

## **The JUDGES CHRONICLES: A NIGHT'S JOURNEY (BOOK 2)**

### **Introduction: The Fall, the Fallen, and the World of Night**

Once before the time of the judges and long before Shavron's rebirth, there was a creature known as the Fallen. This creature was not always known by this name, for it was given to him as an eternal mark of malice for reasons as you will soon read. He hated his Creator and everything that he made, for everything God made reminded the Fallen of God. However before hatred had consumed his heart, the Fallen was created for a noble purpose. Ivornel was commanded by the Holy One to love the new creations with all his being; and since his nature was that of the elegant unicorn, the fallen should have easily carried out the edict given to him. His skin was snowy white. His mane, which flowed like water over his neck, was a radiance of light, and he had large feathery wings to fly among the clouds.

The unicorn knew of his beauty, in fact, he reveled in it. He was a blessing to the creations around him from the land walkers to the sea dwellers. Ivornel was highly respected, but to the unicorn something was amiss. His heart craved more than smiles of courtesy and gestures of friendship. He wanted to be worshiped too, just like God. The Holy One would receive praises through songs, poetry, and other forms of righteous deeds; all of these things, Ivornel relished for. As far as he was concerned, it was he who was the blessing.

"Is it not I who walks among this fertile ground?," he thought, "When I step, is it not I who makes the world at peace? Am I not beautiful-- the greatest of all creation? Why shouldn't I," he thought to himself, "receive praise, to climb the heights of heaven, to have my place on the throne of God."

So he tried to get it, but he was met with futile responses to his call. The more he saw the creatures worshiping the Creator, the more he despised it. It came a day when sin was born in his heart and with such an ugly birth there is the result of death. Ivornel made haste to care out his wickedness: instead of using his gift to bless, he chose to destroy. "If they will not bow down to me as they do God, then I will separate them from Him. If none worship me; then none shall worship Him."

With that, the vice of pride began to seep into his heart like venom. The crafty beast devised a plan to accomplish what he wanted. Ivornel knew of many things in the new world. He knew of a pool residing far away in the regions of the world. It was a large pool surrounded by massive trees. Each tree was bent over in such a way that it created a canopy so that nothing could disturb it. The Holy One gave one command:

"Of all the waters in the world you may drink, but do not drink from the glowing pool." Every creature knew this.

The unicorn knew that he had to be careful with his trickery. So in order to make his plan a success, he changed himself into an old stallion. His horn and wings disappeared, his radiant mane was now a shaggy mess, hanging along his neck and face; and his white skin was now a combination of muddy brown dappled with a few spots of white. Walking through the land, he first came upon a sparrow; and birds, as the unicorn had learned, were of easy persuasion.

The sparrow was washing up in a stream of water as the ruse took place.

"Good day, sparrow," said the stallion, "What are you doing?"

“Oh hello,” said the sparrow, surprised by the greeting, “I’m just washing up. A bird can’t keep too clean.”

“Certainly,” the stallion said with little concern, “But why wash from water that is unclean in itself? There are better places you know.”

The sparrow hopped out of the water as if it had been washing up in dirt. With such an action the stallion could hardly retain a grin: for if it was that simple to get the bird to jump from the water, then causing him and the others to sin would be effortless.

“Do not fret, my dear friend,” replied the stallion, “I know of water that is pure. Just follow me and I will show you.”

The sparrow did so and within a few hours they were at the pool surrounded by the bowing trees. The old stallion and the sparrow passed in between the trees and there was the pool. From the pool came a slight radiance of light. It would pulsate after a few seconds to reveal another luminous flare. The sight of it flabbergasted the bird. The sparrow was hesitant to move; for he knew that the Holy One commanded that no one should taste or touch the glowing pool.

“I don’t think I should be here,” he said nervously, “God has told all to stay clear. If I touch the water, God will surely be angry?”

“Will He?” asked the stallion, “Do you know that to worship God one must know what it is to be God? That water will make you as gods: knowing what is good and knowing what is evil.”

Letting the temptation take root, the sparrow flew over and waded in the water. The water was cool and refreshing over the sparrow’s feathers. The old stallion, seeing the first phase of the plan complete, went to finish it all.

“Taste.” commanded the stallion.

“I’m sure that I shouldn’t do that.”

“God has not hurt you, taste it.”

The bird took a moment to look down into the water, wondering if it was right to drink. The horse continued to tempt him, and finding the water pleasing to his flesh and his eye, the bird took a sip. Quickly he took a deeper gulp and looked at the stallion with glee.

“Are you pleased as I am.” said the stallion.

“Yes!” said the sparrow, flapping his wings, “This is the best water I’ve tasted. Will you try some.”

“I had some before I met you,” he said lying, “We should tell others, should we not?”

The bird concurred.

“Go, tell you friends. Tell the eagles, the robins, the hawks, and the others. Tell them and send them to the other creatures so they can taste the glowing pool.”

The bird did exactly as the old stallion commanded. It took time, but eventually every creature from the largest beast to the smallest was there. The animals crowded around the pool, ascertaining if it was right to be there. The old stallion emerged, proud of his deceptive accomplishment, to speak.

“You have heard from the birds that this water is sweet, that it has power to my you gods” said the stallion, “Tell me great cats, what have you heard?”

A jaguar stepped forward. He stood tall and walked closer to the pool, mesmerized the

anticipation of tasting it.

“I’ve heard that we will know all things.”

“Much more than you know,” the stallion said under his breath, so no one could hear.

“Now taste it, all of you. Taste the sweetness that you all have come for.”

Immediately every creature rushed forward lapping the water into their mouths without conviction or care. The stallion watched joyfully as his lie took effect. There was bickering and hatred aborning in each creature as the glowing pool, now tainted, lost its distinction. The old stallion was oblivious to the others as he slipped away from the scene. Suddenly, every creature felt a sense of worry come over them as a strong wind began to blow.

Most of the creatures tried to hide; for they knew that the Holy One has made his presence known. There was a chilling silence, and then the Holy One spoke.

“The evil that was done, who will take ownership?”

Presently, the jaguar came forward pointing the blame to the leopard; the leopard in turn made haste to place the blame to the bear who had told him. This continued until the small sparrow was confronted.

“Why have you drunk from the pool, which I commanded you not to?” said the Holy One.

Every creature’s hair stood on end. There was a long pause, and then the sparrow spoke up in a shaky voice.

“It- it was the stallions fault,” the sparrow said, “He told me that it was good.”

“Good for what?” replied the Holy One, “to disobey me is never good.”

“God if you had place the pool here we would not have sin,” said the sparrow



The foolish remark engendered the Holy One’s judgment against his creations.

“Was there not other water holes for you to drink from? The curse of sin is yours; for you have chosen it unto your children’s children. Your fur that was once a grand covering will be your nakedness; the sky will no longer please you, but burden you with its rain, heat, and snow. You shall work to earn your life; you have chosen what you thought was good, but now is evil to you.”

The Holy One took the pool, and made it a vacuous ditch.

“Just like this pool,” replied God, “your hearts are dry to me, and you will follow your master—but only for a time. Your children will stand against me in that day and in that day there will be mourning and weeping beyond any heard in the world before. In the night they will become chattel until the coming time of my mercy.”

Now during this time, Ivornel turned himself back into his true form. He pranced proudly along the wide open plains with the energy of a young foal, and yet even he could not escape the Lord’s judgment.

“I will crush what you have done. You’re beauty is no more and all that you had is forever lost.”

As time passed their was murder, hatred, strife, jealousy, and all manner of evil thoughts. For Ivornel it was a breeding ground for sin, and he made it his duty to take

advantage. He deceived many countries to hate God; to stand against him on a appointed day, yet the Holy One separated a land Himself. That land is known as Shavron. Ivronel compelled the world to fight against the Holy One. A great multitude of warriors, large and small gathered, around the wicked behemoth in all his arrogance. The Holy One looked down upon the myriad of nations and said, "Depart from me workers of sin into the Night." Behind the unicorn and the multitude, came a sound as if someone was tearing a cloth. The scenery flapped in the breeze as if revealed a different world. Suddenly that was a potent vacuum that began to pull the multitude into this different world. The judgment of God was sealed and swift; and yet, even in His anger, the Holy One would show mercy to the posterity of that sinful multitude. It is here that we begin the Night's Journey.

## Chapter 1: Gabriel

This journey begins, simply enough, in an orphanage that is located in a land called the Crosslands. Up on the third floor, down the hall, and in bed number twenty-two sleeps a young rabbit named Gabriel, but his friends called him Gabe for short. Gabriel was a black haired rabbit with a few white spots dappled around his face. The freckle appearance usually left him open to teasing, however, he was always apt to return the gesture with a hostile retort or a cuff upside the head. His ears were long and at the ends they were split in three. He was the oldest of the orphans in the building, so he carried a lot of authority among his younger companions.

On this night, the young hare slowly crept out of bed to awake two of his friends: Tobin, a dog, and Alban, a young tiger. All three went downstairs into the kitchen with the intent for a little mischief.

"We shouldn't be down here," said Tobin nervously, "If Ms. Galestone finds us--"

"She'll only find us if you keep talking," replied Gabriel, covering the dog's mouth, "You can't tell me you don't want a taste of those candies she brought in yesterday."

"You mean the chocolates with the jam inside?" the tiger said as his mouth watered.

"Yes," replied Gabriel, " Now, here's the plan: one of you go over to the counter, bring the box back, and then--"

"Hey how come you're always making one of us do the dirty work?" said Tobin

"Yeah," Alban said concurring, " last week I missed out on dessert because of one of your bright ideas."

"If you wouldn't have taken so long you--- look forget it!" Gabriel said, " Which one of you is going to get the box?"

Alban and Toby folded their arms.

"Want me to go, eh?" the hare said grunting, "Why that's absurd. I'm not putting myself in danger."

"I dare you to do it," Alban said pointing.

"I double dare you!" Gabriel said, not to be outdone by Alban's challenge.

"Oh yeah, well I dare you to- to infinity!" said the tiger.

Just then, the ceiling began to crack and creak. The three stood quietly, listening to the

footsteps. Once the stepping ceased, they returned to the plan.

"That was close," said Tobin "So, Gabe, are you going to do it or not?"

"Nah, he's a chicken," replied Alban.

There were three things Gabriel hated: boiled asparagus for dinner, going to bed early; and lastly, he loathed being called a coward. Gabriel gave Alban an icy look.

"You're such a pain," said Gabriel.

"And you're a chicken," Alban said.



The tiger and dog flapped their arms wildly and made clucking noises.

"BE QUIET! YOU'LL WAKE HER UP!" said Gabriel in a harsh whisper.

Gabriel stood idle for a moment, and then he made his way over to the counter. Before, the counter seemed closer; but now, since his anxiety was taking over, the table seemed to draw further away from him. He was quiet as a mouse, but with every step the floor squeaked, which made the hare even more unnerved than before. He stopped just a few paces away from the counter to see if his friends were still there. They were, giving him the encouragement he needed to finish the journey. Gabriel grabbed the box, opened it and took a bite of one of the sweets.

"Delicious," the hare said, licking his fingers.

He turned around to head back when he made a eerie discovery: Tobin and Alban were gone.

"W- What?" said Gabriel, looking around. "Where did they go?"

"They?" said a familiar voice. "Who are they, Gabriel?"

Gabriel turned around, hoping that whom ever was behind him really wasn't there, but his fears were answered as the giant panda looked down on him. Ms. Galestone was a plump panda. She was wearing her favorite nightly cloak, which made her look plumper than usually.

"How did you- I didn't hear--"

"I have my ways," she said with a smile. "What are you doing with that box?"

"What box?" Gabriel said putting it behind his back quickly. "You're--You're seeing things."

"Lying!" she shouted, "I taught you better than that."

"I'm a slow learning," he replied rolling his eyes.

"Enough of your foolishness. Put the box back and get upstairs. We'll discuss your punishment in the morning."

The black hare returned to bed, mildly dismayed from the reproach. In the morning, Gabriel and the other orphans were dressed in their fancy cloaks and stood in front of their beds awaiting an appointed inspection. Gabriel walked over to Tobin and Alban.

"Some friends you are. Couldn't give me a warning?"

"We tried," said Tobin, " but you didn't turn around."

"So you ran!"

"What would you have done?" replied Alban.

Gabriel thought for a moment and with a smile he said,

"Ran."

All talking came to a halt when Ms. Galestone came into the room. She was wearing a long maroon cloak and she held a long stick under her arm. She walked down the middle of the room, and as she did she would say things like: "Button that top button" or "Straighten that collar out." When she came upon Gabriel she only glowered. Gabriel gave her a sleazy grin

"We still have that business of last night to talk about," she said ignoring Gabriel's expression. "You will be in my office after breakfast. Is that understood?"

"Yes ma'am." the hare said, lowering his head.

After breakfast and before he went into the office, he plucked a daffodil from the garden in order to appease Ms. Galestone's anger. He took a deep breath and went inside. Immediately he presented the flower to her, and without even looking at it, she crushed the flower in her bare hand, tossing it to the floor. Gabriel tugged at his tight collar, knowing he was in for a brutal chastisement. Ms. Galestone was fumbling with some papers as she spoke.

"I was prepared to punish you for that raid last night, but I won't."

"YES!" he said jumping in the air.

However upon seeing the panda's vacant look, Gabriel sat down and once again provided his infamous sleazy grin.

"I'm not going to punish you because something has come up," replied Ms. Galestone. "The law in the Crosslands states that an orphan upon the age of fourteen must leave the welfare of the orphanage to learn a trade."

Gabriel was nervous. He tried to change the subject.

"Have I ever told you that you look smashing in that dress, ma'am."

"No, but I've heard you've called me an overgrown rat."

"Oh please," Gabriel said, trying to dispel the truth of his words, "you can't believe everything you hear."

The panda rose from her seat.

"That's not the point. I have arranged an apprenticeship for you with Mr. Wilford, the local tax collector. You will be leaving bright and early tomorrow."

"I don't want to be a tax collector," replied Gabriel.

"You should be thankful. Once you learn how it's done you'll be very prosperous. Now go upstairs and begin packing your things."

The rest of the day Gabriel moaned and complained about the turn of events. A punishment would have been better than leaving the only home he knew. The night came quickly and Gabriel found it hard to sleep. Tobin and Alban came over to his bedside.

"Get some sleep," said Alban.

"Can't."

"Why?" said Tobin

"I'm being sent away," Gabriel said sitting up. "The stupid law says I have to go and learn to be a stupid tax collector."

"So that's what you've been mopping about," said the dog, "Hey, I thought tax collectors were pretty smart."

"Yeah, it doesn't sound too bad," replied Alban.

"Not too bad?" cried Gabriel.

The hare's voice stirred some of the other children in their sleep. He lowered his voice as he continued.

"It's horrible. Last week one of them was nearly hit by a chair, and a few days ago one was thrown from a window. I don't know about you, but I'm too young to die. I not going."

"So, what are you going to do?" asked Tobin.

A perky grin came over Gabriel's face.

"I'm going to live an adventure. I'm going to travel the world and make lots of money too! I'll figure out a way to trick Ms. Galestone and make my way to Giliga."

"Giliga!" said Alban, " That's far from here."

"Yeah, but its worth it. In that city, I will be able to find some kind of adventure. I know,"

Gabriel said snapping his fingers, "I'll join the Crossland navy- you've seen them all dress up in uniform, I'll travel by sea. It'll be great."

"Are you old enough for that?" asked the dog.

"Ah, I'm sure I am. That's the plan. Tomorrow my adventure begins."

## Chapter 2: The Street-Grub

The next day, Gabriel got up eagerly, hoping to leave as soon as possible. Downstairs Ms. Galestone awaited him. The rabbit showed himself cheerful, which caught the panda a little off guard.

"A change of heart, I see?" she said descreying the hare's smile.

"You have no idea. I'm ready. However, could I make a request?"

The panda allowed him to go on.

"I would like to go by myself," Gabriel said. " I can handle going to Mr. Wilford on my own. You can just give me the address."

"No," she said sternly, "Nice try, but your slyness won't work this time."

"Wait a second," the hare said, " you told me its time to learn a trade; to be productive and all that stuff. If I can't even be trusted to travel from here to the next block, then how can I truly be a decent citizen of the Crosslands?"

Ms. Galestone's will, although impossible to penetrate when fixed, was breached by the hare's argument.

"I have to admit you do have a way with words." she said, musing over her decision. "

Fine, all you have to do is take that road and you'll run into Mr. Wilford. Look at you- all dress up and ready to be productive. I'm so proud of you."

The panda proceeded to take one side of Gabriel's face and squeezed it.

"Ouch! So am I," he said rubbing his face.



After she had given Gabriel as few more words of wisdom, the hare walked out of sight from the orphanage to start his so-called adventure. Gabriel could see his former caregiver waving him on. He waited until she was out of sight to change his route and took the road to Giliga. Two months went by and Gabriel quickly learned how to survive on the streets. This was not his desire, but once he found out that the navy did not accept creatures of his age, he was forced to find other means of survival. He became what most

creatures in the Crosslands called a street-grub. Street-grubs were notorious for stealing, and some would even harm others to get what they wanted. It was here that Gabriel learned the crooked trade and it was in Giliga where the grubs did their most underhanded deeds. Most of the time Gabriel would resort to pick-pocketing any creature he thought had something of value, which he would sell later. However, on this day everything was going to change for him.

Recently at the port a ship had docked, which meant that there was always plenty of opportunity to grab a trinket of value from an unsuspecting visitor. Gabriel made his way closer to the ship, swiping an apple to appease his morning hunger.

He hid behind a large crate as he watched all the passengers get off. The first was a old mongoose who looked fairly wealthy, but Gabriel held his composure until he saw all the possibilities. Halfway through came a flamboyantly dressed poodle. She was laced in the finest cloak and gems of all colors that garnished her from head to her foot. Gabriel thought he had found his victim; but once he saw that the poodle traveled with two bodyguards, he quickly relinquished the idea. Lastly came a white rabbit that traveled alone. He was wearing a black coat, carrying a regular bag of clothes, and over his shoulder was a hefty bag of money. From Gabriel's perspective, this passenger the biggest sucker he had seen in his life; and when the hare left the boat with a whistle for his tune, Gabriel started to giggle: for it was time to work this creature over. Gabriel brushed the dirt from his coat to make himself look presentable and followed the rabbit from afar. Gabriel was sizing up the rabbit: he was about his height, middle aged, and looked to be wise in some aspects. The rabbit went over to a gift stand. Upon buying one of the products the rabbit placed his bag of money on the ground, which one should never do. Gabriel couldn't believe his eyes.

"This one is too easy," he said with glee.

Gabriel sashayed over to the money bag, but before he could lay claim on it, the white rabbit took up his bag just before Gabriel could get his hands on it.

"Maybe not so easy." he said disappointed.

But this minor setback did not stop him. When the rabbit turned to leave, Gabriel tapped him on the shoulder and introduced himself.

"Good morning, dear hare, my name is Gabriel. Welcome to Giliga, may I be the first to offer any hospitality I can. What is your name so I might not be rude?"

"My name is Gideon. I'm a Shavronite. Thank you for the warm welcome I—"

"Wait," Gabriel said interrupting, "You're the one who slewed a thousand leopards! I heard many stories about you."

"Seems my reputation proceeds me," Gideon said bobbing his head with a big smile.

"But it was the Holy One that—"

Gabriel took a bow. Gideon was mortified by the act and told the hare to stand up.

"Look, I want to take you up on some of that hospitality. I need a guide to take me to a small village here in the Crosslands."

Gabriel stood straight as a rod, gave Gideon a salute, and offered his services.

"You look too young to be a guide."

"I will have you to know that I'm old enough to make a living and secondly—"

"All right," Gideon replied, "I didn't mean to offend. Do you know how to get to

Holfstead?"

"I sure do."

"Then lead on."

The two rabbits went through the streets until they turned onto an old beaten path, which proceeded into a wood. The trees were dense and hardly any sunlight was able to penetrate through the canopy. Gabriel lead most of the way, until he pretended to drop something in order to position himself behind Gideon.

"Now make a left around that tree and the road to Holfstead will be there."

Gideon did exactly as he was told, but instead of a path, he was facing a boulder covered with vines.

"This is a dead end. You've made a mistake."

"Its no mistake," Gabriel said pulling a dagger. "Now be ever so kind and throw your bags, especially the money, over here so I take a gander at them."

Gideon yelled for help. Gabriel waited until he was done.

"Are you finished? Now throw the bags over or I'll kill you where you stand."

Gideon complied. Gabriel went through the garment bag, keeping his eyes on Gideon as he did so. The bag had a few jackets, and when Gabriel saw a new white jacket, he immediately took favor over it. He took off his old jacket, revealing a dingy shirt underneath, and modeled his new coat.

"This is nice- real nice," Gabriel said looking himself over. "I'll keep it. You can have the medallion you brought. Oh, there something else I've been looking at. That crest around your neck, give it here!"

"You have enough. Now leave me alone!" shouted Gideon.

Gabriel rushed over and pressed the dagger to his throat.

"I said give me that-"

Before he could finish Gideon pushed Gabriel to the ground. The dagger fell away, however, the black hare's attempt to retrieve it was cut short when Gideon kicked it out of reach. Punches were thrown and Gideon's skill as a fighter proved to be the deciding factor, but Gideon was an honorable warrior. His pity for the black hare, although a worthy gesture, was not the wisest thing to do. Gabriel started to cry.

"It just a lesson that you have to learn. Unfortunately, I'll have to turn you into the authorities."

Gideon came over to grab Gabriel. While he was down he took a handful of dirt, tossed it into Gideon's eyes, and with two punches the white rabbit went down.

"When I want something," he said cutting the crest from Gideon neck, "I take it."

Gideon quickly came out of his stupor. His vision was blurry, but he could see that the black rabbit stood above him. With a sinister smile, Gabriel kicked Gideon in the face and left him there alone in the wood.

### **Chapter 3: Words of Warning**

Deborah waited anxiously at the window for Gideon. She was expecting him an hour before hand, but there was no sign of him. Her new home presented her with the comforts

she needed that Shavron was unwilling to relinquish to her. The wickedness in Shavron was on the rise: idolatry had high precedence, even going as far as live sacrifices; acknowledging the Holy One was a distant memory, and every home had a god of wood or stone to worship in its window sill. Deborah was not the only judge to leave the country, for Gideon and Tiber followed her example. Despite the distance between the Crosslands and Shavron, the three still held to their duty as the judges, although when God prompted them to return to Shavron to address the Shavronites, they did not adhere to His words.

There were two visitors in her home, who were relaxing and speaking over the present issues over a game of chess. Samson sat calmly over his white pieces as Tiber studied the board, contemplating his next move. While waiting, the wolf gave the judge of commerce some sound advice.

"Now, you must be adroit- keen if you will-when you negotiating deals with Calus. They will steal your money right from under your nose if you're not careful. Oh by the way, I'll be taking your knight."

Tiber let out a deep sigh, showing his frustration over the game.

"Thank you for the advice, I could use some for the game as well, " Tiber said rubbing his jaw. "Being the judge of commerce is a challenge, but its better than stealing. Just last week I nearly lost half the cargo of wheat in that storm. I should have listened to the captain. I shouldn't have pressed him."

"Don't dwell on the past," replied the wolf. "Learn and move on. And I going to teach you a good lesson right now by taking your rook- pay attention."

Tiber banged his hand on the table. Samson laughed and addressed Deborah.

"Deborah, are you sure Gideon is coming?"

"I got a letter from him over a month ago saying he would be here in time for my birthday," she said looking out the window.

"I hope he makes it," Tiber said touching his knight, "We really don't get to see each other as often as we use to. He better hurry up the night his coming, and that's not a good time for a rabbit to be out," he said beginning to move his knight.

Samson made an expression which changed Tiber's mind for moving the piece. The hare grab his pawn, moved it, and Samson took one of Tiber's bishops. The hare accused him of cheating.

"I'm not cheating, you're just bad at this game," replied the wolf with a smile.

"I am not bad at this game," he replied, " I keep losing my concentration because of your missing eyeballs. Ask the Lord to give you some new ones ,will you? it freaks me out!"

"By the way, checkmate," Samson said.

Deborah came from the window and took a seat. Samson had a grin on his face.

"How old are you again?" asked Samson.

"Thirty- nine," she replied.

"Add three score and you get her real age," Tiber said laughing.

"Oh, be quiet," she said, giving him a playful swat.



Suddenly there came a knock from the door. When she opened it, Gideon was leaning up against the door post ready to pass out. His right eye was swollen black, his lip was cut,

and his clothes were dingy. Deborah went to help him, but Gideon propped himself up and stood up straight.

"I'm perfectly fine," he said pulling on his coat. "I've gotten into scuffles before. I don't need any help."

Gideon went to walk, but found it as easy as a infant does in taking their first steps. He fell into Deborah's arms. Samson and Tiber rushed over to help.

"Who has done this?" Tiber asked, "Gideon, all you have to do is speak the criminal's name and I'll have the entire county on alarm."

"He'll answer our questions soon enough," said Deborah. "Tiber, go to the well and bring some water. Samson, there are some bandages in the cupboard."

Gideon sat down at the table. Deborah knelt beside him.

"Here's your present," Gideon said with a half-hearted smile, "I got it from the gift stand, but the poem is my idea."

"Thank you," she said.

"I was--"

"Mugged," Deborah said cutting him short, "The Crosslands have been infested with criminals. The officials call them street-grubs for short."

Samson and Tiber came back. Deborah told them the details.

"What is the name of the perpetrator?" asked Samson.

"Gabriel," Gideon said taking a deep breath, "His name was Gabriel. I'll talk to the authorities tomorrow."

During the early morning, Samson found it hard to sleep. He got up and began to pace the dining room. He was bogged down by something that was on his heart, and for an hour or so he walked silently, until the Holy One spoke to him,

"Go outside a to the apple tree."

Samson complied and within a few moments the apple tree was there.

"Look up, the apples ready for harvest. Pull three of them." replied the Holy One.

Samson did so.

"Place them on the ground and watch."

As Samson carried out the command, all three apples began to rot and fester until they became worthless.

"What does this mean?" asked Samson.

"My judges have not obeyed my voice. They have seen the wickedness in Shavron that is beyond any other nation in existence. I have spoken to all three to return to the land and fight for righteousness, but they treat me with contempt by hiding in other lands."

"Yes they have Lord," said Samson.

"And my prophet lacks the courage to tell them so."

The wolf lowered his head in shame.

"Listen to me," said the Holy One, "just like the apples, the hearts of the judges are festering. Go to them and tell them of their sin, if they will obey me and repent, warning the Shavronites of their wickedness, then my judgment over them I will forget. However, if the judges will continue in disobedience and if you refuse to speak my words, then my wrath will be upon all four of you and Shavron."

Samson wasted no time returning to Deborah's home. He woke up all three judges and repeated the words of God to them.

"We have all wronged God by not listening to him," said Samson, "God wants us to return to Shavron to warn them to repent from the wickedness they do, but first we have to repent for what we have done."

Tiber, Deborah, and Gideon knew that God was speaking through Samson. They had, when God called them to stand up against the depravity in the land, counted the words of the Holy One as trifling.

"Well, I'm going to ask God to forgive me now, what are you going to do?"

Tiber and Deborah were not hesitant to obey, but Gideon turned his back; for pride was taking form in his heart.

"Gideon, don't do this," said Samson. "You know God has dealt with you. Running from Shavron was wrong; ignoring the voice of God was too."

"I don't *want* to go back to Shavron!" yelled Gideon.

Samson walked over, knelt down so that his eyes were level with the hare's and said, "What you want to do is irrelevant. Are you going to obey God now or ignore him again?"

Repentance was made by all four, and God forgave them.

## Chapter 4: To the Courthouse

The next day Gideon, along with his friends, went to the court of Giliga to report the assault. They approached the front desk being attended by a cat. He was fumbling with his small eyeglasses as he looked over the court records. He paid no attention to the four creatures in front of him, and if Samson hadn't tapped on the desk, they would have been standing there all day.

"Oh, hello there!" replied the cat, started from the knock. "How may I help you?"

Gideon quickly summed up the events.

"You said he had ears that were flared at the ends?" asked the cat

"Yes, at the top in three," replied Gideon.

"I have heard that just last night the Crossland Guard caught a street-grub that fits that description," the cat said flipping through the court records. "I'll let the judge know of your situation. You can sit in on the proceedings--courtroom five on the left."

Inside the courtroom, the four sat down in the front row. A hyena, wearing a brown cloak and read sash to signify his appointed duty, brought the room to attention with an involuntary giggle, as the judge entered the courtroom. An old Indian elephant came in languidly with a gorgeous drapery over his back. His tusks were capped in gold to honor his title, and after getting himself positioned behind his desk, he told the court to take their seats



"Let us begin," stated the judge, "Bring in the first accused."

The black hare came in chained by the arms. He gave the two guards, escorting him, a

hard time, and he didn't stop until he was cuffed upside the head for his efforts.

"Is that him?," Tiber said to Gideon. "You let a kid beat you up?"

"He fought dirty," Gideon said in his defense.

The elephant looked down on the Gabriel with little regard for his age.

"Gabriel of Alur, age fourteen, I have some interesting news about you," replied the judge, "It seems that you should have been in the care of a Mr. Wilford. Does that surprise you?"

"Just as much as how fat you are!" shouted Gabriel.

A hush came over the courtroom. One of the guards popped Gabriel on the head again.

"The- the impudence!" said the elephant nearly coming to faint. "Is the victim of the crime here?"

"Yes," Gideon said, coming forward.

Gabriel gave Gideon a dirty look and spat at his feet. This time both guards cuffed him upside the head. The judge addressed Gideon.

"Is this the young hare who you encounter yesterday, and in your weakness, beat you up?"

"Hey, I'm not weak. I put up a good fight until he got dirty." said Gideon.

"The court's time is very precious a simple answer will suffice. Did he or did he not beat you down?"

"Well-- yes," exclaimed Gideon reluctantly.

"You may take your seat," said the judge, "Now," he said returning his glare back at Gabriel, "young hare you have disrespected this court and are found guilty under the law. Have you nothing to say in your defense?"

Gabriel stuck out his tongue.

"Your abysmal behavior will carry a heavy price," the elephant said taking his gavel with his trunk. "Tomorrow at noon, you will receive a public flogging of fifty lashes!"

The elephant took his trunk and struck the table with his gavel. The young hare left the courtroom kicking and screaming. There was a sense of pity over Gideon's face as Gabriel was taken from the courtroom.

"It was a hard sentence, but justice is served," replied Samson.

"Satisfied, Gideon?" said Tiber.

"Actually I'm not," said Gideon.

Gideon ran up to the judge's table.

"Are you sure that a flogging is appropriate?" asked Gideon, "I've seen a bear nearly crippled once by only thirty lashes."

"Don't have sympathy for him," said the judge, "Examples must be made especially for the likes of him. The nerve of calling me fat-- I should have hanged him. Anyway, I have two other cases. So if you please- "

"The punishment doesn't fit the crime," said Gideon interrupting, "Beating a rabbit to death is not a fair ruling."

"A criminal is a mystery, as much a mystery as why creatures like you walk on two legs while creatures like me walk on all fours. He is scum and deserves what's coming to him. I respect your kind heart, but this is my courtroom."

Gideon left the table, but he still couldn't get over the ruling. Outside the four made their

way back to Holfstead, but Gideon murmured about the court's decision.

"Gideon, if it makes you feel better try talking to the judge after the court closes," said Deborah.

"When?"

"At five," she said, "but remember we leave tomorrow for Shavron."

"I know, I won't be long. I'll see you before dinner."

Gideon stayed by the courtroom as his friends left. Five o'clock came quickly, and when the elephant came out after a hard days work, Gideon wasted no time in accentuating his point.

"Hey, I want a different ruling," Gideon said.

"Uh, not you again. Why are you pestering me?"

"You know why. We both know a flogging will kill him."

The elephant, continuing his causal stroll, paying Gideon no mind; and if he could would have wipe the thought of him from his mind.

"Look, elephant, I'm talking to you!"

The judge swung his huge head towards Gideon. His body nearly knocked down a few bystanders.

"First of all my name is Baz," the elephant said, pointing his trunk at Gideon's face,

"Secondly, I should have you arrested for badgering me."

"Give me two minutes to explain."

"No."

Baz wrapped his trunk around Gideon's ears, lifted him up, and placed him to the side.

The hare ran back in front of him.

"Come on, there has to be another way," replied Gideon.

The elephant thought for a moment and let out a long sigh.

"There is another way-- banishment."

"Sounds kind of harsh."

"Look," Baz said angrily, "Those are the choices. I have said enough!"

"Can I at least tell Gabriel of the changing circumstances?"

"The courthouse has a jail in the basement," Baz said giving the hare direction with his trunk, "You have to go to the back to get in. The jailer will show you the young hare and he may have some of your belongings."

Gideon turned to walk away, but Baz had one more thing to say to him.

"How long will you be in the Crosslands?"

"I'm leaving tomorrow."

"Then tomorrow will be a good day," Baz said, rolling his eyes.

## **Chapter 5: Goodbye to the Crosslands**

Gideon entered the jail. The jailer, a black dog, handed him a bag. Inside were his crest and some money. Most of the money was spent on vain pleasures oblivious to the hare, and Gideon was a little upset by the lost; however, understanding that his life could have been lost, he quickly praised God for his mercy. The jailer took the hare down a corridor of cells. Gabriel was at the last cell on the left. He was sitting in the corner with his back

turned.

"Five minutes," replied the jailer.

Gideon called out to the young hare, and after taking a sweeping glance, Gabriel returned to his solitary world of abjection.

"I- I know I'm the last creature you want to see," said Gideon hesitantly.

Gabriel did not reply.

"I talked to the judge," Gideon said trying to get Gabriel's attention, "He has changed your verdict."

This got Gabriel's attention. He got up from his seat and stood, waiting for Gideon's next words.

"This is your choice, and I would take it if I were you, instead of the fifty lashes," he said in a shaky voice, "You'll be banished from the Crosslands."

Gabriel plopped down in his seat, flabbergasted from the changing event.

"B-Banishment!" Gabriel said rolling his eyes, "Some help you are! I thought for a moment that you got me off the hook. Now I'm a worse position than before. Get lost and stay lost."

"Fine. If you want a taste of fifty lashes upon your back, then you can have it," replied Gideon sternly, "You're going to die tomorrow. Think about that as you sleep."

Gabriel didn't have to sleep, he was thinking about the punishment every second since he left the courtroom. Despite his overall dislike of Gideon, Gabriel knew he was right.

There was no way to avoid the inevitable unless he took Baz's secondary ruling. Gideon was leaving when Gabriel called out to him.

"All right, I'll leave the Crosslands, but where will I go? Who will hire me to work? I have no skills."

Gideon took a deep sigh. The Lord was working on his heart the very moment the verdict was given. It was something Gideon did not want to do, but obedience to God isn't always easy, but it is right and pleasing to Him. Gideon made a quick glance up to the ceiling and utter the words he thought he would never say.

"You can stay with me for awhile," Gideon said dropping his head slowly, "I'll teach you what I can to make a living. You'll learn the way of the sword, and the way of God too."

Gabriel didn't like the proposal about God, but under the present circumstances, he had no choice but to submit.

"Fine, but I don't want any rules put on me. I come and go as I please, go it?"

"Are those the conditions?" asked Gideon.

"Yeah!" Gabriel said bobbing his head.

"Then you can stay here," replied Gideon stepping away, "I not having a reprobate in my home. Good night, Gabriel."

Gideon walked down the corridor, but took small steps; for he knew the urgency of aid would overcome the hares belligerent attitude. Gabriel did as Gideon had thought: the black hare called out to him again in anguish. Gideon came back; Gabriel gritted his teeth.

"You've changed your mind," Gideon replied with a big grin, "I'll be back tomorrow, enjoy your stay."



It was raining the next day. All the paper work was finalized, renouncing Gabriel's citizenship from the Crosslands. Two guards brought him to the dock as Gideon, and the others, waited. He saw that the young hare was chained by the arms. The guards went to unlock him; but Gideon saw in Gabriel's eyes that once the chains were removed he was going to make a run for it. Gideon told the guards to throw him the key. Gabriel was irate.

"Unchain me, UNCHAIN ME!"

"I'll do it when we're out to sea," stated Gideon.

Gabriel marched on board, hating Gideon even now more than ever. Gideon looked to heaven and gave a short prayer.

"God, you wanted me to do this. I don't understand it--I really don't understand it, but you're going to have to deal with that rabbit."

Once the boat pulled from the port, Gideon unchained Gabriel. Gabriel did not thank Gideon for keeping his word. The young hare watched the coast of his home disappear over the rainy back drop, lost in his own dreams of the coming days.

"You may want to head below deck, you'll be soaked and wet if you don't," said Gideon.

"Leave me alone," replied Gabriel.

"Well, once you get tired your cabin number is eleven. Don't be down. You should count your blessings-- better the ship than the whip. Think of this as an adventure."

Gabriel rolled his eyes from the irony. The young hare stayed in his state of depression as the captain and crew made preparations for the heavy rain.

## Chapter 6: Ulice the Despot

Returning to Shavron wasn't easy for the judges. Their willful absence had made the Shavronites indifferent to them. Without the judges presence it left Shavron open to any creature of weak character to take over, and that creature was a skunk named Ulice. He had risen in power of the past ten years and had lived through the tyranny of Jezerah and Iya. He was abrasive when confronted, deceptive when he was in trouble, and when it came to God he had the worst trait of all: apathy. He allowed all manner of wickedness to breed in Shavron, but all the sin stunk in the Holy One's nostrils, but one sin in particular brought sorrow to God's heart to which he told Samson as the wolf prayed:

*It grieves me that I have established Shavron for they are a disobedient land. They have cast me off in the days of Iya and Jezerah and when I sought them to bring them back to goodness, they turn from Me again. All manner of sin dwells here, but above all that angers me is this: they sacrifice their own children to please Iya's moon god---I hate it above all! I will destroy Shavron and make their name vanish.*

"But what of your mercy Lord?" said Samson, "I was once wicked and you forgave me, and even when the judges failed to do their duty, did you not forgive that wrong? You are a gracious God whose mercies are renewed daily. And what will other nations say: The Lord made this land only to destroy it. Let it not be so, God. Have mercy on Shavron."

The Lord replied to Samson.

*“Go to Ulice and bring My words to him: Your sin is great and I the Lord am ready to judge this land, but if you would humble yourself and pray I will not bring the judgment I plan on doing. You sacrifice your children and you allow the ways of the witch, Iya, to still live among you. I will take your children and leave you with no offspring, but if you will repent of this evil and turn away from it, I will not do such a thing.”*

The next morning Samson explained all that the Holy One told him.

“I don’t feel comfortable with this Samson?” said Deborah. “Will the Holy One really do that?”

“I didn’t ask him,” said Samson, “I just listened.”

“When are we going to see Ulice?” asked Gideon.

“Today.” said Samson leading out.

Ulice himself wasn’t expecting anything troublesome today. In fact he revel in the fact that he would have time to spend with his two sons (twins) Tip and Top. With the death of their mother in childbirth it was Ulice’s priority to fill that void for his sons by catering to their ever need: if they wanted toys they got it; if they wanted parties they received it. All of this, although good hearted in sense, lead the young skunks to become what we call in our world spoiled brats---and that is what they were. Nevertheless Ulice loved his sons and today he was taking them on a picnic. Everything was in place and Ulice called for his sons, but a servant came to him bring a hint of bad news.

“Sir, the judges are here to see you?”

“Who?” said Ulice unconcerned with the matter.

“The Judges of Shavron, the prophet Samson and a young rabbit is with them.”

Ulice showed his discontent by pushing the picnic basket to the side. His servant backed away knowing that the skunk was prone to throw objects at this point of irritation.

“I don’t have time for this!” he said, “My sons and I are going on a picnic. Tell those deserters to come back tomorrow.”

The servant obeyed his master, but returned quickly with this response.

“They said that it is important--a matter of great distress.”

“Distress!?” was Ulice’s reply, “What presume is the distress?”

“The judgment of God.”

Ulice started laughing.

“Oh please!” he said waving his hands, “Send them away, send them away!”

The servant went to carry out the deed, returned again within one minute.

“Sir, Samson the prophet said that he will not leave until he speaks with you face to face; and if not, he will sit on your porch and howl day and night until you go mad.”

“WHAT!?!?” shouted Ulice, “I’m the ruler in Shavron. What right does that wolf have to stand at my door and to interrupt my time with my sons. Bring him in here, now!”



The judges came in. Ulice stood straight as a board with arms crossed, eyes narrowed, and his lip tight with rage. Samson took a slight bow to show reverence to the ruler and his home. The wolf started to speak, but Ulice held up his hand.

“Get to the point, Samson, I don’t have a lot of time.”

“So be it,” said Samson. “God is not pleased with the Shavronites and aims to judge the

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

