

S.J.Pow



THE
CALLING

Book One of The Black Pearl of Sacrifice

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Extract from

PROLOGUE

Bloody And Terrifying

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD GIRL tossed and turned fitfully in her sleep, the rise and fall of her chest labored, the covers on her pallet tangled and soaked through with sweat. Beneath shadowed lids, her eyes darted, and her dark, wet lashes fluttered as tears trickled down her deathly pale cheeks. The muscles in her fluffy, dark-feathered wings twitched anxiously on the bed, as if she might take flight, and she clutched the sheets with tiny fists.

Samara's naked, white flesh glowed against her long black hair in the darkness where, in her mind, she stood confused and alone.

Cries of hopelessness and terror echoed, growing louder. The air wavered, and images began to flicker in and out through her sleep until they manifested before her.

A fire glowed faintly at the edge of her vision. When she turned,

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the child saw a huge brutish creature, clutching a torch in one clawed fist. A series of loud bangs resounded, and the earth began to cave into the underground tunnels, spewing thick clouds of dirt from its mouth. Hundreds of small, armored people crawled from the ruins like an exterminated colony of ants; children cried as they were carried forth, and the injured begged for death.

“Take them all,” the soldier growled loudly, as the blood of his kill bubbled over his lips and dribbled down his chin to splatter on the corpse at his feet. He shook the torch fiercely and bellowed, “No mercy to those who fight!” In his other clawed hand, a long axe oozed blood.

A deafening war cry thundered in answer, echoing through the dark as the drum bearers began their slow, rhythmic beats.

There was a sickening crunch as the soldier stepped on the lifeless body which lay face up in the dirt, and the angelic child jerked as dark droplets of blood splattered across her cheeks. The soldier creature swept its soulless gaze over the wheat crops swaying in the growing breeze, as meaty flesh squished between the toes of its clawed feet.

The child’s eyes grew wide as thousands of other torches flared to life, the orange glow of their fire sweeping through the dark, flickering over the beastly soldiers’ armor as each raised a cruelly shaped weapon overhead.

The flesh-eater raised its axe. “Take them now,” it commanded, as it ran past her into the golden sea, its green-tinged flesh beaded with sweat, and its heavy, rusted armor smeared crimson with blood.

The dull thump of the creature soldiers’ answering footfalls was magnified by their numbers, and the child covered her ears as they thundered past her.

The stench of the first few had barely left the child’s nose when a strange-looking head of flaxen curls rolled out from the field and wobbled to a stop at the angelic child’s bare feet. The man’s mouth was open, his empty eyes fixed upwards, as blood trickled down each cheek. A loud horn sounded, drowning out the four-year-old’s screams, and one dark, wing swept up defensively as she dropped to crouch in the

dirt, her heart pounding wildly in her ears.

Metal clanged against metal, and thick smoke burned into the little girl's throat and eyes as she tried to blink through the gray hazy clouds, too frightened to close them. Light danced in the dark pupils of her pale eyes as fire leapt up the golden stalks of wheat, its bright orange flames licking at the darkness, chasing the shadows away to the rocky mountains. Screams echoed through the gully as the fire roared across the golden sea of crops. Men and women fled the flames in every direction, and she watched in horror as the brutish creatures herded them into cages.

The people were strange to the warrior child. They were much shorter than the adults of her tribe, and wider, but what astonished her most was their lack of wings.

Those who fought died.

The girl ducked her black-haired head beneath her fluffy wings, and her body trembled with terror. A small boy cried out to his father as he was dragged into a cage, and the brawny, stout man battled his way through the carnage, but was struck down less than a pace from his son. The child screamed, tears spilling over from his wide eyes as he stretched one hand toward his father's headless form, until the huge cage door swung shut and he sank to its floor in shock.

An auburn-haired toddler stood red faced and screaming. Her eyes were brimming with tears as she looked around wildly for someone familiar. But there was no one, and she was snatched up by one of the brutish soldiers, then thrown into the cage with the young boy who sobbed in the corner.

The angelican child curled her black wings closer around her pale body, as if they could shield her from the horror, and tried, ineffectively, to burrow into the dirt. She peeked out at the soldier creature that was advancing on her, and a whimper escaped her colorless lips. The warrior girl flexed her tiny wings and readied herself to push up from the ground and shoot into the air. But she had moved too slowly and started too late; she had only risen to the level of the beast's chest level when, suddenly, it passed through her as if she were not there.

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Like the dark clouds above that promised rain but withheld it, her presence there was a lie. For in truth, this horrific slaughter had already damned the small race; their fate had already come and gone.

Samara's breath caught in her tiny throat and she began to sob, her chest heaving. She squeezed her hands into little white fists as she landed shakily on the ground, too young to fully understand, and too frightened to move.

A tall, broad-shouldered man paced the floor between his son's and daughter's beds, on the upper level of their underground lodge. His thick, black brows were furrowed over gray-blue eyes in deep concern as he watched his daughter's restless sleep.

A small-framed woman stood beside the young girl's bed, her long graying plait swishing between salt-and-pepper feathered wings as she shook her head.

"Surely, you cannot tell me this is normal," the man demanded, stretching one large hand toward his little girl.

The woman shrugged, and her feathered wings shifted with her shoulders. "Tabias—" she started.

"Do not say it again, do not say this *may* be normal for her, or so help me I will ..."

The woman raised one thin, graying brow. "Or you will do what?" Her faded gray-blue eyes sparked with interest, her tone challenging and irritable. They both knew that only a fool would think he could best her.

The warrior stood silently, seething as he glared at the other angelican through too many nights without sleep. "Nothing," Tabias muttered, lowering his eyes to his bare feet.

Suddenly, he looked very young despite his forty years. "She is my little girl, Tarkisha." Tabias turned back to gaze again at his sleeping daughter. "My little Samara is just four years old. Four!" He sighed heavily, his white shoulders and dark, feathered wings slumping. "She

should not be suffering this way,” the angelican warrior whispered helplessly.

The woman moved soundlessly to his side and waited for him to go on.

“Every time Samara goes to sleep, I feel as if I have failed her. And it is only worse when she wakes.” Tabias said weakly. “No child should have to live this way!” The warrior stared down at his daughter’s fragile frame. “Her world should be filled with laughter and games,” he frowned, “not sickness and night terrors.”

Tarkisha placed one delicate hand on his shoulder. “As should your son’s be, as well.” She looked toward the twin boy. “But such is life! You cannot presume that what Samara faces has anything to do with your ability to be a good father.”

Tabias scratched impatiently at the stubble on his chin.

“The fact that you worry and fuss over the twins is enough to prove you love them.” Tarkisha moved over to the boy’s pallet and sat on the edge of the child warrior’s bed. “He does well to sleep through all of this,” she mused quietly, with sadness in her voice.

Tabias gave her a sad smile. “At least I can be grateful for that!”

Tarkisha nodded miserably.

Across the room, Samara cried out, her tiny arms held protectively above her head. Over and over she screamed, her body shuddering, flinching from some predator he could not protect her from. Tabias stroked the girl warrior’s head until she was quiet once again, but he knew that it was not unusual for Samara to have three or even four such outbursts in a night, and he wondered whether it was all part of the same vision.

His expression pained, he asked, “What would Sarsha think, if she could see my uselessness, and how our little girl suffers?”

Tarkisha clicked her tongue. “She would think herself lucky to have left her twins behind with such a strong, loving father to protect and raise them well,” she rebuked him gently.

Tabias nodded solemnly.

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“Sarsha would be proud,” Tarkisha persisted, her eyes glistening with the tears she would not allow to spill. She turned back to the boy.

Sarsha was four years dead, and still the pain stung them both like a fresh wound. Worse yet, the twins were much as Sarsha had been at four, in both appearance and behavior, particularly the girl. Samara was very much like their mother.

Tabias sat rigidly for a time, willing the pain away. On his daughter’s tiny face, the black circles under her eyes had darkened, and he rose to fetch a cold cloth for her sweat-beaded brow. He found Tarkisha already returning from the lower level, carrying the damp material; she handed it to him with a gentle smile.

The old warrior woman nodded towards the girl. “I think, perhaps, that you sitting there with her eases her distress a little. On some level, she seems to know that we are with her.”

Tabias nodded, but did not speak. His face looked drawn, and he seemed lost in thought. “Will my son’s wings remain that way?” he asked, almost absently.

Tarkisha studied Elias’s wings for a long time before she answered, and she took care in selecting her words. “Perhaps, Tabias. But I cannot be sure.” She frowned, and her thin brows drew in. “Since Elias was born with this deformity in his wings, it is possible that they will correct their growth later in life ... It *has* happened in the past,” she offered softly.

The angelic warrior nodded solemnly.

Tarkisha regarded his drawn face and tired eyes, “Off to bed with you, Tabias. I will watch the twins until a few hours before dawn. Then you can take over, so that I may rest.”

The warrior smiled sleepily at her, “Tarkisha, I do not know how I would cope without you. If you were –”

The woman shifted uncomfortably, raising one delicate hand. “Oh, hush. Off with you, now, before I change my mind!” She forced a yawn. “I am rather tired myself, you know!”

Tabias laughed to himself. *The woman hates compliments and gratitude!*

Why, I will never know!

The angelican bent to kiss his daughter's forehead, and then his son's, as well. His gaze flickered back to Samara one last time.

My poor little girl! Some life you have, my sweetheart. Tabias thought bitterly.

Then he descended the ladder to the level below, where he slept.

Tarkisha watched him go, then looked up to the ceiling. At her will, a small ball of blue lightening appeared near the girl's pallet.

Extract from

CHAPTER TWO

The Self-Exiled Elder

SAMARA SLID FROM HER huge cat's back and scratched under the animal's velvety furred chin. Purring tenderly in her throat, she rested her white forehead against the side of the feline's black face. When Samara made a sound in her throat, Iseeba roared softly and sauntered over to a tall willow tree where she sat, twitching her tail in the shade. With a soft whining sound, the sheeba lowered her dark face and rested her chin on the back of her huge paws, her amber eyes intense as she watched Samara remove the wide, clay hatch from the hole leading to the old woman's lodge.

If Samara took a few more steps, she would be outside the protective boundary the elders wove. For one who had not been anointed, that was forbidden, and she glanced around one last time.

As a child, Samara had delighted in sliding down the ladder, but today

she jumped to the earthy floor and landed, crouching, as she blinked nervously at the gloom. Her eyes adjusted quickly to the poorly lit room, bathed in the wavering glow of a scattering of half-burned candles which flickered in the breeze that had come in behind her.

She noticed that a large, round clay bowl still dominated the room's centre, with a mass of unlit coals in its bottom, encircled by deerskin sacks stuffed with lamb's wool, which sprawled invitingly over the floor.

A small-framed woman lounged comfortably on one of the large pillows closest to the clay bowl. Her black and gray feathered wings were tucked absentmindedly behind her back. She sat silently for a moment, her gaze intent on Samara.

"I had almost forgotten about you, Samara, thought you had disappeared!" Faded gray-blue eyes shone in the poorly lit space, her gray hair softened by white curls that almost glowed in the dim room.

"It has not been so long, Tarkisha. You exaggerate!" Samara laughed, finding her way to a pillow across from the old woman.

Tarkisha chuckled. "It is good to see you, my girl." She tightened the neck-cords of the cloth she wore to cover her breasts.

"And you, Elder –"

"You know better than to call me that!" Tarkisha snapped.

Samara nodded. "I do. I am sorry Tarkisha."

Tarkisha waved the apology away and sighed. "I have missed your visits, and Elias's, too. It can be lonely here at times," the older warrior said softly, a distant expression on her face.

"Then come back to the village and live with the rest of the tribe," Samara urged quietly. Hopeful, she added, "Ebanisa will not object!"

"And live with such fools?" Tarkisha shook her head and her long, graying plait swished between salt-and-pepper feathered wings, "You ask for something that you know I will not do."

Samara shifted uncomfortably on her pillow.

"My girl, I would rather die alone and miserable than mindlessly tie my life to their blind ignorance!"

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“But –”

“Samara, they are vain, and have forgotten the old ways, the wise ways.” Tarkisha gave an angry nod.

Samara frowned, but sat quietly.

“We have not an army in the sense of the old way, only a community of people who can barely hunt!” Tarkisha scoffed. Her voice softened. “It sickens and frightens me to think what may happen because of their laziness.”

“I understand why you hate them so.” Samara said, tucking short strands of her hair behind her ears. “And why you left your home with us ...”

Tarkisha’s gaze snapped up to meet Samara’s, a hurt expression on her aging face, “I have always kept an eye on the pair of you. And you have always been welcome here.”

Samara scratched the back of her ear. “I know.”

Tarkisha ruffled her salt-and-pepper feathers, “I do not hate them, Samara. But I pity them, and I rue whatever danger their foolishness may bring down upon their people! Mark my words as I tell you truly, most of them will pay for it with their lives!” she snapped, pointing a shaking finger at the young warrior.

Samara nodded.

“Every morning, I wake with the stench of dried blood in my nostrils, though there is none to be found in my home, or on my flesh, or in my hair.” Tarkisha sighed irritably.

“What does that mean?” Samara asked, troubled.

The older angelican’s thin, graying brows drew in over angry eyes. “It means there will be death here.”

The room was silent.

“I tried to speak with Ebanisa when I first smelled it, but he was not interested. Much as with your dreams, he cares not.”

Samara’s eyes grew wide. “You came back into the village?”

Tarkisha nodded. “To warn them! And, despite my years, they refused to listen to me. *Again*, they chose to listen to Ebanisa instead.”

As Samara listened to the wise woman's words, she felt ashamed of her elders.

"I can tell you that those fools do not care for warnings of the future, so concerned with their luxuries are they!" The former angelic elder spat angrily, as though she had bitten into something rotten.

Like everyone else, Samara had long believed that the protective boundary could not be breached, and had never bothered to think what would happen if it was.

But the old angelic warrior had been a close friend of Samara and Elias's father, and in the past had proven right about many things.

So why had they not listened to her before she left?

"Samara, have you been able to remember anything from your visions?"

Samara stiffened at the mention of it.

"I know you are still having them. I can see it in your face!" The older warrior waited patiently, her angry expression now soft and loving.

"They are worse." Samara cleared her throat. "More frequent. And I am weaker, now, when they finally end."

"Even though Elias mixes the syrup I gave you as a child?"

Samara looked surprised that Tarkisha knew.

"I told you, I keep an eye on you both," the older woman said with a knowing smile and a twinkle in her pale eyes.

"Tarkisha ... why do you think I am punished with these draining dreams?" Samara asked somberly, her husky voice soft.

"I have told you before, as did your father." Tarkisha pulled her plait around to the front of her body so she could sit back against the pillows more comfortably. "They are not merely *dreams*," she scoffed, "but visions of things past ... and of things yet to *come*."

"Ebanisa says they are not."

"Then he lies." More softly she asked, "Does he still refuse you the syrup given to warriors burdened with visions?"

Samara nodded.

Tarkisha glared into the clay bowl. "No matter. After tonight, things

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will change.”

“What will change?” Samara asked in confusion.

Tarkisha waved the question away. “You and your brother are to undergo the so-called ‘anointing trials’ tonight, yes?”

“Yes. Why?”

“I have waited for this day for a very long time,” Tarkisha said, and smiled sadly.

“So you *are* going to be there?”

“No.”

The younger angelican frowned. “But – ”

“I want both you and Elias to come to me here, at first light.”

“Why?”

“I will begin your training myself, so bring *all* your weapons and pack provisions,” the older woman told her.

“Why do we need provisions? Will we be leaving the protective boundary?”

Tarkisha scowled. “Never you mind that! Just do as I tell you and do not tell anyone,” she snapped. “There are a great many things you both must know.”

“Tarkisha, Elias and I have never told anyone that you are still here. Why would we tell others now?”

The older warrior did not answer, but gave her a thoughtful look before adding, “Bring your sheebas, too.” Tarkisha fixed her with a look. “Remember, do not tell anyone where you are going in the morning, or why. Understand?”

“Yes.” Samara frowned, running her tongue along the back of her teeth.

Tarkisha watched her and then, with a click of her tongue, said, “You needn’t worry about tonight.”

Samara shook her head. “I am a little nervous, but it is not tonight that I am thinking of.”

“Good! To spend any time worrying about that would be a waste of it,” Tarkisha said with a serious nod.

“It is my dreams,” Samara began, but with Tarkisha’s glare amended, “That is, my ... *visions*. Today I have felt a strange sense of dread, though I have no idea why.” She shivered.

Tarkisha regarded her sadly a moment.

“What is it?”

“I have felt on edge, today, as well. Let us hope that whatever ruin Ebanisa’s foolishness and complacence brings to us happens after tomorrow, not tonight.”

“You *do* intend for us to leave tomorrow, don’t you?”

“Oh hush, child,” Tarkisha waved her hand, as if to wipe her question away. “Just be here with your brother at first light, and bring the things I told you to bring.”

Extract from

CHAPTER THREE

The King Of Kodeah

THE LUSH, GREEN FOREST was dark beneath its thick canopy of branches, a restless ceiling shielding its floor of foliage from the light. The thick guardians allowed only a few thin beams of sun through their fortress. In the rays, small dust particles rose but remained unseen within the gloom.

The breeze picked up slightly, rolling fallen leaves sluggishly past the wide trunks of the monstrous trees, swirling over the limp, armored bodies which scattered the ground. Battle axes, swords and shields lay bloodied and discarded around the corpses of elves and flesh eaters who stared blankly up at the thick branches. Thickening black blood trickled down the blotchy, greenish flesh of creature-soldiers' jaws, as they watched death come for them on the wind. The head of an elf lay meters from his body, severed at the neck by a flesh-eater's axe. Two

more were face down in the dirt, their rose-tinged armor spattered with blood.

In the center of the carnage, three armored elves stood, panting, their swords drawn and smeared with blood. The elf king of Kodeah was among them, clutching his daughter with his free arm, his gaze snapping around wildly.

The elven toddler princess, unaffected by the chaos, pointed curiously through the trees. She alone had seen the sickly pale man with black hair and hollowed eyes come and go. His dusty, black suit had been untouched by the rain as he pressed his thumbs over the eyes of the corpses. Kiara had watched with innocent fascination as he paused by each body; she sensed that something was taken, without understanding what it was or that it was unnatural for her to be able to see him.

“Your Highness, is the Princess Kiara safe?” Miandra’s slanted aqua eyes flickered over the trees and their surroundings, as the wind blew dark-brown curls in passing. “Aowyn?” she called softly.

King Aowyn cleared his throat and tore his eyes from the headless elf’s body. “Yes.” His voice was tired, and lines appeared on his tanned forehead when he frowned.

They stood silently, listening.

The king of Kodeah looked up from the ground. “That was too close. How did they get so close without our knowledge?”

“Dark magic!” an elf with broad shoulders and short, black hair hissed through clenched teeth as he glared through the gloom.

“Perhaps.” King Aowyn’s long, blood-red hair blew in the increasing wind. “But that kind of power could not have come from these hideous things!”

Miandra shifted her weight on the balls of her feet. “You think there is a scanner with them, Sire?” Her gaze shot to the king’s drawn face, then to the toddler he held, whose rich curls and emerald eyes looked so like his.

Aowyn sighed heavily. “It would not surprise me to find one lurking in the shadows.” He looked to the dark-featured elf. “What do you think,

Faxious?"

The swordsman did not look at his king, but kept his gaze fixed on the forest around them. "I cannot say, Sire." The elf wet his lips. "I have raked my webbing through the forest without pause since we left camp, as we all have, and I have found none!" His haunted gaze returned to the sight of his friend's severed head.

The swordswoman spoke quietly. "None of us were aware of the council's soldier creatures until three of our people were killed!" She stiffened suddenly.

King Aowyn looked at her. "What is it?"

"A feeling I have that it is not a scanner, but I do not know what else," Miandra said. Instinctively, she ordered the ground to open into a deep chasm, and floated the three elven bodies up from the ground.

"Wait," the king whispered. Without moving, he encouraged a thin layer of ice to form over the corpses, ice that quickly became thicker and harder. Then he gave a nod for her to proceed. "You may lower them now."

Tears formed but were not shed as she closed the chasm around them, moving the earth until it held the bodies deep within it. It seemed only right that it should begin to rain once again, as if to mirror the elves' mood in the deepening gloom of the forest.

Faxious blinked through the spitting rain. "We should move on from here, Your Highness. I believe it is no longer safe," he whispered, nodding towards a section of trees in the far distance.

King Aowyn frowned as rain ran down his tanned face. "We are no longer alone."

"There are too many," Miandra whispered, as she saw the soldier-creatures appearing between the trees, their numbers growing.

The king bent to kiss his daughter's forehead, his blood-red hair plastered to the sides of his face in the downpour. He cast forth his senses, sweeping through the forest with his mind, like a giant net that raked through the area.

"The armor of those creatures is bewitched," the king whispered

softly. "It must be, for my eyes can see them in front of me, but still I cannot sense them."

Princess Kiara wriggled in her father's arms, her emerald eyes wide with interest as she struggled to turn her head far enough around to see the soldiers running towards them, their huge feet crushing rotten logs and leaves as they advanced. The toddler's mop of blood-red hair was limp with water and she sneezed.

"To me," the king shouted, holding his sword in one hand, Kiara in the other.

Miandra and Faxious stood in front of Aowyn and his daughter, their weapons drawn.

"No," King Aowyn breathed, looking behind them.

Miandra opened a chasm in front of the Flesh Eaters. "What is it Your Majesty?"

The king's blood-red brows had drawn in tight over his emerald eyes, as he squinted through the rain. "I can see them approaching behind us."

"They intend to flank us," Faxious snarled, and with his rage, yellow fire roared through the ranks of the Flesh Eaters on the other side of Miandra's chasm.

King Aowyn stared hard at the ranks coming up behind them through the forest, and ice began to form over some of the soldier-creatures' heavy armor, but on most it cracked and fell through them, as if they were ghosts.

A sickening stench rose up from the charred flesh, as rain splattered over the creatures' blackened armor and the wind blew its steam through the trees.

"It is sorcery!" The king was bewildered. "Some of them are not really there!"

Miandra focused on the replenished ranks on the other side of the chasm, loading long bows. At the swordswoman's will, large, thick rocks formed under the earth and bubbled to the surface. Like elephants' feet, they trampled the enemy into the ground. Once she had ordered the

rocks up into the air and aimed, there were none that missed.

Rain ran down the elves' tanned necks, and steam rose from the burnt corpses.

Faxious shouted angrily, as he threw a row of the foul beasts against one of Miandra's rocks with his eyes. "Where are they all coming from?" he wondered aloud, as the numbers finally began to dwindle.

"Who can say?" The king shook his head as he raised the last of the frozen creature-soldiers high into the air, then let it drop. "But we need to move on from here." he told them, as the frozen flesh-eater shattered into tiny pieces over the forest floor.

Faxious gasped.

"What is it?" Aowyn asked, turning back to face his swordsmasters.

The black-haired swordsman pointed wordlessly at the still body on the ground, rain splattering over tanned flesh and armor.

The king's emerald eyes were sad as he swept them over the dead elf's expressionless face. "Miandra," Aowyn whispered in shock.

Faxious stared briefly at the arrow embedded in her forehead and gave a soft grunt as he collected himself. "Sire, we must not linger."

A thin layer of ice began to form over the dead swordswoman's corpse and, as it grew hard, the king opened a chasm for it.

Kiara wriggled irritably in the king's arms. "Indeed," Aowyn sighed. "We will not linger."

The elves walked on in the rain, now only a drizzle which slowed and then stopped; the sky had become light and sunny, before they finally deemed it safe to snatch a moment's rest.

After the briefest of reprieves, they rose to their feet again. But when the elves took a few steps, a strange blue wall appeared before them, blocking their path. It looked more like glass; they could see plants and grass on the other side, though there seemed to be no structure holding it in place.

"What is it?" The king's blood-red brows drew in.

Faxious shrugged. "I do not know, Sire." The elven swordsman took another step. "I will see what happens to my sword," he told the king.

As the elf slid his sword into the blue glow, the tip of it turned to dust, flaking and crumbling to the forest floor.

“What witchery is this?” Aowyn demanded, his emerald eyes widening in disbelief.

Faxious tried again, this time with a fallen tree branch, and was baffled when it did not crumble, but remained unaffected when he removed it from the blue glow. To the elves’ further confusion, a small bird flew through the strange frameless window, and it, too, was unharmed.

Aowyn cocked his head to the side and put one tanned finger to his lips, “Shhh! Can you hear that?”

One thousand years have passed
since the elves freed mankind from slavery –
and one hundred since that kindness was
betrayed...

Behind their elders' weave of protection, Samara and her Angelican twin, Elias, have lived a peaceful life, despite a mysterious illness curiously linked to her horrible dreams. But on the night of their anointing, the village is raided – their people either killed or enslaved – leaving the twins lost and alone...

Hundreds of miles away, an elven swordsman named Thorn finds that the great city of Kodeah suffered the same fate – and that the ancient evil long captive within the city's underground tombs has been set free...

John Stratman, is a human farmer plagued by the darkest of visitations. Driven by terror and lack of sleep, he rides in desperation to speak with his father, seeking an end to the curse.

As the Angelican twins search for their family; the Elven swordsman endeavors to warn his king; and the farmer struggles to dispel the horrifying darkness that taunts him.

Now old betrayals must be forgiven, and new alliances forged, for a destiny far beyond them has been placed in their hands, all tied to the fate of one precious child who can save - or damn - them all...

"Angels and elves, dragons and dreams - if you love a big, bold tapestry of a tale, this one's for you!"
~ Julie Meyers, award-winning author of
Face To Face

