anything at all. The vision swam in and out of focus, growing as fuzzy as his own thoughts before emerging again.

“Are you an Angel?”

A single crystal tear formed at the corner of the Angel's eyes. Then everything went dark.

The darkness seemed to last a long time, though he couldn't be sure, time didn't seem to work the same way here. The light returned and the Angel appeared above him again. Her lips were moving.

“Do you have a message for me?” Paul tried to ask.

He couldn't hear what she was trying to tell him. Before he could ask again things began to grow fuzzy and oblivion once more enveloped him.

A man's voice called from the abyss.

“Paul?”

He was sleepy. It was nice here. Peaceful.

“Paul? Can you hear me?”

Paul tried to respond but all he could hear was a distant muffled sound coming from somewhere far away, yet inside of him.

“Nnngung” was all that came out.

“We’re going to have to move him,” said the voice.

Paul felt himself floating. He was looking toward the sky. He could see clouds moving above and for a moment it seemed as if they’d shifted closer. A golden shaft of sunlight pierced through. The Angel was no longer to be seen, but he smiled all the same. At least he was heading in the right direction. He gave in to the feeling of quietly slipping away.

There was a sharp pinch in his left arm, like an angry insect had bitten him. A flood of cold rushed through his veins.

“We’re losing him.”

Go away! He tried to call out but the words refused to come. There was something in his mouth, blocking his tongue, stopping him from speaking.

“Paul we’re going to try something, there’s a chance this may hurt a bit.”

Paul ignored the voice. It was annoying, and it was growing distant now. He felt himself running. Not in the usual familiar painful sluggish way, but free and with ease. He couldn’t remember running like this since he was a child. He looked around and saw he was striding through a brightly colored open field.

“Clear.”

Clear? It seemed like an odd thing to say to someone running through a golden field of wheat. The breeze made the long blonde stalks nod and tugged at his hair, which seemed to have regrown to lengths it hadn’t seen for the last twenty years.

There was a clap of thunder in his ears and a searing pain ripped through his chest. For an instant he thought he’d been shot. Then everything went black.
