

## Chapter 1- The Creatures

Under my bed there was a box and in that box there was a world, and in that world there were creatures I had never seen before. I had read about them and seen movies and TV shows about them, but they never showed these creatures as they really were. These creatures were angels, but up until that point I knew of “good” angels, the ones that look out for our humanity. I did not know some of them could look like monsters and that not all of them had wings, and that for some you could only tell what their shape was until you were right up to their faces. Some were fiery creatures with many eyes all over their bodies, and some had human torsos and legs, and the arms and heads of animals. Some had long, strong wings and battle cuirasses and a blinding brightness to them that scared me every time. What scared me most was that all of them seemed predisposed for battle as if against me or the humanity they should have been protecting.

Furthermore, I did not know that demons were also angels; they were angels that had fallen from grace.

Although I could tell these were angels, I was certain that I knew at least four of them even when I didn't know their names or recognized their faces. That felling of familiarity was there though as if I should have known them and they should have known me. What made it hard for me to decipher their identities was their glorious appearance, which was exactly like that of an angel. Well, you know what I mean: blinding light glowing from all over their bodies, white long robes hanging down to their feet and of course large wings attached to their backs. These angels were the types that are mostly represented by the media, not the monster type.

As I was watching all these mystical creatures, the strangest scene developed right before my eyes. These four angels that were so familiar to me were doing something very odd to what is expected of them. Three of them were escorting the fourth angel to be executed! As if that wasn't uncanny enough, the Almighty, the all-merciful was in agreement with the embarrassing treatment the fourth angel received. Before my eyes the scene that should have been one of light, glory and goodness was overshadowed by evil, a malign force all around me that seemed content with the mistreatment of the angel. It was sort of Darth Vader and the whole *force* thing communicating fear into everyone's pores.

Suddenly I realized the evil force was coming from within me and having realized it I turned to look at myself. You'd ask whether this is possible, to look at yourself without the help of a mirror. Well, I can tell you that this was possible for me at that point, it was as if the good me was questioning the evil me.

Shocking was realizing that there was a split decision within me as to whether continuing to be a spectator or do something to help the troubled angel. But willing that indecision aside I jumped in front of the angels who were dragging the fourth one to the execution.

Funny thing was they looked at me with hope, waiting for me to say or do something even though it was obvious we would be in contempt of the entire proceedings.

The rest of the angels wailed in protest and their sounds were thunderous and scary, but something pushed me to stand up to them and drag those four angels out of there. And so I did. Ignoring the lightning, thunders and the rapidly thickening and darkening clouds that set on top of us, I told them to follow me and they did without questioning me. They also were willing to defy the events everyone had gathered for and in doing so start the chaos that quickly surrounded us.

Among their shouts I heard phrases like "it is written!", "no one can change the outcome!" and "you will fail!"

I told them to fly out of there so we could all get out, but they said they couldn't do it. I told them to run away from there, but they said they couldn't. Destiny needed to be fulfilled they said and I could not change their path. However the terrified fourth angel's look told me something needed to be done.

I asked "what can I do?"

The angel said "help me"

I asked "how can I help you?"

And the angel said "help me by finding the book of the prophecy and destroy it!"

I didn't question the angel even when I should have for I didn't understand what the angel was talking about. I bobbed my head consenting to help in any way I could. But as soon as we started to walk away

from the angelic reunion we soon encountered a chasm right before our eyes. The huge abyss would have only been possible to cross if the angels were allowed to fly.

We stood there at the edge of the huge abyss staring and wondering whether we were going to be able to get away. I wonder whether we were going to do anything at all to help the angel in trouble. And so all of us runaways turned to look at each other, but it was when I realized that I was watching them, but they all were watching me. They seemed to be searching for answers in my eyes, answers that I didn't have at the moment.

Across the chasm a staircase with no end in sight stood up waiting for us to climb it, an impossible task because first we needed to reach it. That next morning I woke up to an adventure never imagined.

## Chapter 2 – From Boring To Exciting In 0.2 Seconds

“Good heavens!” was the first thing I exclaimed when I woke up from the scary and confusing dream.

My heart palpitated at countless beats per second, and I was sweaty, scared, and out of breath. The sunlight was barely starting to show through my window on a nice spring day of May and I felt so relieved that it was morning for waking up in the dark after such dream would have been scary.

“Monsters and angels” I said out loud feeling the mystical angels of my nightmare were as mean as any other creature, “no difference!”

A couple of hard knocks on my door made me jump again; it was mom whom inadvertently bolted me to the upright sitting position.

“Sam, it’s time to get up!” her voice followed the uninvited knocks, however I could not get upset at her for doing so for she had meant well, her tone said so. Yet I wondered why it would be so important I get up this early on a Saturday, because nothing beat staying in bed on weekends.

“Mom!” I complained. “Can you please not do that? I hate it when you do that!” Which was naturally not true, but my racing heart drove the words out of me at once. Those words were born out of fear and irritation, all to do with angels and not mom.

“Well, how else you want me to do this?” I heard through the door “the alarm has been ringing for some time now. Turn it off.” Her tone was that of a patient mom who suspected her son just refused to get up.

She was right of course because the alarm was still ringing as we spoke. I stood up with trouble because I had a headache from the dream of the previous night; still fresh in my mind were the blinding light effect from the angels that had penetrated my senses. It was then I realized I had a nightmare and not your nice dream when dreaming with angels.

“What a nightmare” I said to myself thinking I had yet to hear of a nightmare with angels in it, mines would be the first. With a lot of effort I sat down on the bed, reached over the snooze button and pressed it. It must have been over five minutes that I sat there with my mind in blank and the pain reverberating

against my temples because I heard the alarm again, and again it made me jump. This time I reached for the electric cord and pulled it off the wall. I didn't know what I felt besides the pain. Stress maybe, for having had such a nightmare and maybe frustration for not understanding it. Whatever I felt confused me though for the effects of it still remained in my body, which had never happened before. That convicted angel's expression of fear had been recorded in my head. It made it worse that I should have known who the angel was, for it seemed I had seen it before but my head hurt and I wasn't about to worsen my headache by intending to think about something so complicated as understanding the identity of a celestial being. The headache was bothersome and more important at this time. To recover myself from the shock I tried counting to ten and calm myself down, didn't work. Then I did the deep inhaling and exhaling routine with no success. I tried yoga too and last the "Na Mio ho reng ke gioh" prayer that had once worked for Tina Turner to no avail.

My hands went up to my head instantly as if holding it would do the trick and make the headache go away.

"Oh God!" I jumped off my bed in surprise because my instinctive move to hold my head tight had actually helped and gotten rid of my headache. "Oh my God, the pain is gone!"

Such things had happened to me before. It was sort of when I had been sick at other times and if I wished it hard enough, that wish would come true and I was able to heal myself. However, it sounded crazy every time it happened that I decided like the other times to consider the headache had not been real at all. I released my hold and looked at my hands considering the impossible too, but doubting whether the pain had been real. No doubts about it though. It had been quite painful.

Just then the door flung open and in its stead stood Jake, my brother, wide-eyed with his hands to his side inquiring what I was doing.

"What?" I asked.

"What? Just that you have a very important game this morning mister" said Jake who was quite right.

“Oh man! You’re right ‘bits’ I gotta goooo....ahhhh!” I began to say and jumped out of bed; which wasn’t a good idea. Stumbling is not the way to describe the way I stepped in the direction of the bathroom. It was more like a clownish dance that could only be done by a person who had been surviving on booze for days.

“You ok Sam?” Jake asked.

“Yeah...I think so”

“Well you don’t look good...Need some help?” he asked uncertain.

“No ‘bits’, I just need to be alone for a while...I’ll...I’ll be fine”

“Ok, but remember if you are not feeling well you cannot play today, mom wouldn’t...”

“Don’t tell mom about what just happened, it’s something...it’s nothing really. I’ll be fine, it happens all the time”.

His look said he didn’t believe everything I said and so he stood at the door, quiet and inquisitive. I had to tell him something and send him away to have time to gather myself and prepare for the game of that morning. However, I wondered whether I would be able to make it out of my house if one was to judge from my sidestepping way of walking.

“Jake, go to your room and close my door...please” I said in a voice that would not worry my brother, but I added “...and please don’t tell mom about this, it’s just a morning feeling...once I take a shower it will go away...I promise”

I pulled that “morning feeling” phrase out of a soap mom was watching one day where two pregnant women were cheering themselves up. That did it though. Not the phrase, but every time I promised something, Jake knew I would come through with my promise and having released a small smile he did as I requested. Being left alone helped me get back to my task at hand, which for now was to get over my drunkenness.

Having dragged myself back to the bed, I sat down on it thinking if I just waited long enough the strange feeling would just go away. For some reason I figured it would help to search for things around my room to help me forget the feeling, which could have followed me all the way home from beyond. My wooziness of that morning was unexplainable so far and couldn't be traced to anything, except of course the bizarre dream. I shook my head again and looked at my room; my domain. There was an untied pair of vans next to my bed, soccer balls spilled out from the closet across the room showing the clothes that was hanging; well most of it down a messy bulk in one of the corners. The light blue that covered the walls of my room was parched with posters of rock bands and soccer stars. I gave Pelé and Messi a wink like I did every time I turned my gaze to them. There was a night table next to my bed where an unplugged alarm clock sat along with a picture of my friends; these were just some of the things in my room that made it mine.

I was back on earth, back at home, away from celestial beings that would not stand up for their own kind. I closed my eyes and let my body fall on its back softly on the bed. Letting go of that dream sort of released me from my physical state of the moment. So closing my eyes and feeling the safety of my home was an odd welcoming feeling being that staying away from it usually felt better. I opened them and remembered mom and Jake and the alarm and the early hours of that Saturday morning. The alarm should have woken me up, but instead mom and Jake had seen to it that I was wide awake at 7 am on a Saturday morning. Sleeping in on Saturdays was my sport, a sacred sport and no one could mess with that.

“Soccer game!”

I reminded myself, slapping myself upside the head, shooting from my bed and pushing my body into the shower. The game of that morning was a decisive game, the first one of a two-legged game in which we held the home advantage. The combination of results would determine whether or not we would move on to compete at the regional finals. We had grown into a good team and only this year we had started to enjoy small successes, therefore little by little we had began to think we were good enough, great even and to expect good things from ourselves. So great in fact, that we could move on to win the region and then compete and win at state level and then even nationally. That's right! But first we needed to win that Saturday's morning game on our own turf.

Things were looking up for that humble high school team where I was a sophomore. Pride filled our hearts and together we knew we could do it. It was a great team really and the success had little to do with the way we played. It had more to do with the way we all got along, we were a family. The picture on my night stand reminded me specifically of the promise to give my best during each game, it served as a reminder to my friends too for they all had a picture just like mine in their own rooms. The picture did not have the entire soccer team, there were only four of us and our friendship was untouchable. You have heard of the twelve Jesus chose, I'm sure, however I don't know whether you have heard of the three he always hung out with. You know, the chosen twelve...but the elite three plus Jesus...which one sounds better? Right! The four of us in the picture were all part of the soccer team, and we were the best of friends. Each one of us had made the same promise, which consisted on giving our best each time we stepped onto the field, among other promises of course. We were united, not only by soccer though (by blood once I think...crazy story), but by the many things we had in common...or so I always thought.

Every time my friends would come over and look at the picture on my night stand we would have a laugh about it. I, who was the most "normal" kid in the picture, kept quiet at their comments because really no one talked about me when they saw the photo. Nonetheless I was intelligent, with good grades to prove it, and although I was not ugly, people would look over me in a crowd for I didn't stand out. I did have a killer smile that always worked with the girls though. My shortcomings were my height and my quick temper, characteristics that are a trademark on us 'Latinos'. People did criticize me for being a smart mouth, they said, and for the tendency to give my opinion on everything there was to talk about, even if I was just guessing on the subject. In my own defense, some consider this last thing to be a plus. I played right wing on the soccer field when I could have it my way and the coach was in a good mood, otherwise it was anyone's guess where I played.

There was Paul, the tall buffed white guy in the picture who was sought after for joining the football team but instead he had chosen soccer. He was unbelievably quiet and timid in spite of his size and bulky figure. A girl once asked him out in front of lots of kids at school and he just turned around and left her standing there, which provoked the laughter of everyone. After being asked why he did that, he said he had tried to open his mouth but his lips wouldn't move so he decided to ditch out. Not a football player,

but a soccer player, not talkative, but shy, not funny but dorky. To top it off he was a musician too, played the guitar and even had composed songs, or so he had wanted us to think because I never heard one. Paul wasn't all that good looking, though he was impressive and intimidating to look at, therefore he made a good center back in the team's defense.

Brainy Frank charged for doing homework, essays and even invented ways to cheat during tests, which he sold at a very good price. He was mixed. One of those weird mixes too because he claimed to be a quarter black, a quarter white, a quarter Asian and a quarter Arab. Just the right mix he liked to say, naturally. He was quite smart though and he took advantage of this all he could for he wasn't at all timid about bragging about it. So he boasted about the things he could do very openly as if anyone wanted to hear it. He was also a talker like me, though he controlled his temper during an argument which made you feel dumb each time he finished "arguing his point". It is no surprise that he controlled the midfield during a game and had been nicknamed the "playmaker". Now, this fool, because of his smooth way of talking and his good looks, was pretty impressive when it came to hitting it off with the girls. Not too tall, not too short; not fat, not thin. I hated the fact he looked too perfect and even more I hated the fact he was aware of his charm.

And yeah, oddly enough there was a girl in the picture. She was Asherah, which was an odd name, but she was pretty, and yes she played soccer. She was Persian, she would like to say, although we knew she was Iranian but of course Persian does sound much better after names like Ahmadinejad became synonyms of terror. Pretty and tough, what a combination! It took a big fight with the league and the state soccer federation to let her play with the boys, as she had requested. But a battle she was willing to fight and ultimately won. It seemed she always won or conquered every objective she put her mind to conquer. It was no surprise that after her freshman year and getting the golden boot for the most goals scored at the regional level; the federation gave up the fight. Yes, she was the star forward of the team and the main talkative point of that picture on my night stand.

Ok, so we didn't have as many things in common as I had once expressed. We did have the passion for the sport, and were the best friends and that should count for something if not everything. Even when we weren't so much alike, we got along great and helped each other out in times of trouble. Yet it was funny

now to think that we only commented on how much alike we were, ignoring the differences between us. Three very different boys and a girl, the diversity was obvious.

In the same way I went in the shower I got out, still troubled by the nightmare. I made it a point to push the events of that nightmare aside and concentrate on the important soccer game of that morning; it had slowly begun to work. So I slipped into my uniform and readied my mind while keeping a constant gaze on the picture I had with my friends. Satisfaction filled my heart; it felt good to have such good friends and such good life. Yes, there were times when it was boring and there was a need for an antidote of “excitement ready to go”. Other times some arguments with my mom, called for an exit to “let me live” land or “leave me alone” island. But it was a good life, in all honesty I couldn’t complain. I could only guess I was thinking of those things at that moment because of the heavy emotional dream of the previous night. Shaking all negativity down and with a sudden change of mood I got out of my room and headed downstairs.

The smell of scrambled eggs, crispy bacon and hash browns caught my nose on my way down the stairs generating guilt for I was late for my game and didn’t have time for breakfast. It also triggered a few loud grunts from my stomach so it was not only guilt I was about to carry all the way to my soccer game. My seven-year old brother Jake met me on his way up having finished his breakfast and greeted me with a pinch on the back of my leg. He always did that, the little nuisance, sort of his way of saying “hello”.

“Hey ‘bits’...told you not to do that! It hurts!” however I smiled and bounced my soccer ball off his head, which landed on my mom’s hands at the bottom of the stairway.

“Cry baby” I heard him say as he reached the top of the stairs.

“Samuel, you’re going to be late for your game, and you still need to eat your breakfast boy!” She called me boy whenever she knew she had to be upset at me, but couldn’t quite bring herself to be for the simple fact I was currently innocent, or was I? I knew the trick well enough and she knew I did not have time for breakfast.

“I know mom, which is why I can’t have breakfast this morning or else I’ll be late.” Right away I took advantage of her fake mood for I knew I could get away with not eating breakfast that morning. If I can

say something awesome about mom is that she is very cool and totally understands the passion for the game.

Normally leaving the house without first having breakfast was a great obstacle to beat every time my mom was handling the situation but I had calculated my words and moves. So I kissed her once I reached the bottom of the stairs and continued out the door without looking back. She was quicker than I had considered though. She stretched her arm and hooked me on the back of my shirt forcing me to turn back.

“Please mom” I begged “...I am really going to be late and you know this is an important game for me and the guys...don't you mom?” I put on my best puppy face and she bought it. Pressing her lips and shaking her head she gave up on trying stopping me and let go off my shirt.

“Well then...play your best today! Doubt you can do it without your breakfast...” She began to say.

“Mom...” I replied with a fake complain.

“Go on, may God be with you and may he send an angel to guard you.” Her outstretched arm was shooining me off.

“May he not!” I interrupted her. Hardly did I want to hear anything more about angels that morning.

“Samuel...what is wrong with you today?” Now her arms had drawn up to her hips in a sign of protest.

“Nothing mom, just a rough night...maybe I'm just too worried about this game,” I gave her any excuse.

I refused to tell her that I didn't want any angel reminders that morning, that I didn't want to pray for their help or become their prisoner. She said something else, but I couldn't hear it as I had already made my way out the door and onto my bike. The soccer field was only ten minutes away from my house and the game was scheduled to start in fifteen. I wanted to be in the starting lineup that morning so I made that trip in five.

“He made it” I heard Asherah said as I arrived at the field. That weird name of hers should have been a cause for lots of bullying in her younger years. However it would have been a different Asherah we would be referring to, for this one was scared of no one, and she could have probably beaten anyone that would have dared make fun of her. No need to worry about her, she knew how to protect herself all too well. That was Asherah, her face and figure could have easily been the model for many Ali Baba movies, except that she was a tomboy. On the field she was suited up ready for the game too. Her hair up on a bun with a headband around her forehead, ready to be the heroine of that game and perforate the other team’s net a few times.

“Are you starting the game today?” I asked wheeling my bike next to her and unloading my backpack.

“Of course, I am...what kind of question is that?” She quickly answered; and what kind indeed. She was always a starter and when she wasn’t, there was a really good reason for it such as an injury. What I really wanted to ask was whether I had been put on the starting lineup, but I couldn’t ask the question. My pride wouldn’t let me. The big guy standing next to her knew what I was thinking so he offered to answer my question to put me out of my misery.

“Hey buddy, you know if you don’t play, we don’t play either...you’re starting too, we made sure” Paul beamed reassuringly.

“Thanks Paul” I said and truly wanted to thank him for he always seemed to know what I wanted, he was easily the one I got along best out of our group.

“Yeah, just don’t embarrass us today” The comment came from Frank wearing a thin malicious smile.

“...and thanks to you too Frank, I’m sure you supported me too” I said knowing that I couldn’t count on him as I could in Paul or Asherah, it had always been that way.

“Don’t mention it...just remember not to hold on to the ball too long. You get it, you pass it, got it?” He replied ignoring the sarcasm in my comment. I don’t think he cared whether it was a compliment or not, he just wanted to make sure I did as he said.

“Don’t worry about it Sam...leave him alone Frank...Just do your best” said Asherah turning from me to him, then back to me.

Just then the coach called everyone to huddle up so he could give his last indications before the game. “Hustle in, hustle in boys and...and girls as well” He would call us in the same manner every time hanging on to the “girls” word until he met Asherah’s gaze. Pretty loud guy, the coach, always seemed to be upset about something when he spoke about soccer. It was his style he had said as an excuse. Judging from his round body and absence of a neck I doubted that he ever played soccer in his life. Always wore a hat and sweats as if ready to go for a run, but that was unlikely to happen.

He looked at everyone, wrote some stuff on the clipboard he was carrying. He stopped to look at me and grunted as if he wasn’t happy to see me there, twisted his mouth and erased something to rewrite something else. Some giggling went around the group that suggested he was doing me a favor. I had not been playing my best lately, but all I needed was a chance to prove that I still had it. Asherah noted the giggling and elbowed someone next to her while threatening someone else right across with a very tough stare. The giggling stopped. She had this odd influence on the group. Some feared her and others respected her...out of fear I think.

“Ok Sam...play...let’s see...play left wing” Coach barked

“But I play right wing coach!” I complained even when I knew what was coming.

“Are you the coach?” he spat.

I frowned and shut one eye “No, I’m...” I had humbly began to say, but he did not let me finish.

“Then play left wing, damn it!” he settled the nonexistent argument.

I shut my mouth and determined to listen to his indications and do my best in the field, which included playing left wing even though it wasn’t my regular position, for the benefit of the team.

The sky was clear that spring morning and at 70 degrees Fahrenheit, the city of Fremont would enjoy a very fine day. Here we didn’t have adventures, but we did have very fine days. Some dared to call it Freak-mont, yet there was nothing freaky or wild about it; boring quiet neighborhoods plagued the city. However if asking an older adult, they would use the adjectives safe and tranquil as supposed to boring.

We all had gotten used to the tranquil life in the East Bay. It was shocking when that May morning the boring life we once knew, changed forever.

Suddenly I saw something above the clouds like a bright comet rushing across the skies. I had seen shooting stars at night, but never had I seen them during the day and that's the closest comparison I have of what I saw. It confused me and I thought it could very well have been my imagination, my mind playing tricks on me, in which case the tricks had been played since the previous night. The difference was that this was no longer a dream, I was seeing it live.

Just then I realized coach had been barking indications all along and asked loudly, "You got what I'm saying Lopez?" his gaze fixed on me.

"Yes coach!" I replied, automatically. I wanted to sound interested and attentive to what he had said, but the truth was that I had no idea what he had been saying. The morning wasn't going well for me up until then, but it was certainly going to get worse...much worse!

"Well then, let's go get them tigers!" He yelled and everyone roared together in excitement.

The referee sounded off his whistle calling all players to the field. Excitement soon filled the air as the small crowds of proud parents cheered their children coming into the game running onto the field. Most parents that is, because my mom never attended, though she loved the game. Nevertheless, I felt the excitement, but could not help to wander about the things experienced up until that moment. The terrible dream of the previous night and the most recent sign across the sky made me more nervous than excited. Asherah winked at me, which felt weird, not because she wasn't like that, but rather because it just added to the list of things that I could have easily placed on my weird list. Honestly nothing to do with her, it probably had all to do with me. The game eventually started with me playing a position I wasn't used to play, needless to say I was terrible.

I kept glancing at the sky not sure of what to expect, which added to the difficulties I was having playing on the left side of the field. Everyone's eyes were on me, but Asherah's eyes studying me are what I mostly felt, as if she knew I had other kinds of troubles. I certainly did not know what to make of the things I had dreamed and what I was now seeing. Soon after the beginning of the game, the coach made the decision to take me out of the game amidst the laughing and giggling of some of my peers. I would have

done the same thing if I was the coach and someone was playing as bad as I was. If it were someone else coming out of the field for that same reason, I would have giggled too and even have yelled a couple of jokes about it. So I paid no attention to the giggles and the mockery, what I did continue to pay attention was the sky.

The good thing about the two-legged game system was we had two opportunities to make it right. We would visit their school for the second game so it wasn't all lost should we lose this game. And we did. The final score was 2 to 1 in their favor. Their first goal was due to the loss of a ball I couldn't control. It was what rushed my coming out of the game. Asherah scored, but it was not enough, and it was obvious she wasn't into the game either. She kept eyeing me all throughout the game, even after I had been benched. Paul and Frank were also playing at half speed; needless to say the backbone of our team was broken. Right when the referee whistled for the end of the game I witnessed more celestial signs. This time I clearly saw them, it was a bunch of shooting stars that flew across the sky heading in the direction of the bay. They were brighter and bigger than the ones from earlier but heading in the same direction. The scary thing this time was that I had not dreamed it or imagined it, and what's more I actually saw the splashing of the ocean water when the shooting stars landed at miles from where we were. In other words these were certainly big stars destined to make headlines in the morning paper the following day and be categorized as breaking news any time now on TV or the internet. The splash had been seen for miles around. I got scared and turned to look at Asherah as if searching for an answer and simultaneously she turned to look at me. Everyone had seen the shooting stars, but she seemed to know what they really were. She grabbed Frank by the hand and signaled Paul to come join her, and then she, accompanied by the others, walked straight at me.

"We have something to talk about" she announced.

"We do?" I asked.

"Yes we do Sam, and you know it!"

She sounded as if demanding a confession. The truth was that I wasn't sure what I had seen and experienced up until that point. Yet I felt answers will be coming to me soon because of how everyone else reacted during these happenings. My friends even looked different now, like they knew something I did not. It turned out they had more knowledge about the happenings, much more that I could possibly

had imagined. Surprisingly soon though I would be brought up to speed on the supernatural events happening around me and more important the role I would play. My life became adventurous to say the least and Fremont ceased to be the boring, quiet town it had been. My friends had prepared, inadvertently, a series of shockers for me and eventually I would return the favor as it had been expected, even planned. Certainly not by me though, but I'll tell you all about it.

At a loss for words I got on my bike and followed my friends who rode toward our special rendezvous, a place we had known for quite a while but I realized that day that I hardly knew what this special place really was.

### Chapter 3 – The Dream Team

A person can change in a matter of minutes given the right situation and the right time, something I realized that day at our rendezvous. However, now that I think about it there were other life changing events that prepared me or changed me over time without my realizing it. In short I had been changing for a while, just did not realize it. Simple events like meeting my friends ended up being quite important too because meeting them was all part of a plan, although at the time it was just another normal day-to-day activity for a kid my age.

I was five when I met all of them.

“What are you doing?” Came the sweet and yet defying voice of a shiny silk black haired girl with penetrating round hazel eyes. She stood next to me in the sandbox area of the playground of a park located at Paseo Padre Parkway and Stevenson Boulevard, one of the many that we had in Fremont.

“Construction work”, I said. It should have been obvious with the tractors and shovels and sand buckets lying next to me. The noises I had been constantly making added the special effects of a busy construction site, which made her question a silly one indeed.

“Oh!” She said having landed a first step in a life-long friendship, which now I’m pretty sure she knew even back then, even at the age of five. The plan was now at work.

“Want to play?” I invited the girl for two reasons: she seemed determined not to let me play alone and because I liked her almost immediately since the time she spoke.

“Sure...let me get my dolls...” She said and I panicked.

“No!” it was my instinctive answer. “You cannot bring your dolls to my construction site”, I said while staring in her eyes wondering if she knew dolls did not belong in my construction site. However I could not take the chance it was still unclear so I went ahead and said it, “they don’t belong here!”

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