CHAPTER 5

"You see the doors behind me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"When I open the doors, I want you to imagine a time of year from your past. Think of a time you would like to revisit," he said, "It must be a year you remember!"

"You're kidding me!"

"No, just trust me here, think of a year."

To humor him, I answered, "1969—the year I graduated from college and came to town."

"Now close your eyes and concentrate hard, imagine you're back then. Imagine how you felt, the things you saw, how it looked here back then."

"Okay," I said curiously, "I've locked my mind on late summer of 1969!"

"A great year," he said as he swung open the doors. There in front of me was a space of about six feet; beyond it was a matching set of doors. Puzzled, I turned and looked at him.

"Take my hand," he said.

I was a bit uncomfortable since I was not accustomed to holding hands with a man, but since his request seemed reasonable, I complied. As Henry stepped through the opening all but his hand, which grasped mine, disappeared. As his hand pulled me forward, I watched as my arm first disappeared, then as he pulled me from the dimly lit shed entirely through the portal I noticed I was in a space between two shimmering curtains. I was in that space for only a moment but in that instant I noticed movement around me. As Henry continued to pull me, we moved through the rest of the portal and out into a bright, sunny day!

I stood in awe. As I took in the vista, it was just as I remembered it. There was Blackman's Lake, but there were no subdivisions on the hills above it. There were classic cars driving up and down the roads. A beautiful '67

Camero Z28 roared by on Third Street. Man, I would have given anything to have had one of those!

I looked west toward the high school, but there was no McDonalds across the street. The hill north of town was covered with trees, not by the Fred Meyer with its twenty-acre parking lot. I turned toward him with my mouth agape and simply asked, "How?"

"It's a time portal," he answered. "It's been here for eons, it's how I come and go home. Let's step back through the other side now." As we stepped back through the portal, I quickly glanced sideways. It was softly lit, kind of a shimmering pure white light and the spaces to my sides and above and below me seemed to have no end. In a split second we re-entered the old shed. Through the window by the side door, I could see it was still dark. Looking at my watch, I saw it was a little before eleven o'clock.

I was speechless. I felt dizzy and wondered if I was dreaming. I slapped my face to wake myself up. Henry laughed and told me to sit back down.

"You're not dreaming," he said as he closed the large doors, "That was my first thought too, when my father first revealed it to me."

"But how did he find it?' I asked.

"He didn't, it was Uncle Sven who found it," he said, "Sven was an immigrant. In Sweden, he'd worked as a lumberjack. Friends who had come to America wrote him to join them. They told him there was plenty of work here and land was cheap." He continued, "He'd saved some money and he didn't have much to lose. He, and his wife Olga, traveled by steamship to New York then took the train west. In the early 1870s, the Northern Pacific Railway Company had just completed its transcontinental railroad western terminus at Tacoma, just forty miles south of Seattle.

Their friends were there waiting when they arrived. They brought them by wagon here to Snohomish. That trip took a couple of days. Sven started work the next day as a lumberjack and Olga as a cook in the lumber camp."

"What about the portal?" I asked impatiently.

"Yes, I'm getting to that," he said with a slightly impatient voice that

reminded me of my late father.

"You see, in the town's early days, most of the buildings were along the river. South of town the Snohomish River flood plain, with its rich soil attracted settlers who began to farm. It was only after logging had cleared enough land that the town began to spread to the north. You can imagine, with the rain we get here, how dense the forest was, especially with the old-growth trees. Some of those trees were over forty feet in circumference and hundreds of feet tall. In fact, if you will remember when you came to town in '69 there was an old tree south of the airport by Highway 9 with a large opening in it," he said.

"Yes, I remember it. They called it the bicycle tree. I think it was given the name because you could ride a bicycle through the opening."

"That's right, decay finally killed it, and vandals burned it down years ago. There were thousands of trees that size right here in Snohomish County. Centuries of logging in Sweden had eliminated all the old growth trees there. The old trees here enchanted Sven and Olga. Often, during what little time they had off from work, they would explore the forest. One day Sven was near here, all alone, or at least he thought. He had taken a few hours off, for a much-needed break from the rough atmosphere of the camp. Olga had stayed at the camp and was busy preparing the mid-day meal for the lumber crew."

He continued, "The forest was full of deer and other animals. He heard a noise, like someone breaking a stick when they stepped on it. He turned to see what it was and almost fainted with fear at the sight before him. At first, he thought it was a giant grizzly, but it was too tall and much thinner than a bear. It stood looking down at him. A coat of heavy hair or fur covered the animal; its eyes seemed almost human. Its arms were longer in proportion to its body than a human's. Today we'd call it a Big Foot or a Sasquatch, back then they called them "wild men." He'd heard rumors of the wild men but discounted it since they had the same legends in Sweden. He stood real still, not knowing whether to run or find a weapon to defend himself. The wild man smiled and gestured for him to follow.

Sven was a remarkably intelligent and curious person. He was gentle and kind but also extremely naive. They walked for a short while. The giant

stopped between two extremely large old fir trees and then turned and faced Sven. Sven understood from the creature's motions that he wanted him to stay put, which he did. The giant, while facing him took a step backwards between the trees and disappeared into thin air. A spellbound Sven stood facing the place where the giant had been a moment before. He waited a bit and then walked forward and placed his hand in the space where he'd last seen the creature. He was astonished as he saw his hand disappear. He pulled it out and it reappeared. He examined it and found it to be fine. He put it forward but this time, as it disappeared, something grabbed it and pulled him through."

CHAPTER 6

“Sven was near panic as he wrestled to free himself from the giant's vise-like grasp. Now through the portal, the giant relaxed his grip on Sven's wrist. He looked up to see the giant smiling down at him...almost laughing. The “wild man” did not seem all that wild anymore. He let go of Sven’s wrist and put his other arm gently around Sven’s shoulders and turned him around. Sven gasped in amazement. There before him were numerous other giants, though all were not as tall as the one holding him. Some appeared to be youth while others appeared to be female. The group before him seemed non-threatening. They were smiling as they moved forward to greet him. While watching them as they approached, Sven noticed a small village behind them, along a river. The mountains in the background were familiar; there was Mount Pilchuck and the Sisters mountains just east of Snohomish. However, they and the surrounding hills were entirely covered with trees. There was no logging town by the river or for that matter any other sign of human habitation.

The group moving toward him slowed and then stopped. The creatures slowly parted as a solitary figure moved forward through the group toward Sven. As he neared the front of the group, Sven could see he appeared to be much older than the others. His coat was not brown like the others but almost pure white. The old giant supported himself with a stout walking stick as he moved forward to greet Sven. Sven stood dead still and looked up at the creature. His eyes seemed kind and knowing. He looked down at Sven and spoke, startling him with his words, though not in English or

Swedish, Sven understood what he said!"

"Do not be afraid Sven, we will not harm you."

Sven gasped and with an adrenalin powered squeaky voice asked, "Who are you and why have you brought me here?"

"We have been watching you Sven, and your mate for some time. You are here because we felt you could be trusted. You and Olga are not like the other humans."

"We're not? How are we different and how do you know our names?" He asked.

"We have been watching you since shortly after you arrived. You and Olga love this forest don't you."

"Yes, we do, that's why I was here today, but the forest seems different here. What happened to the town and why are there no cut trees? Please, tell me, who are you?"

"This place is the same one you were before you stepped through the portal. What is different is the time. When you stepped through the opening you moved nearly forty years to the past," he said, "You have traveled to a time before the white man came to this land."

"But who are you?"

"Your holy books speak of giants in the land in the early days of man," he said, "We are those giants who were here from the beginning. The place we came from is not of this world. We arrived though another opening or gateway, one that leads to other worlds. The work we were sent to do is almost completed, and soon most of us will return to our world."

"But why do I understand your words? They are not in any language I know."

The giant explained, "Your holy books also speak of a confounding of the languages in ancient times because of man's wickedness. When man was first placed on this earth there was only one language, a pure language understood by all, this is the language we speak. In the not to distant future

there will be a great upheaval on this world and many will perish because of their wickedness. Those of your race who survive will once again speak with one voice, one language, and there will be peace again here on Earth. It is the language of the Creator, understood by all...on every world."

Wide eyed and trying to grasp what he'd been told, Sven said, "I think I understand most of what you say, but I am confused about your work. If you were here from the beginning of man…then that would be thousands of years ago. He paused a minute as he surveyed his surroundings. He looked up at the old giant and asked, "What is your work?"

The old giant continued, "Our work is to provide safety for those few men that are good and to protect the earth until those who try to harm it are gone. Like man, this earth is a living being, it feels, thinks and reasons just as any other creature. Man's time here, as it is now, is very short, with only a few of man's lifetimes left. Our life spans are very different. To us, time has no meaning. By our reckoning, man's existence on this earth has been very short. We are from a different world very much like this one. As new worlds are created, we continue the work we have done here."

The wise old giant told Sven to sit with him. The others had returned to the village. He explained that there were other portals on this world. In the past, giants guarded all portals. Now that they were leaving, these earthly portals were all being assigned to trusted human guardians. The guardians are responsible for safeguarding the portals.

The old giant said they would leave earth soon but a few of their kind would remain to help as best they could. He said those giants would remain until the last days, until the wickedness had passed and the time of peace began. He told Sven the time of peace would last over a thousand years. During that time Earth's scars would be healed and it would again become the paradise it once had been.

Henry continued, "Before the giants left, the old one told Sven much more during several more visits. He instructed Sven to purchase the property the portal was on and conceal it with this building. As you saw, when these doors were opened, they revealed another set of doors. The portal is between these two sets of doors. From the outside of the building, you see only the building's outer doors. If you travel to a time before the shed was

built you will only see a space between the two old-growth trees outside.

Sven built this building to last a long time. The original portion of the building is where we stand. The larger portion was added at the time the house was built in the late 1880s. It was first used as a carriage house and later as a garage, hence the other set of large doors and concrete floor."

"So, you say you sold this property to me for a reason, what is it?"

He stood very still looking at me quietly. He blinked his kindly blue eyes a few times. While squinting a bit, in a solemn low voice he said, "You have been chosen to be the next guardian.