

THE OTHER BEYOND THE STARS II.

THE LAND BEYOND THE MORNING

A JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF ETERNITY

GERARD FELLER

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The Other Beyond the Stars - Book Two

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1 - The River Of Awakening	
Chapter 2 - The First City	
Chapter 3 - The Great Restoration	
Chapter 4 - The Lion And The Lamb	
Chapter 5 - The Library Of Lives	
Chapter 6 - The Hall Of Crowns	
Chapter 7 - The Wounds Of The King	
Chapter 8 - The Chamber Of Prayers	
Chapter 9 - The Feast Of The Nations	
Chapter 10 - The Music Of The Stars	
Chapter 11 - The Father'S House	
Chapter 12 - Beyond The Morning	

CHAPTER 1 - THE RIVER OF AWAKENING

Elias Vermeer woke up to a sound that was not a sound. It was as if music, light, color and love merged into one experience. He slowly opened his eyes. Above him stretched a sky that seemed to be morning and evening at the same time. There was no sun in the sky, yet everything was illuminated. The light did not come from outside. It seemed to come from everything itself. Out of the grass. Out of the trees. From the river that flowed right next to him. Even from the air. Elias got to his feet.

He immediately felt that something had fundamentally changed. He inhaled deeply. The air was richer than anything he had ever breathed. Every breath felt like he was breathing in joy itself. He looked at his hands. His heart beat faster. It was his hands. And yet they were different. Stronger. More lively. More perfect. No scars. No old age.

No fatigue. His skin almost seemed to wear light. He clenched his fist carefully. Power flowed through him. Not the strength of an athlete. Not the power of youth. But the power of a body that was completely what it was meant to be. A thought crossed his mind.

"Am I dead?" A warm voice answered behind him.

"No." Elias turned around. The world seemed to stand still. There stood his father. Not as he remembered from his last days. Not like the frail man who was slowly broken down by illness. But strong. Upright. Radiant. Younger than Elias had ever known him. His eyes sparkled with life. Elias felt something break within himself. All the years of loss. All memories. All unfinished conversations. They came up at the same time.

"Daddy.."

That's all he could get out of his mouth. His father walked towards him. When he hugged him, Elias felt no dream. No memory. No apparition. He felt a real body. Hot. Alive. Present. Elias started to cry. His father held him. Neither of them said anything for a long time. Finally, his father backed off a little.

"Welcome home." "Is this real?" His father smiled.

"More real than anything we called earth." Elias looked around. For the first time he saw the river clearly. The water was clear as crystal. But at the same time he saw colors that did not exist on earth. The surface didn't just reflect light. As he looked at the river, something strange happened. Without moving, he suddenly knew what the mountains in the distance looked like. Not like he was imagining anything.

He actually saw them. At the same time he saw the river. At the same time he felt the wind over the hills. As if his new body wasn't trapped in one place. As if space was no longer a wall but an invitation. His father explains, "Here we can be present where our love is present." It seemed to reflect memories. When Elias looked at the water he suddenly saw images. His mother who held him as a child. His first day of school. The night he activated Veritas Omega. His conversation with Mei. The stars. The Throne. The First Morning.

He was shocked.

"What is this?" His father looked at the river.

"The River of Awakening." "Why do I see my life?" "Because nothing is lost here." Elias looked again. Images appeared and disappeared. Not just his own life. He saw glimpses of thousands of other lives.

Laughing children. Old men. Mothers. Kings. Beggars. Saints. Sinners. learning incorporated into a larger story.

"This is impossible." His father shook his head, smiling.

"That word hardly exists here." They started walking along the river. Elias seemed to get stronger with every step. Not more difficult. Stronger. The ground bounced lightly under his feet. The trees along the shore were enormous. Their leaves glittered like green gems. And yet nothing felt artificial. On the contrary. For the first time, nature seemed truly alive. Suddenly a bird landed on a branch above them. The animal looked directly at Elias. Not the way animals looked on earth. There was awareness in his gaze. Amazement. Joy.

As if the animal recognized him.

"Even the animals are different." His father nodded.

"They are no different." "What do you mean?" "They are what they were always meant to be." Elias looked at the bird. For the first time he felt something he had never fully experienced on earth. Connectedness. Not just with people. But with creation itself. The bird flew away. His wings left trails of light in the sky. Elias laughed out loud.

"This isn't possible." His father laughed along.

"That's what I said when I got here." They walked on. Mountains appeared in the distance. Their peaks seemed to reach beyond the clouds. Water fell down their slopes in thousands of waterfalls. Rainbows danced in the mist. But the most amazing thing was what Elias felt. A desire. Not the painful longing he had known on earth. Not the longing of loss. But the desire of discovery.

As if every mountain said: Come on. There's more. Always more. His father looked at him.

"Can you feel it?" Elias nodded.

"Yes." "That feeling will never go away." "Why not?" His father remained silent for a moment. Then he replied, "Because God is infinite." They stopped on a hill. The river flowed below. The sky stretched above them. Elias looked at the horizon. He saw cities. Forests. Lakes. To put away. Valleys. Buildings that glittered like living crystals. And behind it all, more mountains. And beyond that again. Until the distance.

"Does it ever end?"

he asked softly. His father smiled.

"No." "How big is it?" "No one knows." "No one?" "Not even the ones who have been here for thousands of years." Elias looked up in surprise.

"Thousands of years?" "Maybe millions." "And they haven't seen everything yet?" His father laughed.

"My son..." He pointed to the horizon.

"...you are just on the edge of God's world." Elias looked again. Suddenly he understood something. Heaven was not the end of a journey. Heaven was the beginning of a much greater journey. His search for

God was over. But his discovery of God had only begun.

CHAPTER 2 - THE FIRST CITY

They walked for hours. Or maybe just a few moments. Elias soon began to discover that time worked differently here. Not because time was absent. But because nothing was driven by decay anymore. On earth, every clock had reminded him of loss. One day closer to old age. One day closer to goodbye. One day closer to death. There was no such pressure here. Every second felt full. Complete. Alive. A city slowly appeared in front of them. At first she looked like a spot of light on the horizon. But as they got closer her size grew.

Towers rose high above green hills. Streams of water ran between buildings. Trees grew from terraces and squares. Flowers bloomed on balconies that seemed miles high. Not a single line was hard. Not a single angle felt artificial. As if architecture and nature had finally learned to live together. Elias stopped.

"This is impossible." His father smiled.

"You'll say that often." They reached a wide gate. But the word gate did not do justice to what they saw. The entrance seemed to be woven from light. Not closed. Not monitored. And yet Elias immediately felt that nothing dark could enter here. Not because anyone stopped it. But because darkness simply could no longer exist here. Above the gate were words. No letters. No language. Yet Elias immediately understood their meaning. WELCOME HOME. His heart beat faster.

"For everyone?" he asked.

"For everyone who loves the King." His father looked at him.

"And for all who are loved by Him." As they entered the city something unexpected happened. People started smiling at Elias. Not polite. Not superficial. They were smiles of recognition. As if they were happy that he existed. Not because of what he had achieved.

Not because of his knowledge. Not because of Veritas Omega. Just because he was Elias. He felt tears welling up. On earth he had spent his life trying to prove himself. Scientist. Thinker. Seeker. Here no one seemed impressed by his performance. And yet he felt more loved than ever. A young woman came up to him. Her eyes shone.

"Welcome." "Do I know you?" Elias asked. Le laughed.

"Not yet." "But you seem happy to see me." "So am I." "Why?" She looked at him in surprise.

"Because ji exists." Elias didn't know what to answer. The woman laughed again and continued walking. His father looked at him.

"That's the normal way people greet each other here." "They don't even know me."

"You don't have to." "But why are they happy?" His father pointed up.

"Because every person reflects something of God's glory." Elias looked around. Suddenly he saw it. Every person was beaming. Not literally light. But beauty. Uniqueness. Personality. As if every soul revealed a unique color of God's character. He had never seen two identical people. But only now did he understand how different people really were. An old woman passed by. Her face radiated wisdom. A group of children

ran after her, laughing. A little further along walked a man who looked like a king. Beside him walked a simple shepherd.

No one seemed taller. No one seemed lower. leather possessed dignity. They reached a square. There was a tree in the middle. Elias stopped immediately. The tree was huge. His crown seemed to touch the sky.

Silvery light flowed through the trunk. Fruits hung among the leaves like living gems. He immediately felt that this tree was different. Important. His father nodded.

"You feel it." "What is this?" "A descendant of the Tree of Life." Elias walked closer. A scent of joy filled the air. Not sweet. Not heavy. But alive. As if memories and hope had become scented together. Then suddenly he heard a familiar voice.

"Elias." His heart stood still. He turned around. A woman stood on the other side of the square. For a moment he didn't dare believe what he was seeing. The same dark eyes. The same smile. The same curiosity. But clearer. More lively. Freer.

"May?"

She smiled. Before she spoke, Elias already knew what she felt. Not her thoughts as single words. But her joy. Her memories. Her love. Nothing was forced. Everything was shared voluntarily. For the first time, Elias understood what community was meant to be. Mei says: "Here we no longer hide behind words." Not a word. No explanation. She walked towards him. And for a moment the entire city seemed to disappear. All questions. All mysteries. All centuries. Disappeared. Only one reality remained. Two friends. Found.

Mei stopped right in front of him.

"It took you a long time."

Elias laughed. For the first time since his arrival he felt completely relaxed.

"I had to search the universe first." "And?" "It turns out I was looking in the wrong place." Mei looked at him quizzically.

"Then where were you looking?" "In stars." "And where did you find Him?" Elias looked up. To the tree. To the city. To heaven. To the people. Then he replied softly, "In love." Mei smiled.

"We all learn that here." They started walking around the square together. Their conversation went on for hours. Or centuries. Elias didn't know that. They talked about the earth. About death. About their search. About the Throne. About the First Morning.

But in the end, Elias asked the question that concerned him most.

"May." "Yes?" "Have you seen Him yet?" She stood still. The joy in her face became even deeper. Even brighter. Even more real.

"Yes." Elias felt his heart beat faster.

"And?" She said nothing for a long time. As if words failed her. Then she answered softly: "All we ever thought about love..." She looked up at the sky..was but a shadow." Elias swallowed.

"Is He really that beautiful?" Mei looked at him. Tears appeared in her eyes. But they weren't tears of sorrow. Only for joy.

"No." "No?" She smiled.

"Much nicer."

And somewhere deep within himself, Elias felt again the same longing he had felt since his awakening. Not the longing of loss. But the desire of discovery. Because there was more behind this city. There was more behind the mountains. Behind the stars lay more. And in the end, the One who was more beautiful than anything ever created waited. Their journey was just beginning.

CHAPTER 3 - THE GREAT RESTORATION

The next morning—if it could be called morning—Elias was awakened by birdsong. But this was not birdsong as he had known it on earth. Every tone carried meaning. Every melody seemed to tell a story. As if the birds did not sing about creation. But with creation. Elias stood up from the house he and Mei were staying in. From the window he looked out over the city. The streets glittered in the soft light. Fountains danced between flowering trees. Children played in squares. People walked with animals. There was movement everywhere.

But nowhere in a hurry. Joy everywhere. But nowhere superficial. There was a knock on the door. When Elias opened the door, Mei was standing outside, smiling.

"Are you ready?" "Ready for what?" "For a surprise." "That sounds dangerous." "Not here." They walked through the city together.

After some time they reached a large square. In the middle of the square stood a figure that Elias immediately recognized as an angel. Not because he had wings. Not because he was beaming. But because his presence seemed to fill the room. As if reality itself became a little more solid where he stood. The angel smiled.

"Elias Vermeer." "You know me?" "We've been following you for a long time." "That sounds disturbing." The angel laughed.

"For us, your search for the Other was one of the most beautiful stories of the last centuries." Mei grinned.

"See you're famous." Elias rolled his eyes.

"Even in heaven I can't avoid that." The angel stretched out his hand.

"Come." "Where to?" "I want to show you something." An opening of light appeared before them. Not suddenly. Not spectacular. It was like a curtain was slowly being opened. Behind it lay a landscape.

Elias held his breath. An ocean stretched to the horizon. But the water had colors he had never seen before. Deep blues. Living silver tones. Colors for which there was no name on earth. There were forests on the coast. To put away. Valleys. Waterfalls. Everything radiated life.

"Where are we?" Elias asked.

"On Earth." Elias looked up in surprise.

"That's not possible." "Why not?" "Because the Earth was never like that." The angel smiled.

"Precisely." They started walking along the coast. Elias saw animals along the way. Large herds. Wolves. Lions. Deer. Elephants.

All together. No fear. No hunting. No threat. A young lion walked curiously towards Elias. The animal looked at him. Then it rested its enormous head against his shoulder. Elias burst out laughing.

"This is impossible." The lion yawned happily. The angel looked on, smiling.

"Impossible according to what world?" Elias had no answer. After some time they reached a hill. The angel stood there. Below them lay a valley. The most beautiful place Elias had ever seen. And yet he suddenly felt sadness. Not painful. But deep.

"What is?" May asked. Elias looked down.

"This could have been Earth." The angel nodded.

"Yes." No one said anything for a long time.

Then the angel spoke again.

"Many people think that God has thrown away His creation." He pointed to the world around them.

"But He never did that." "Then what has He done?" Elias asked.

"Restored." He bent down. Picked up a flower. The flower radiated light.

"Do you see this flower?" Elias nodded.

"This flower is not new." "Not new?" "No." "But she never existed on earth." The angel smiled.

"Yet." He looked at the flower.

"Every flower that ever bloomed." "Every flower that ever withered." "Every flower that was ever loved by anyone." "Everything lives on in this." Elias looked again. Suddenly the flower seemed infinitely deeper. As if thousands of stories were hidden within her. The angel looked at the horizon.

"God does not make everything new by destroying the old." "How?" "By completing it." Elias slowly began to understand something. The new earth was not a replacement. No backup world. No escape from the old reality. It was its fulfillment. Just as an acorn is not a substitute for an oak. But her destiny. They walked on. Suddenly Mei stopped. An animal walked in the distance. Elias looked closer. His eyes widened.

"That's a mammoth." The angel nodded.

"Yes." Further on he saw a dodo. Behind it a huge bird. Even further, a herd of animals that had been extinct on earth for millions of years.

"Are they all here?" Elias asked.

"Why wouldn't they?" replied the angel. Elias thought. He had never realized how people-oriented his thinking had been.

Even his idea of heaven had remained largely about people. Now he began to see something new. God didn't just love people. God loved everything He made. A butterfly landed on his hand. The wings glittered like liquid rainbows. Elias just looked. And suddenly he knew something. Not by reasoning. Not by science. But by seeing. Love preserves. Love does not destroy. Love does not forget. Love completes. The angel looked at him.

"You're starting to understand." "What?" The angel smiled.

"Why the Resurrection Was Necessary." Elias looked at the world again. Then everything fell into place. God did not create man to become spirit. God created man to be man. The Earth had not been a mistake. The body had not been a mistake. Matter had not been a lower reality.

Everything had always been meant for glory. Mei looked at him.

"What are you thinking about?" Elias smiled.

"All my life I thought heaven was the end of creation." "And now?" He looked at the mountains. The oceans. The animals. Heaven. The infinite world that stretched out before him. Then he replied, "Now I think creation has finally begun." At that moment, a huge mountain appeared in the distance. Much bigger than any other. The top disappeared in a sea of light. The angel looked at it. His face suddenly turned serious.

"One day you will go there." Elias immediately felt awe.

"What's there?" The angel smiled.

"The Crown Hall." "The place where all stories come together." "The place where the King receives His children." And deep down, Elias knew that everything he had seen so far had only been WGS preparation.

CHAPTER 4 - THE LION AND THE LAMB

4 - THE LION AND THE LAMB The days that followed were the happiest Elias could remember. But even that word was wrong. He had known happiness on earth. Happiness came and went. Happiness depended on circumstances. This was something different. Deeper. Firmer. As if joy were no longer a feeling, but a quality of reality itself. He walked with Mei across a vast plain. The grass rippled like a green ocean. Flowers moved on a wind that sounded softly like music. Herds of animals stood in the distance. Hundreds. Thousands. But nothing fled.

Nothing chased. Nothing was hiding.

"I still find this strange." Mei smiled.

"What exactly?" "That no one is afraid." "That's because fear has lost its job." They walked on.

Suddenly Elias stopped. Not far from them lay a lion. A huge male lion. His golden mane sparkled in the light. Beside him lay a small lamb. The lamb was sleeping. With his head against the lion's flank. Elias stared. The lion looked up. Their eyes met. To Elias' surprise, he sensed no threat. No animal instinct. No predation. Only wisdom. An ancient, deep wisdom. The lion stood up slowly. He walked towards Elias. Its paws barely made a sound. Mei remained calm. Apparently this was normal. For Elias it felt anything but normal.

When the lion stood right in front of him, something unexpected happened. Not with words. Not with sound. Yet completely clear. Elias understood what the lion was thinking. Welcome.

Elias was shocked.

"Did you hear that?" Mei nodded.

"No." "No?" "I didn't hear anything." "But..." She smiled.

"You understood." The lion looked at him. And again Elias understood. Not because the animal spoke human language. But because there was no longer any misunderstanding possible between them. The separation between consciousnesses had become thinner. More honest. Purer.

"Who are you?" Elias asked cautiously. The answer came immediately. I'm Asher. The protector of this plain. Elias looked at Mei in surprise.

"Do you see this?" "All I see is you talking to a lion." "That's not normal." "Not for the old earth." The lion turned around.

Follow me. Without knowing exactly why, Elias obeyed. Elias discovered that it wasn't just Asher that he understood. He understood the whole plain. The birds did not sing songs. They shared joy. The trees did not speak. But their lives flowed through creation like music. Together they walked across the plain. Other animals joined along the way. Deer. Wolves. Horses. Even a huge bear. No one threatened each other. No one tried to be higher than the other. It seemed like every species finally knew who they really were.

After some time they reached a hill. From the top, Elias looked out over a valley. His breath caught. Thousands of animals lived together here. Not as prisoners. Not as pets. Not as competitors. But as a community. Suddenly he understood something.

On earth, man had regarded himself as the crown of creation. Here he saw that creation was much greater than man. God did not love people any less. But of much more than people.

"Why are you showing me this?" Elias asked. The lion looked at the horizon. Because you have to learn to look.

"To look?" As the King looks. Elias was silent. He thought about his life. To laboratories. Computers. Theories. Experiments. He had studied thousands of things. But rarely really looked. Not like now. Not with wonder. Not with love. The lion continued. On earth, man often thought that rule meant that everything revolved around him. Elias felt the truth of those words. The lion looked at him. But the King rules differently.

"How?"

By serving. By giving life. By growing beauty. By making freedom possible. Suddenly, Elias was reminded of the Empire of Shadows. To the mother who gave her life for her child. To the lessons of freedom. At the Throne. Of the scars he had once seen. The same truth came back again and again - Love rules by giving of itself. The lion looked up. The clouds parted. A mountain appeared in the distance. Much closer than last time. The top radiated light. Elias immediately felt awe.

"That mountain again." Yes.

"Why do I see him everywhere?" Because everything points there.

"What's on that mountain?" The lion was silent for a long time. Then he answered. The King. The word filled the air. Not as information.

But as a presence. Even the animals became silent. The wind seemed to listen. The flowers moved more softly. For the first time Elias realized that everyone here lived from one center. Not a place. Not a system. Not an idea. A Person. And the closer one got to that Person, the more real everything became. The lion stood up. It's time.

"For what?" Your next lesson.

"What lesson?" The lion smiled in a way that seemed almost human. Learning why even heaven is not the end goal. With that he turned around. The animals followed him. They slowly disappeared among the hills. Elias stayed behind with Mei. They said nothing for a long time. Then Mei spoke.

"I'm starting to understand something." "What?" "Why C.S. Lewis Wrote That Heaven Goes Farther Up and Farther In."

Elias looked at the mountain. Towards the light. To the infinite reality that seemed to stretch beyond. Then he replied softly, "Perhaps we are still only in the courtyard." Mei smiled.

"I think so too." And far in the distance a sound sounded. Not thunder. Not from music. But of a joy that came closer. As if all creation was preparing for an encounter. An encounter that would surpass anything Elias had seen so far. The journey to the Crown Hall had begun.

CHAPTER 5 - THE LIBRARY OF LIVES

The journey to the Crown Hall took longer than Elias expected. Not because the distance was great. But because the road itself was part of the destination. The further they went, the richer reality became. Forests took on deeper colors. Mountains became more majestic. Rivers began to shine like liquid light. And they met people everywhere. Millions of people. No one seemed to be in a hurry. Nobody was bored. No one longed for the past. Everyone seemed to live from a constant discovery. One day they reached a building.

At least, building wasn't the right word. It looked bigger than a continent. Still, it felt warm. Inviting. Personal. Pillars of light reached up beyond the visible ceiling. People moved between those pillars. Thousands. Maybe millions. Above the entrance were words. Not written. But present.

Elias immediately understood their meaning. THE LIBRARY OF LIVES He stopped.

"This is bigger than a city." A voice answered behind him.

"That's because stories are bigger than cities." Elias turned around. An older man stood behind him, smiling. His eyes radiated wisdom. His face was unfamiliar, but Elias felt immediate confidence.

"Who are you?" "A librarian." "Of all these stories?" "From a small part of it." Elias looked again at the immense building.

"How many lives are stored here?" The man smiled.

"All." Elias was silent. He expected millions of answers. Maybe billions. But not that word All. The librarian looked at him.

"Come." They entered the library.

There were no books inside. No shelves. No archives. No screens. Instead, Elias saw thousands of pillars of light. Each column radiated its own color. Some gold, some blue. Green. Red. Silver. Each color seemed to express a personality. A life. A story. A soul.

"What are these?" Elias asked.

"Lives." "What do you mean?" "Touch one." Elias carefully placed his hand on a pillar of light. Suddenly the library disappeared. He was standing in the middle of a village. A small village. Centuries ago. A young woman was walking along a dusty road. She carried a child on her arm.

Elias felt her fatigue. Her worries. Her love. But also her faith. He did not experience her life as a spectator. He experienced it from within. He felt her joy when her son was born. Her fear when war broke out. Her prayers at night. Trust her. Her doubt. Her hope. Then the experience ended. Elias stood in the library again. He breathed deeply.

"That was real." "Yes." "I felt everything." "That was the intention." Elias looked at the endless rows of columns of light. Suddenly he realized something. Each column was a universe. Every person has a world. Every soul had a story that God had found important enough to keep forever.

"Why does this place exist?" he asked.

The librarian looked at him.

"Because love remembers." Those words struck him deeply. Suddenly Elias thought of the earth. To forgotten people. Forgotten names. Forgotten lives. How many people would have died without a monument? Without a history book? Without recognition? No one appeared to be forgotten here. Nobody. Even the smallest act of love lived on. Even the quietest prayers. Even the hidden tears. The librarian led them on. They came to a huge hall. In the middle stood a single column of light. Much bigger than any other.

Elias immediately felt that this one was different. More important. Deeper.

"What is this?" The librarian smiled.

"Your life." Elias froze. His life.

Everything. His childhood. His father. Anna. May. Veritas Omega. The search. The Throne. The First Morning. Everything was in here. He slowly walked closer. His hand trembled.

"Am I ready to see this?" The librarian looked at him kindly.

"Probably not." "Then I'll wait." The man laughed.

"Everyone says that." Elias looked at Mei. She smiled.

"I saw mine too." "And?" She didn't say anything for a long time. Then she answered softly.

"I discovered that God was much closer than I ever suspected." Elias carefully placed his hand against the light. He was immediately sucked in.

He saw himself as a child. Lying in the grass next to his father. Looking at the stars. He saw the night his father died. The void. The sadness. The questions. But now he saw something he had not seen then. God was present. Not visible. Not coercive. But present. He saw Anna. Their love. Their removal. Their pain. And again he saw something new. God was present. An unknown nurse who once found courage through a conversation with Elias. A student who had started looking for God again through his books.

A lonely man who years later found comfort in words that Elias had long forgotten. Then he discovers: No act of love was ever lost. He saw his years of loneliness. His obsession with whether anyone really existed outside of him. His quest.

His desperation. His prayers. And everywhere he saw the same reality. An invisible hand A loving presence. A patience that never gave up. Then he came to the most difficult moments. The moments when he had reproached God for his absence. He expected answers there. Statements. Justifications. But what he saw broke his heart. God had not been absent. God had suffered. With him. Every tear. Every night. Every fear. Everything had been seen. Everything was worn Elias started to cry. For the first time he understood something.

Not with his mind. But with meaning as a whole. Love never looks away. Then a scene he didn't remember appeared. An evening from his youth.

He sat alone. Sad. Lost. He had said a prayer that he had then completely forgotten. A simple prayer.

"God, if You exist, let me find You someday." Young Elias had spoken those words. And then forgotten. But not God. The scene faded. Elias stood in the library again. Tears streamed down his face. Mei stood next to him. The librarian looked at him kindly.

"What did you see?" Elias looked at the endless room. To the millions of stories. To the love that had carried everything. Then he answered softly.

"I always thought I was looking for God." The librarian smiled.

"And now?" Elias looked up. To the light that filled the library.

"Now I know He was looking for me all along." At that moment, a bell began to sound somewhere deep in the building. Not loud.

But majestic. The librarian looked up. A smile appeared on his face.

"It's time." "For what?" The old man looked at the distant mountain. The mountain that seemed to get bigger and bigger. The mountain whose top was hidden in glory.

"In front of the Crown Hall." And deep in his heart, Elias knew that the greatest discovery of his life was still ahead of him.

CHAPTER 6 - THE HALL OF CROWNS

The mountain was much bigger than Elias had imagined. As they got closer he didn't just seem to get higher. He became deeper. Richer. More real. As if the mountain had more reality than the world around it. Its slopes were covered with forests that shone like living emeralds. Rivers flowed down the flanks like liquid crystal. Music sounded everywhere. Not from instruments. The mountain itself sang. Elias felt it deep in his soul.

"Why does everything feel stronger here?" he asked. The librarian smiled.

"Because you get closer to the center." "The center of what?" The man looked up.

"All kinds of things." They reached a huge plateau. Elias stopped immediately. Before him stretched a hall larger than cities. Pillars of light rose beyond sight. Streams of water ran through the floor like clear rivers. Thousands of trees grew between the pillars. Flowers bloomed everywhere.

And yet everything was one whole. No part seemed disconnected from the other. Above the entrance were words. Not written. But present. THE CROWN HALL Elias felt awe. Not fear. But holy wonder. They went inside. My breath caught there. People. People everywhere. Not thousands. Not millions. Countless crowds. People from every century. every culture. Every tough. Children. Ancients. Kings. Slaves. Scholars. Shepherdesses. Martyrs. Mothers.

Fathers. Everyone beamed. everyone was alive. Everyone was completely themselves. And yet they were one community. Elias saw an old man with a weathered face. Next to him stood a young woman from a completely different time. Further on, a child. In addition, someone who must have once been an emperor. No one seemed more important. None other. Suddenly Elias heard a familiar voice.

"Welcome." He turned around. A man stood in front of him. He knew his face from paintings. From books. Of history. But no shields had depicted him correctly.

"Paul?" The man smiled.

"That was indeed my name on earth." Elias looked at him in surprise.

"You are truly Paul." "And you really are Elias." Paulus laughed.

"We've talked a lot about your quest."

Elias suddenly felt uneasy.

"That doesn't sound reassuring." Paulus laughed even harder.

"Don't worry. No one here will laugh at your questions." His face softened.

"We all remember our own." They continued walking together. They met others along the way. Men and women Elias only knew from the Bible. But also countless unknowns. A simple woman from the Middle Ages. A boy who died young. A missionary from a forgotten land. An old farmer. A nurse. A street sweeper. Elias noticed the same thing again and again. Some radiated a special glory. Not because they had been famous. On the contrary. Often it was the strangers.

"Why?" Elias asked. Paul smiled.

"Come." He pointed to a woman walking quietly among the crowd. No one seemed to pay special attention to her.

Yet she shone like a star.

"Who is she?" "No one you know." "What did she do?" Paul looked at him.

"For fifty years she cared for a severely handicapped child." Elias was silent.

"No one ever wrote a book about her." "Nobody knew her name outside her village." "But the King knew her." The words struck him deeply. As Elias walked through the crowd, lines of light began to appear across his hands. No decoration. No reward. But memories that became visible. Living images appeared in his skin. A prayer from his youth. A conversation with Mei. A moment when he had given someone courage without even realizing it.

Paul explains, "That is your testimony." "Everyone visibly bears how God's grace has worked through his life." On earth he had often thought that greatness had to be visible. Here the opposite turned out to be true. The greatest glory often came from hidden faithfulness.

Then music sounded. The whole room became silent. A light appeared above the center of the room. It grew. Brighter. More beautiful. Purer. Crowns emerged from the light. Not gold. Not from gemstones. But of living glory. Each crown was unique. No two were alike. Some shone like stars. Others like fire. Others like morning light. Elias looked surprised.

"Are these the crowns?" Paulus nodded.

"Yes." "The Crown of Life." "The crown of righteousness." "The Crown of Joy." "And much more." Elias thought about everything he had read about this. To the rewards. To the crowns.

To victory. But what happened next took him completely by surprise. The people received their crowns. And immediately they put it down. Before a throne of light that stood in the center of the room. No one held his crown. No one tried to save her. Nobody wanted to show it off. Every crown was returned. In love. In worship. In joy. Elias looked at Paul.

"Why do they do that?" Paul smiled.

"Because we finally understand." "Understand what?" "That even our faithfulness was ultimately a gift from Him." Crowns appeared again. They were received again. They were laid down again. And every time this happened the room became brighter. Richer. More joyful. As if giving brought more joy than receiving. Then Elias saw something unexpected. His father walked forward.

A crown appeared above his head. Not big. Not impressive. But beautiful. His father received her. Looked at it. Smiled. And immediately laid her down at the foot of the throne. Tears filled Elias' eyes. Not because of the crown. But because of the love with which his father gave her back. Then he understood- The crowns were not rewards to possess. They were opportunities to love. Opportunities to give back what was first received. Suddenly the entire room became silent. Completely silent. The music stopped.

The rivers did not stop flowing. But even their sound seemed to grow softer. Everyone was looking in the same direction. The throne. Paul looked up. His eyes filled with joy. His voice became whisper soft.

"He's coming." A wave of anticipation went through the room.

Not nervous. Not anxious. But full of longing. Deeper than anything Elias had ever felt. His heart started beating faster. He knew without explanation. Without words. Without a doubt. Hitherto he had seen the works of the King. His creation. Line recovery. His love. His people. But now the King Himself approached. And somewhere deep in his soul Elias knew that everything he had experienced so far had only been preparation. Reality was about to get even more real.

CHAPTER 7 - THE WOUNDS OF THE KING

The silence in the Crown Hall was unlike any silence Elias had ever experienced. On Earth, silence had usually been the absence of sound. An empty room. A deserted street. A night without voices. But this silence was full. Full of expectation: Full of life. Full of love. Billions of eyes were focused on the Throne. Nobody spoke. Nobody moved. Even the streams of light running through the room seemed to soften. Elias felt his heart beat faster. Mei stood next to him. On the other hand, father. Ahead Paul. Abraham. People from all times.

They were all looking at the same place. Then the light around the Throne began to change. Not brighter. But deeper. As if behind the light an even greater reality became visible. Elias tried to look. But every time he thought he saw something, he discovered there was more.

More beauty. More majesty. More joy. More love. Then a figure appeared. No explosion of glory. Not overwhelming power. No display. Just a Man. A Human. Elias blinked. The surprise was so great that he could hardly breathe. The King of all things did not come as a cosmic force. Not as an incomprehensible energy. Not as an abstract principle. He came as a Man. Really human. Really present. Really recognizable. And immediately Elias knew Who He was. Not because someone told you. Not because he had ever seen Him.

But because everything in his being recognized Him. Like a child recognizes his father. Like a thirsty spring water recognizes. Just as love recognizes its origin. Jesus.

The name filled the room. Not pronounced. But present. And at the same time something unexpected happened. Everyone started laughing. And to cry. At the same time. Not out of sadness. Not out of relief alone. But because all the desires of their existence suddenly came together. Elias felt tears streaming down his face. He had searched for years. Thought. Doubt. Fought. Now he stood before the One he had been seeking all this time. And the strangest thing of all was: He didn't feel watched. He felt known. Completely known.

And completely loved. Jesus walked among the people. Slowly. Personal. As if no one else existed. And yet everyone felt seen. He spoke to children.

Hugged elderly people. Laughed with friends. Welcomed newcomers. It seemed impossible. But Line's attention was complete. For everyone. Then He came closer. Elias noticed that he was starting to shake. Not from fear. Of awe. Of desire. Of joy. His whole quest came back. The artificial stars. Luna Station. Translate Omega. The question. Does anyone exist besides me? Now that question felt almost childish. Not wrong. But incomplete. Because there wasn't just anyone standing outside of him here.

Here stood the One through whom all things existed. Jesus stopped right in front of him. Their eyes met. And at that moment Elias saw something. His hands.

Scars. Actual scars. Not hidden. Not removed Not healed. Present. Elias looked at the wounds. He didn't understand. This world had no more pain. No disease. No death. Why had the scars remained? Jesus saw his question. He smiled. A smile that seemed older than stars.

"You look at My wounds." His voice was warm. Deeper than music. Softer than water. Stronger than mountains. Elias nodded. He could barely speak.

"Why did they stay?" he finally asked. Jesus looked at His hands. Then to Elias.

"Because love does not forget what it gives."

The words were deeper than thoughts. Deeper than memories. Deeper than emotions. Suddenly Elias saw something. Not with his eyes. With his soul. He saw Golgotha. The darkness. The desolation. The pain. But at the same time he saw something even greater. Love. Voluntary love. Love that wasn't forced. Love that chose. Love that lasted. Love that carried everything. Jesus looked at him.

"You searched for a long time for proof that someone outside of you actually existed." Elias nodded.

"Yes." "And what did you find?" Elias looked at the scars. Then he answered softly.

"YOU." Jesus smiled.

"Even more."

Suddenly Elias understood. The mother in the empire of Shadows. The woman who gave her life for her child. His father. May. All the love he had ever seen. All sacrifice. All loyalty. All beauty. They had been reflections. Small windows. Shadows of a much greater reality. From Him. Tears streamed down Elias' face again.

"You were everywhere." Jesus nodded.

"Yes." "Even when I didn't see You." "Especially then." That answer broke something open in Elias. Years of questions. Years of loneliness. Years of searching. He suddenly saw how often he had been worn. How many times he was protected. How many times God had been present when he thought he was alone. Jesus placed a hand on his shoulder.

An ordinary hand. A human hand. With a scar. And yet Elias felt more life flowing through him than ever before.

"I was never far away." Elias couldn't say anything. He knelt. Not because he had to. Because love did that naturally. Millions of others knelt around him. Not out of compulsion. Not out of fear. But out of joy. Then something happened that Elias never expected. Jesus also knelt. For him. Elias looked up in surprise.

"Why are you doing that?" Jesus smiled.

"To show you who My Father has always been." And then Elias remembered. The foot washing. The crucifixion. The Prodigal Son. Everything pointed in the same direction. The highest became a servant. The most powerful became love.

The King became a servant. In that moment, Elias understood something that he had not fully understood even in heaven. The greatest force in the universe was not power. Not knowledge. Not glory. But love. And all the stars. All worlds. All centuries. All histories. In the end it all revolved around that one secret. Jesus rose again. His eyes shone.

"Come." "Where to?" Elias asked. Jesus looked up. To an even higher mountain behind the Kronenzaal. A mountain whose top disappeared in an ocean of light. Elias had never seen him before. Or maybe he had always seen him without actually seeing him. Jesus smiled.

“Continue up.” “Further in.” And as the King turned and began to walk, Elias knew that even this moment was not the end.

Not even almost. For the infinite love of God could never be fully discovered. All eternities to come would only be new core. From the same story. The Story of First Love.

CHAPTER 8 - THE CHAMBER OF PRAYERS

They followed the King. The road led uphill. Higher and higher. But to Elias' surprise, the climb did not become harder. On the contrary. With every step his joy seemed to increase. His consciousness became clearer. His love deeper. His amazement greater. It was as if reality itself made him stronger. Jesus walked ahead of them. Don't rush. Not solemn. Just as a friend walks with those He loves. Thousands of others flowed around them. People from all ages. Some had died centuries ago. Others only recently.

But all moved with the same desire. Closer to Him. After a long time they reached a building that seemed to grow out of the mountain itself. From the outside it looked simple. But Elias immediately felt that something extraordinary was hidden here. Above the entrance were words of light. THE ROOM OF PRAYERS Elias stopped.

"Prayers?" Jesus looked at him and smiled.

"Yes." "Do they still exist?" "No prayer is wasted." The words reminded Elias of his life on earth. How many times had he prayed? How many times had he thought no one was listening? How many times had he thought that heaven was silent? He entered carefully. His breath caught. The space seemed endless. Billions of points of light floated through the room. Some were shining brightly. Other soft. Some moved like stars. Others like dancing flames.

"What are these?" he asked. Jesus looked at the points of light.

"Prayers." Elias looked again. Suddenly he heard voices. Not thousands. Not millions. But all. Prayers from all times.

A mother praying for her child. A soldier in a trench. An old woman who lived alone. A boy who doubted God's existence. A dying man. A refugee. A king. A prisoner. A child. Their words filled the room. Not as noise. But as music. A huge symphony of desire. Of hope. From pain. Of love. Of faith. Elias felt tears welling up. Because suddenly he recognized a voice. His own voice. He turned around. A point of light floated just in front of him. Then he heard the words.

"God, if You exist, let me find You someday." The prayer from his youth. The prayer he had completely forgotten. But here it was still alive.

As if it had been spoken yesterday. Elias looked at Jesus, "You have not forgotten." Jesus smiled.

"How could I?" Elias slowly began to walk between the points of light. With every prayer he saw something new. Not just the prayer itself. But also the answer. Sometimes immediately. Sometimes years later. Sometimes only after death. But always an answer. A woman prayed for healing. God gave her courage. A man prayed for wealth. God gave him wisdom. A child prayed for protection. God sent people in his path. A widow prayed for comfort. God gave her His presence. Elias looked on in amazement.

On earth he had often thought that unanswered prayers were evidence of absence. Now he saw how limited his vision had been. People had only seen a few pages of the story. God had seen the whole book.

Suddenly he stopped. One area of the room shone brighter than the rest. Thousands of points of light were brought together there. Their glow was almost overwhelming.

"What are those?" Elias asked. Jesus just looked. Line's eyes softened.

"Prayers That Changed History." Elias walked closer He heard Abraham. Moses. David. Mary. Paul. Countless unknowns. Their prayers had influenced wars. Nations changed. People saved. But to Elias' surprise, he also heard simple prayers. A mother praying for her son. An old man who prayed for his neighbor. A girl who prayed for peace.

"Why are these here?" Elias asked. Jesus smiled.

"Because love is more important than rudeness."

Then Elias saw something that made him completely silent. A small point of light. Not particularly bright. Not noticeable. Almost hidden.

"What's that?" Jesus just looked.

"That is the prayer of a woman who prayed for her husband every night for fifty years." "What happened?" "On the last day of his life he found Me." Elias felt tears again. He discovered the same pattern again and again. What seemed small on earth. Turned out to be huge here. What seemed important on earth. Sometimes it seemed to have little meaning. The values of God's Kingdom were completely different. Then they came to the end of the room. There was a single pillar of light. Much bigger than any other. A column of pure golden light.

Elias immediately felt awe.

"What's that?" Jesus looked up.

"Those are all the prayers that were ever addressed to My Father." Elias watched speechless. Billions of votes.

Billions of desires. Billions of tears. And none were forgotten. None. Jesus turned to him.

"Elias." "Yes?" "What was the question that haunted your life?" Elias answered immediately.

"Is there anyone besides me?" Jesus nodded.

"And now?" Elias looked at the countless prayers. To the millions of lives. To the infinite love that had carried everything. Then he replied softly, "Now I know that no one ever prayed alone." A smile appeared on the King's face.

"Precisely." Then the mountain began to sing again. A deep sound. Older than stars. More beautiful than music. And somewhere high above them, a new gate of light opened. Jesus looked up. His eyes shone.

"Come."

"Where to?" Elias asked. The King smiled.

"The Feast of the Nations." And Elias immediately felt that a new reality was waiting for him. A reality in which he would discover that no culture, no people. not a single good thing from history had been lost. Everything that was true. Everything that was beautiful. Everything that was good. Lived on in the King's Kingdom.

CHAPTER 9 - THE FEAST OF THE NATIONS

The gate of light slowly opened. What Elias saw beyond surpassed anything he had seen before. Not for greater glory. Not because of more impressive splendor. But because of something else. Multicolor. To live. Personality. Joy. The valley that stretched before him seemed to have no end. There were tents everywhere. Pavilions. Gardens. Squares. Water flows. Trees. Music sounded from all directions. Not just one style of music. Thousands. Tens of thousands. Melodies from all times. From all peoples. From all ages.

And yet together they formed one harmony. As if all of human history had finally found its destiny. Above the entrance it said:

THE FEAST OF THE NATIONS Elias looked at Jesus: "What is happening here?" Jesus smiled.

"Today they celebrate whom My Father made." "Who?" Jesus looked across the valley.

"All." They descended. They met people everywhere. A group of African worshipers sang around a fountain. Their voices filled the air with joy. Farther away, children from dozens of different times danced together. At a long table sat people from civilizations that had lived thousands of years apart on Earth. But here they understood each other completely. No translators. No misunderstandings. No barriers. Only community. Elias kept standing still. He discovered new wonders everywhere.

People wore clothing that recalled their earthly culture. But glorified. Completed. Not as museum pieces. But as living beauty.

He saw Romans. Medieval peasants. Chinese scholars. Israelite shepherds. Modern scientists. Indigenous tribes. People from all ages. All languages. All continents. And no one had disappeared into the crowd. Each person radiated their own unique glory.

"I don't understand." Elias said. Jesus looked at him.

"What don't you understand?" "How can so many differences form one whole at the same time?" Jesus smiled.

"Because unity is not uniformity." Those words stuck. On Earth, people had often tried to achieve unity by erasing differences. The exact opposite happened here. It was precisely the differences that made the glory greater. They reached a large square. There was a table in the middle. So big that Elias couldn't see the end. There were people at that table that he immediately recognized.

Abraham. Moses. David. Ruth. Isaiah. Peter. John. Paul. But also countless others. People who would never have ended up in history books. Yet some of them radiated a glory that seemed even greater than that of kings. Elias looked surprised. A simple woman laughed as she spoke to David. An unknown shepherd sat next to Paul. A former slave spoke to an emperor. And no one thought that was strange. Everyone seemed completely themselves. And at the same time completely at home. Then Elias saw a man he had not expected.

The man stood alone at the edge of the square. His face radiated deep wisdom. His eyes seemed to contain sadness and joy at the same time. Jesus smiled.

"Go ahead." Elias carefully walked towards him. The man turned around.

"Elias." His voice was warm. Known. Although Elias had never met him.

"Who are you?" The man smiled.

"On earth many called me Clive." Elias froze.

"C. S. Lewis?" Lewis laughed.

"That was indeed my name." Elias couldn't think of anything to say for a moment. His books had often helped him in his search. Not because they gave answers. But because they increased his desire. Lewis looked around.

"What do you think?" Elias looked at the party. The people. The music. The colours. The joy. Then he replied, "I could never have imagined it." Lewis smiled.

"That's because you couldn't." "Not?"

Lewis shook his head.

"Reality is always greater than imagination." They continued walking together. Along the way, Elias saw something remarkable. People continued to discover new parts of the valley. New music. New art. New stories. No one ever seemed to be done exploring.

"I used to think that heaven was a place where everything would already be known." Lewis laughed.

"Almost everyone thought so." "And now?" Lewis pointed to the horizon. Behind the valley were mountains again. And beyond that again mountains. Without end.

"Now you know better." "Why does everything keep getting bigger?" Lewis looked at the distant peaks.

"Because God is infinite." "And that's why?" "Because a finite soul can never fully comprehend an infinite God." Elias thought. Suddenly he understood why no one was ever bored. Why no one ever got satiated. Why joy kept increasing.

Heaven was not a standstill. Heaven was an eternal discovery. At that moment there was a cheer. A huge crowd gathered around a raised plaza. Jesus walked forward. Everyone followed. The music stopped. The silence returned. But again it was a living silence. Jesus looked over the countless crowd. Line's eyes shone.

"Dear children." It was as if each person heard the words personally.

"Today we celebrate not only what My Father has done." He looked at the people.

"We celebrate who you have become." A wave of joy went through the crowd. Not proud. Not self-aggrandizement. But gratitude. Because everyone knew the same truth. Everything that was good. Everything that was beautiful. Everything that was sacred. Had been a gift in the end. Then Jesus lifted up His hand. Suddenly, thousands of images of light appeared above the valley.

Scenes from history. Not wars. Not disasters. But moments of love. A mother comforting her child. A man who forgave. A woman who remained faithful. A child praying. A friend who stayed. A martyr who stood his ground. An unknown believer who kept hoping. Millions of moments. Small moments. But now they shone like stars. Elias felt tears again. Here he saw the true history of the world. Not the history of power. But the history of love. And then he understood something he had never realized before.

When the history of the earth was finally told.....the emperors did not appear to be the main characters. Not the generals. Not the celebrities. But those who had loved. Jesus looked at the crowd. And smiled.

"This is My Father's Kingdom."

And Elias knew that he had only just begun to understand what those words really meant. Because behind the Feast of the Nations, a new discovery awaited. A discovery that would make even the sky even bigger. The Music of the Stars.

CHAPTER 10 - THE MUSIC OF THE STARS

After the Feast of the Nations, the sky seemed to have become even bigger. Not because the world had changed. But because Elias himself had changed. More and more often he discovered that each new revelation increased his ability to see. As if his soul was growing. As if his heart could contain more and more reality. One morning Jesus came to him again. Not suddenly. Not overwhelming. Just like a friend comes for a walk. Elias sat on the bank of a river that flowed through a valley of silver trees.

The water sang softly as it passed by. Jesus sat down next to him. They said nothing for a long time. That still surprised Elias. On Earth, silences had often felt awkward. Here silences were sometimes more beautiful than words. Finally, Jesus spoke.

"Are you ready for the stars?" Elias smiled.

"I think so." Jesus laughed softly.

"That's what they all think." A moment later they were standing somewhere else. Not through movement.

Not by traveling. It was as if reality had simply opened up. Elias looked up. His breath caught. He stood on a mountain top. But this mountain was not on earth. Not on the new earth. Not even within a galaxy. There were stars beneath him. Millions. Billions. Galaxies rotated through space like beautiful spirals. Mists colored the darkness with shades he had never seen before. Lights were on everywhere. To live. Beauty. Elias watched speechless.

"I've been studying this all my life." he whispered. Jesus looked at the stars.

"I know." "But I never really understood what I saw." "No." "Why not?" Jesus smiled.

"Because you only looked at the outside." Then Elias heard something.

At first he thought it was his imagination. But it got stronger. Music. Not from an instrument. Not from a voice. The stars themselves sang. Each star carried its own tone. Each nebula has its own harmony. Every galaxy has its own melody. And together they formed a symphony greater than anything he had ever heard. The music seemed to come from the depths of reality itself.

"What is this?" he asked. Jesus looked into the infinite sky.

"The Hymn of Creation." Elias listened. Suddenly he understood why music could touch people on earth so deeply. Music was not a human invention. She was a memory. An ultrasound. A distant reflection of something much older than Earth. Much older than humanity. Much older even than stars. Jesus pointed to a distant mist.

"Listen." Elias turned his attention to it. Immediately he heard a new melody.

Soft. Full of desire. Full of expectation.

"What does that mean?" he asked. Jesus smiled.

"That nebula is waiting to be consummated." Elias looked up in surprise.

"Guard?" "Yes." "Do You mean that creation is alive?" "More than you ever suspected." At that moment Elias remembered words from his old life. All creation sighs. All creation longs. Now he saw what those words really meant. Creation had never been a machine. Never just matter. Never a collection of natural laws. She was a work of art. A living work of art. A symphony. A story. A song of praise. Jesus began to walk slowly along the ridge. Elias followed. Along the way they saw worlds.

Some larger than a thousand Earths. Others small and hidden. Some known. Others completely new.

"Are these all worlds of people?" Elias asked. Jesus looked at him and smiled.

"You're still thinking very small." Elias laughed.

"I suspect so too." Jesus pointed to the endless sea of stars.

"My Father loves to create." Elias looked around. Then he started to understand something. The new creation was not static. God had not stopped creating. Reality grew. Immersed himself. Continually unfolded. Not because something was missing. But because God's abundance had no end. Suddenly they saw a light in the distance. Much brighter than all the stars. Much bigger than all the suns. Still, it didn't hurt his eyes. On the contrary. It attracted him.

Like love attracts. As beauty attracts. As truth attracts.

"What's that?" Elias asked. Jesus looked at the light. His eyes shone.

"My Father's House." Elias felt awe.

"Haven't we been there yet?" Jesus laughed.

"You're just getting started." Elias looked at the light again. Then he realized something. The Crown Hall. The Library of Lives. The Feast of the Nations. Even this sea of stars. All he had seen so far had been but an outer court. The reality was even greater. Much richer. Much nicer. And suddenly he felt again the same longing that had once led him to Veritas Omega But now without fear. Without loneliness. Without a doubt.

Only wonder.

"How long will it take before I see everything?" he asked. Jesus looked at him. His smile grew even warmer. Even deeper. Even more joyful.

"Eternity isn't long enough for that." Elias looked at the stars again. Then he started laughing. Not because he heard a joke. But because he finally understood. Heaven was not a place where all questions end. Heaven was a place where questions turn into discoveries. Where desire turns into joy. Where wonder never ends. And above them the creation continued to sing. Star after star. World no world. Eternity after eternity. The King's great symphony. And somewhere beyond the stars. Behind the music. Behind all the glory.

A deeper reality still awaited. The House of the Father. The place where even heaven felt at home.

CHAPTER 11 - THE FATHER'S HOUSE

They traveled on for a long time. Or maybe it was just one moment. Elias had long since learned that time in God's Kingdom was not measured as it was on earth. Not by clocks. Not by sunbathing. Not through decay. But by depth. Through discovery. Through love. The closer they came to the great light, the more Elias realized that everything he had seen so far had only been preparation. Even the stars. Even the Crown Hall. Even the meeting with the King. Not because they were small. But because God was infinitely greater.

Before them finally appeared a landscape beyond words. Mountains of light. Rivers of joy. Forests in which every tree seemed to sing. And behind it... a city. But different from the First City. This city didn't seem built. She seemed born.

As if love itself had taken shape. Towers rose like crystal fims. Squares glittered like liquid gold. Streams of water flowed through the streets like living music. Yet it was not the beauty that struck Elias first. It was the presence. Here was the Father. Not further away. Not hidden. Not behind a veil. Here. Jesus stood still. For the first time since their journey, Elias saw something new in His eyes. Springs. Not the longing of loss. But the longing to come home.

"Welcome." Jesus said softly.

"Where?" Elias asked. Jesus looked at the city.

"Home." Those words did something to him. Suddenly Elias thought of his youth. At his parents' house. Of nights when he lay safely in bed while rain pounded against the windows. The smell of coffee in the morning.

To his mother's voice. To the presence of his father. That feeling of security. Of belonging. Of being known. Now he realized that all those memories had been just shadows. Examples. Sneak peeks. Of this reality. They walked through the gates. People greeted them. Children laughed. Music sounded. But everything seemed like just a backdrop to something bigger. The Father. Elias felt it more and more strongly. As if a magnet was pulling at his soul. Deeper and deeper. Further and further. Finally they reached a garden.

A garden more beautiful than all the worlds he had seen. Lakes reflected the sky. Flowers bore colors that did not exist in the ancient creation. Birds sang melodies that touched directly the heart. There was a tree in the middle. Bigger than any tree Elias had ever seen. Its branches seemed to bear galaxies.

Its roots reached deeper than the foundations of worlds. Jesus looked at the tree.

"Do you know him?" Elias nodded slowly.

"The Tree of Life." "Yes." They sat down under his shadow. Nothing happened for a long time. Or maybe everything happened. Then Elias felt a presence. Not approaching. Not showing up. Not arriving. Just present. As light is present. As truth is present. As love is present. He looked up. And saw the Father. Later, Elias would often try to describe what he saw. He would fail. Not because it had to remain a secret. But because words were too small. The Father seemed older than time. Younger than a child. Mightier than all the stars.

Softer than a mother holding her baby.

His eyes contain oceans of love. And yet Elias saw joy there too. Humor. Wisdom. Amazement. As if even the Father found joy in His creation. Elias wanted to kneel. But the Father opened Line's arms. And suddenly Elias knew what He wanted. Not distance. Proximity. Not fear. Community. Not submission. Love. The Father embraced him. And at that moment something happened that would have surpassed even meeting Christ. Elias saw. Not with his eyes. With his entire being. He saw how the Father had known him before his birth. Before the earth.

Before the stars. He saw how every day of his life had been familiar. every joy. Every wound. Every question.

Every tear. Even his loneliness. Especially his loneliness. Nothing had ever been hidden. Nothing was ever forgotten. Nothing was ever lost. Elias started to cry. Not out of sadness. Not out of guilt. But because he finally understood. He had never been a project. Never an experiment. Never a problem that needed solving. He was loved. Elias meets people he never met on earth. Yet they recognize him. Not because they ever met him. But because they bear parts of the work that God has done through him.

A woman says, "You didn't know me." "But a choice you made changed my life." Then images of light appear again in his body. Not to glorify Elias. But to make God's grace visible. From the beginning.

From before the beginning. The Father looked at him. His voice sounded like music and silence at the same time.

"Elias." "Yes." Elias' voice broke.

"What were you looking for?" Elias thought about his whole life. To the stars. To science. To philosophy. To Veritas Omega. To all the worlds he had visited. To all questions. Then he replied, "I was looking for someone outside myself." The Father smiled.

"And what did you find?" Elias looked at the Father. To Jesus. To the Spirit that flowed through everything like joy. Then he replied, "A love greater than reality." The Father gently shook His head.

"No, My son." Elias looked up in surprise. The Father smiled.

"Reality is so great because love made it." Those words opened another door in Elias's mind. Suddenly he understood. Love was not part of reality. Love was her foundation. Not power. Not energy. Not laws of nature. Not a coincidence. Love. The Father stood up. He pointed to the horizon. Behind the garden. Behind the city. Behind the mountains. Once again there was an endless world. New oceans. New stars. New creations. New wonders. Elias looked surprised.

"More?" The Father laughed. A smile that seemed to ripple through all of creation.

"Always more." "Even now?" "Especially now."

"When will it end?" The Father looked at him lovingly.

"When I cease to be God." Elias started laughing. And everyone laughed along. Jesus. The Father. All creation. Because they all knew the answer. Never. And for the first time Elias understood why heaven was never boring. Why eternity wouldn't be long enough. Why wonder never stopped. Because God was infinite. And love had no end. Far behind them the stars sang. New worlds lay before them. And above all came the voice of the Father: "Come, My son." "There is still so much to discover." And together they walked on. Further up.

Further inside. Further into the heart of eternal Love.

CHAPTER 12 - BEYOND THE MORNING

Centuries passed. Or maybe just a few days. In the Kingdom of the Father that question lost its meaning. Elias had now seen worlds that he could not even have suspected existed during his earthly life. He had visited oceans that sang. Climbed mountains that kept memories. Crossed forests where each tree reflected a unique aspect of God's beauty. He had walked with Abraham. Sung with David. Talked to John about Patmos. Laughed with Paul about his old letters. He had again had long conversations with Mei.

With his father. With people from thousands of generations. And yet the same discovery kept repeating itself. The more he saw... the greater God became. One day Elias was sitting alone on a hill. Before him lay a vast valley. In the distance a river of light flowed. Stars glittered above him. But these stars were different from the stars of the old creation. They seemed closer. More lively. More available. He thought back to Luna Station. To the artificial stars. To his first question. Does anyone exist besides me? He smiled.

How small that question now seemed. And yet... how necessary. Because without that question he would never have started his journey. Suddenly he heard footsteps. He didn't have to look back. He knew who it was. Jesus sat down next to him. As He did so often.

Not like a distant King. But like a friend They sat in silence for a long time. Finally Elias spoke.

"I don't understand something." Jesus smiled.

"That's a good sign." Elias laughed.

"Why?" "Because those who think they understand everything usually discover nothing more." Elias looked at the horizon.

"After everything I've seen..." He searched for words.

"After all these centuries..." "Yes?" "I feel like I'm still at the beginning." Jesus looked at the stars.

"That's right." Elias laughed.

"That's what I thought." There was silence again. Then Elias asked, "Will there ever come a time when I understand everything?" Jesus looked at him. Line's eyes radiated the same love that Elias had seen on the first day. Maybe even more.

"No."

Elias smiled. The answer did not disappoint him. On the contrary. He had hoped this would be the answer.

"Why does that make me so happy?" he asked. Jesus pointed to heaven.

"Do you see those stars?" Elias nodded.

"Can you count their number?" "No." "Can you exhaust their beauty?" "No." "And yet you enjoy it." Elias nodded again. Then he understood. An endless reality was no problem. She was a gift. An infinite God meant an infinite discovery. An infinite joy. An infinite wonder. Jesus stood up.

"Come." "Where to?" Elias asked. Jesus smiled.

"Even further."

Elias laughed.

"You always say that." "I'll always say that." They continued walking together. Elias looked at his hands. In the light he saw countless stories. Not his own greatness. But the greatness of the One who had been working through him all this time. And he understood that even eternity would not be long enough to discover all the wonders of God's grace. The hill disappeared behind them. New landscapes appeared. New wonders. New realities. Then something special happened. Before them opened a vista that Elias had never seen before.

Not a world. Not a galaxy. Not a heaven. But an endless series of realities. World behind world. Creation behind creation. Glory behind glory. And behind it all... the Father.

Not far away. Not hidden. But present. As He had always been present. Elias looked at the countless horizons. Then he finally understood something that even Heaven had not yet fully taught him. Man's destiny was not a place. Not even heaven. Man's destiny was God Himself. And because God was infinite... the journey would never end. Tears of joy filled his eyes. Not because something passed. But because nothing would ever pass. Not love. Not the discovery. The community does not. Not the joy. Jesus looked at him.

"What are you thinking about?" Elias smiled. He thought about his father. To May. To Anna. At Luna Station. To Veritas Omega. At the Throne.

On the First Morning. Of everything that lay behind him. Then he looked into the infinite future. And replied, "I think the story has only just begun." Jesus smiled.

"Exactly" They continued to watch together. Eternities long. Or maybe just a moment. Because here the two were ultimately the same. Far behind them the stars sang. Before them lay the infinite reality of God. And above all there was a voice. The voice Elias had always sought. The voice that was older than time. Older than stars. Older than creation. The voice of the Father.

"Welcome home." And for the first time Elias understood that home was no place. Home was a Person. The Other. The First Love. The Source of all beauty. The Origin of all joy. The Eternal.

The Last Horizon And as Elias walked on with the Father, beyond the last horizon he could see, he finally understood what no human on earth can fully comprehend. Heaven had never been the end of the story. Heaven was the first page. From a book that never ends. Love was not the purpose of the journey. Love was the way. Love was the country. Love was the house. And new horizons still lay ahead of him. New joy. New wonders. New discoveries of the infinite God. The river flowed on. The stars continued to sing. Creation continued to grow.

And the Father smiled.

"Come, My son." "There is still so much to discover." And together they walked on. Further up. Further inside. Further into the heart of eternal Love. And as new horizons opened up before him, the same adventure began again. Further up.

Further inside. Further beyond the morning. End of part II Or perhaps better: The beginning of eternity.