

## Chapter Seven: Desperate Lives

As the sun rises over Barstow, a lonely shadow walks upon the earth with a feeling of despair. Samantha has been in the hospital for over three months now and the doctor's still haven't found what is ailing her. Laevieus is troubled by the anguish in his heart for the young child. He has visited her as often as he could, but his service to Him takes away precious time that could be spent by her side. As he enters the hospital ward, returning from his task, he sees that her parents seem a little happier this day. They had just been informed that Samantha would be able to go home. This was good news for Laevieus; being so troubled in his heart was affecting his mannerism towards those who needed his assistance. He started to feel indifferent for their plight of fate; he could not get himself to have compassion when he was tortured within. But now he felt better, much happier because of the news. As Amber and Doug softly talks to Samantha Laevieus comes in a little closer to listen to their conversation.

“Honey, guess what? You get to go home with me and dad today!” says Amber as she holds her daughter's hand. “Everything is going to be alright and you will be playing with daddy in the backyard real soon.” It had felt like an eternity for both of them, being by her side daily as the fever had no mercy on one so young. Laevieus felt like speaking up but he knew they could not see or feel him let alone hear him. At times, when he visited Samantha, he would talk to her while her parents slept, in the hopes that she would hear him. He always felt that Samantha could, but had no confirmation of this, only her sudden stares his way caused him to believe that she could. As the doctor returned to the room his hands are full of papers with instructions for Samantha's care. “We still have not pin pointed what happened to Samantha, but here are some instructions to follow as you watch over her. What you can do if the fever returns, how to recognize dizzy or light headed spells before it gets worse, and other things that I felt may help you both to be better aware of any other symptoms that may arise until we find her ailment and cure. I am going to ask you to bring Samantha back at least once a week so we can check on her progress.” “Thank you doctor, we appreciate all that you have done so far. I will be sure to bring her back every week!” says Amber as she glances at Samantha who has been sitting up and listening to the whole conversation. “Now Samantha, you are going to have to watch over your parents so that they don't get too worried about you. So please make sure that you tell them if you feel even a little sick, okay?” says the doctor with a smile as Samantha nods her head in agreement. Laevieus is relieved that all is well and can feel his own heart lifted by this happy turn of events. Suddenly a voice speaks, “Laevieus, it is time.” “I am coming.” Replies Laevieus. “What is this I sense? A lighter heart becomes you Laevieus!” responds the voice. “It will do you well on this next task.” Laevieus takes one last look at Samantha and turns to leave.

He enters what looks like a farm house. As he walks he hears the tears of what sounds like a woman crying from the second floor. Laevius follows the voice to find an elderly woman leaning over the body of her now deceased husband. As Laevius enters in he finds the elderly man sitting in a rocking chair facing a window that looks over the golden wheat field growing behind the house. "You know, I have worked my whole life on the farm, I sure am gonna miss this." speaks Mr. Benjamin Cohen in a country style twang voice. Benjamin stands up to face Laevius; "Well, this sure is not what I expected! I just thought we all ended and none of this existed, boy was I wrong." He takes a look at Sarah his wife one last time. "She'll be alright, she's one of the good ones!" then starts to walk towards Laevius. "So, how does this work? Do I just follow you or you just point the way and I go alone?" Laevius is surprised at Benjamin's attitude over his death. "You follow me." Says Laevius as he turns to leave the world of the living. Suddenly the room changes and just like before he and his task are walking side by side in an endless world of clouds. "I never knew God," says Benjamin; "I never wanted to believe because of what I had been seeing all over the world. People fighting, people dying, people hating, I guess I could not see God in this." Laevius listens with interest as they walk, he too, at one time thought the same way, but being who he was he knew God was real, but from a humans perspective he understood. Benjamin continued to talk; "Well, I guess it's the hell hole for me! I never gave God a chance; I was an idiot to not see Him in all things." Suddenly a light appears up ahead and the door that is well familiar to Laevius appears.

"Well Mr. Death, it has been a pleasure seeing you, now I know my own ignorance and my fate waits me." Laevius looks at Benjamin and with a soft voice of compassion he speaks; "God's mercy is great, he knows." And with those words tears start to fill the eyes of this old man. "Thank you much for that, I do appreciate that voice of confidence." And as they get closer to the door Benjamin sighs; "I was a fool!" he says to Laevius; "I am a dammed fool!" As they reach the door Laevius speaks; "As you have lived so will you be judged." Those words echoed into Benjamin's hearing as he stepped toward the door alone. And with one last sigh he starts to speak; "Now God, I just wanted to say something; I was mistaken to have judged You by my own sight. I never gave You a chance when I know You must have given me so many, but Your judgment of me is true, I am not worthy, so before You throw me out I just wanted to say that I am sorry. And to thank You for the life You gave to me and the woman You allowed me to have, that was mighty kind of You." And as Benjamin took hold of the door knob, it starts to turn and a voice starts to speak. "Benjamin, worthiness is not based on what you knew of Me, but if you lived your life as if you knew Me. I may have never heard a prayer, or saw you read My word, but you lived as if I was written in your heart. You treated people with kindness and love that cannot be gained by those means; you truly have showed more love to mankind than most of my servant to their own kind. I find you worthy this day to enter into My kingdom." And with those words the door opens for Benjamin who by now has fallen to his knees and was sobbing with gratefulness. Benjamin gets up and with a deep breath and his head held high, he walks

through the door. Laevieus is moved by the mercy shown this man by God and feels a sense of justice as he turns to leave this world to enter into the world of the living.

Three months had gone by since he last saw Samantha and decided to check in on her. As he turns he enters into the back yard of Samantha's home. Samantha is sitting on the porch reading a book; she has no idea that Laevieus is watching her. "Samantha honey, you hungry?" asks Amber from the kitchen window. "No, not really, but I could eat a cookie!" replies Samantha with a chuckle. "Now you know that won't happen so close to dinner time; why don't you come in and clean up for dinner, daddy should be home real soon." replies Amber. Samantha gets up and enters the house, Laevieus is right behind her and enters the kitchen to see that it is fried chicken for dinner. As Samantha walks ahead of Laevieus he notices that she is limping, as if she hurt her left foot. Laevieus knows that he missed something on his task with Benjamin; Samantha must have gotten hurt and his curiosity as to how is raised in his mind. Laevieus follows Samantha upstairs to her room; he has never been in her room since they moved here. As he reflects on her room back at the other house he can see that she has grown so much. Not a baby anymore! She now has posters of teen idols hanging on her wall; she has her own television and stereo and of course a laptop computer sitting on her own desk! So much has changed for Samantha that Laevieus felt a bit left out. Samantha enters her room from her private bathroom that daddy installed for her privacy, she is nice and clean from a quick shower and fresh clothes were lying on her bed to wear. Laevieus had never seen Samantha's naked body before and notices that she has a scar on her left leg, a pretty long one and what looks like stitches along the sides. "That is a pretty bad scar for one so young." Thought Laevieus as he turned away to give Samantha privacy to dress. "Samantha; dinners ready!" yells Amber from the bottom step of the stairway. "I'm coming mom!" yells Samantha back as she brushes her wet hair. Samantha puts the brush down and with a limp starts to sort of run down stairs. "No running in the house Samantha! Especially down the stairs! I do not want a replay of what happened a few months ago! So be careful." Says Doug as Samantha comes closer to give him a hello kiss. "Alright daddy, I'll be more careful." Replies Samantha as she takes her place at the dinner table. "Samantha, it's your turn to say grace." reminds Amber to Samantha. "Okay" and as they bow their heads and hold hands Samantha says grace. "Dear God, thank You for the food that You gave to us this day, thank You for feeding others in the world, and thank You for being with us at dinner. I hope You enjoy the food mommy made, Amen!" and with a chuckle Doug and Amber reply; "Amen!" During dinner the family converses about their days events; Amber found a great new yogurt shop that she and Samantha found while grocery shopping; Samantha learned how to say "hello" in Spanish and kept repeating it through out dinner: and Doug talked about the new computer system at work that he had to learn in two days. Dinner was a pleasant time for all and Laevieus felt apart of the family. "Laevieus prepare, time has come." Spoke a voice. And with that Laevieus takes one last look and turns to enter into a house of worship.

As Laevius walks through this house of worship he is familiar with the statues depicting Christ and his final days. Pews line both sides of the walkway that leads to the front of the church. It was a very large church, looked like it could fit at least two thousand people. As he continued to walk he sees what looks like a figure of a man kneeling in one of the pews; it is Pastor Ronald Morgan. He was cleaning the pews when he had a sudden heart attack and died where he sat. Laevius walks over to Ronald's body and touches his shoulder; and with that Ronald's spirit rises out of his lifeless corpse. "Are you here to take me to God?" asks Ronald as he looks at Laevius. But without saying one word Laevius turns and starts to walk away. Ronald starts to follow close behind as if trying to not be left behind. And as they walk the room changes and the clouds appear with a bright light way ahead. When Ronald looked at the distance he was surprised and starts to speak; "That's a long way to travel to get to the kingdom! I have been waiting for this day since I became the Pastor of Hillside Assembly Church; I knew I would get in." Laevius takes a glance at Ronald and continues to walk in silence. "I always taught the people that if they believed in Jesus Christ they would get in; if they pleaded the blood of Christ they were guaranteed in!" Laevius glances at Ronald again and stays silent. "You know, we had a bible study once on this subject and I asked everyone who they thought would be most likely to get in; they all said I would! Isn't that something, they said me; boy were they right!" spoke Ronald with a smile and a chuckle. "I can't wait to see the mansion that God has prepared for me; He said He goes to prepare a place for us; I had a dream about it also. Yeah, it was magnificent; almost three stories high and servants to attend to my every need. You know, our church did many things for God; like, feeding the homeless, raising money to give Him a beautiful church, and, and, hmmm, I can't seem to remember; anyway we did a lot!" Laevius stays quite as they get closer to the door that waits to show Ronald his eternal destiny. "This sure is a long walk, I thought heaven would be closer after you died and it would be faster getting there." As Ronald looks ahead it seemed that they made no progress towards the door, it seemed like they were walking in place and that time felt like forever. This is sure a long walk; how long have we been walking? I am feeling a bit tired; am I supposed to get tired? I thought I left my human body behind so being sick or tired doesn't follow us." Ronald pauses from speaking to think about what he just said, something didn't feel right and the door seemed farther away.

Ronald is now silent on this journey that Laevius is taking him on; this walk opens a man's eyes to the truth of their life. People become very honest with themselves and God on this final journey. As Ronald looked up from his inward reflection he sees that the door is much closer and starts to talk again. "Boy, we are finally here! That was sure a long test of faith! Anyway, how does this work? I kind of expected Jesus to be standing in front of me, with His arms open ready to give me the hug that I always talked about. I never expected this, but I know it is coming." Laevius looks at Ronald and speaks; "Your destined eternal waits, you must go alone." Ronald looks at Laevius and smiles; "This is the moment I have been waiting for!" Then turns and starts running towards the door; and without hesitation he grabs the knob and turns to find that the door is locked! He starts to jiggle the knob as if he

didn't turn it right, but it still won't open. He starts to think; "Maybe I am supposed to knock." So he starts to knock; "Hello? Jesus it's me, Your servant Pastor Ronald!" He yells as his knocking starts to become louder and a little more frantic. "Jesus, it is I; Pastor Ronald; are You there?" Ronald starts to feel a bit fearful of this situation and starts to pound on the door; "JESUS; IT'S ME, YOUR SERVANT PASTOR RONALD MORGAN" Ronald does not like what is happening so he falls to his knees and starts to pray; "Lord Jesus, I have believed in You for many years. I have taught Your people to believe in You and to love You with all their hearts. I come before You and I plead your blood; Your blood that You shed for me on Calvary; I have done everything that You told me to do, I gave to the church, I fed Your sheep, I clothes the naked, I did more than anyone else! Please look upon me Your servant." And with that a voice echoes from the eternal heaven. "Ronald," "Yes Lord, here I am" replies Ronald as he smiles at hearing God's voice. "Ronald, you have feed the hungry, you have taught my sheep; you even clothed the naked. You have built Me a house of worship, Healed My sick and counseled the weak; but there is one thing that you lacked; you did not do it for Me!" And with that Ronald jumps to his feet and questions what God just said; "How can you say I did not do it for You? How can You imply that it was all for me?" "Ronald, you lacked the love that drives a man to do all that you had done, you lacked the love that becomes and example that the blind may truly see Me. You have done many things with the intention of receiving a great reward; you did not do it for Me, you did it for you!" And with that Ronald reflects as God shows him his own heart and walk with Him. "You see Ronald, I was always behind you; I was never before you." Ronald falls to his knees in disbelief and with a realization that God was right the heavens start to dissolve away and Ronald with a loud scream finds himself falling into eternal damnation. Laevius quickly turns to not hear the screams that come from a place so horrific that though one is dead, he begs for death!

And as Laevius enters into the human realm he stops to reflect. "Mankind has so much to reflect on. If they could only see what God was seeing!" thinks Laevius as another voice speaks. "Laevius, what compassion on mankind has grown in your heart, you actually feel for these." "I do not think I feel, but I am starting to understand." "Very good Laevius, but time waits for no one; come you are being called." And with that Laevius takes one last look And turns to enters through the walls of Barstow Military Hospital.