

Chapter 5

Bill awoke with a start with his heart beating rapidly. He was still sitting in the overstuffed chair in Eileen's family room. He could see Frank sleeping on the couch. Cybil was sleeping in her sleeping bag by his feet. The clock on the mantle said it was two thirty in the morning. He realized he must have dozed off after talking to Professor Brewster. He stood carefully so as not to disturb Cybil and went to the bathroom. He returned after brushing his teeth and walked back to the chair. Some movement outside the window caught his eye.

He went to the window and looked out at the quiet street. A cloud of birds was flying around the closest street light. He thought about that and looked again. It was a cloud of the giant mosquitoes, he was sure of that. Now as he looked, it seemed like the street was moving. He squinted and could make out hundreds of giant spiders moving along the street away from the direction to his house. This could not be happening. He had to be dreaming. He went back to the bathroom and splashed water on his face. On the way back, he grabbed his shotgun and pistol just to be safe. As he approached the window, one of the spiders jumped onto the glass. He could see it looking in his eyes with its mandibles moving back and forth. He did not know what to do. If he shot it, hundreds more would rush in and kill them all. If it broke through the glass, they would all die anyway.

He leveled his rifle on the spider and debated whether to shoot. A large animal shot into view and

grabbed the spider in its mouth and chewed voraciously. At first Bill thought it was a large wolf, but when he looked more closely, it had no hair and leathery black skin. The eyes were blue and Bill thought it too was looking directly at him. Then the beast jumped away and into the street. It and several others like it were grabbing and eating the spiders as fast as they could. Bill's mind was racing in circles. There was no way he could fight off all of these creatures. Everyone in town would likely die that night no matter what he did next.

Bill thought about poor Cybil lying there sleeping so peacefully. What would happen to his granddaughter?

The window crashed open as one of the large beasts jumped through and knocked Bill to the ground. It stood on top of his chest breathing down on him. Cybil screamed and Frank jumped to his feet. The animal glanced over at Cybil and licked its lips. Bill raised his pistol to the animal's head and pulled the trigger. Blood and gore splashed against the wall and his face and the animal fell over dead. Frank grabbed Cybil and Bill tossed the shotgun to his free hand. "Get to the back of the house now!" he shouted as several spiders climbed through the window. Bill tried to move away from the window while training the gun on the advancing creatures. Bill shot the closest one, but another raced forward and bit him on the leg before he could shoot it. He kicked it off and shot it as it flew across the room. Several dozen spiders were in the room now and Bill only had a few bullets left. The venom was affecting his mind now and he found it difficult to focus on the advancing spiders. He knew

his life was over now and prayed for his family to be safe.

As he was about to black-out, a very tall man burst through the door. He was wearing full body armor unlike anything Bill had seen. The man held out his left hand and shouted, "A-Nak-Fla!" A brilliant flash of green light filled the room and all the spiders froze in place. The man came to Bill and pulled a small device from his belt. He jabbed Bill in the thigh near the spider bite. "Don't worry, this will eliminate the venom. Please don't move. I'll be right back." The man raced back into the street. Bill could see him through the broken wall where the window had been. He held some kind of gun in his right hand that shot balls of light wherever he aimed it. He raised his left hand again and again shouting different phrases. Blinding lights of various colors illuminated the night sky. Bill was already feeling much better, but thought he better do as he was told.

As quiet returned, Frank cracked open the door and saw the scene in the living room. "Are you okay, Dad?" Frank asked.

"I'm going to be okay. How's everyone else?" Bill asked.

"We're fine but scared out of our minds. What happened out here?" Frank said as he walked over and sat with his father. "You were bitten by that spider, weren't you?"

“Yes, but some guy came in and froze them all. Then he jabbed me in the leg and said it would eliminate the venom,” Bill said.

“Some guy? What guy, Dad?” Frank asked.

“That would be me,” said the man in the black armor who had returned. He pulled off his helmet and smiled at the two men. “Hello there, my name is Lance Allright. I think I got all of them.”

“Thanks for saving my life, Lance, but who are you?” Bill asked.

“You can probably get up now. The anti-venom has had time to do its work,” Lance said. “Besides, I need your help to make sure this doesn’t happen again. I don’t know if you’d really understand who I am, so I want one of you to go with me. Don’t worry, you’ll be completely safe.”

“Lance, my name’s Bill Marshall,” he replied. “You saved my life, so the least I can do is see what you want me to see. But you’re sure all these things are dead, aren’t you?”

Lance laughed. He picked up one of the spiders and dropped it to the floor. It shattered as though it was made of glass. “Oh, I’m sure they’re dead. Let’s go before something else bad happens.”

“I’m not sure I like this Dad,” Frank said. “Maybe I should go too?”

“Sorry, Frank, but I need you to take care of our family now,” Bill shook his head. “You have to remember that if Lance didn’t show up, we’d all be dead already. I owe him this.”

Bill felt remarkably well, all things considered. Five minutes ago, he was laying three-fourths dead on the floor with hundreds of ravenous creatures about to kill his whole family. Now he was running down the street with the man who saved the lives of every person in town. He felt like a young man again, full of excitement for what would happen next.

Thirty minutes later, the excitement had worn off. He and Lance had passed his farm and continued into the woods behind the house. He passed the burned shell of his barn and wondered if he would ever get his sheep back. Deep in the woods, they came upon a hole in the ground. Lance started to crawl down into the hole.

“What exactly is this, Lance?” Bill asked, out of breath.

“This hole was created by the earthquake,” Lance said. “It opened this cave that had been lost for who knows how long. Climb on down, Bill, we’re almost there.”

Bill climbed down and they found themselves in a dark cavern. Lance pulled another device from his belt and slapped it against the wall. Bright light filled the chamber. Primitive paintings covered the walls. Lance raced further down the cavern between tall stalagmites. Bill could hear water dripping and soon a

small stream ran by their feet. Lance turned down another dark passage and slapped another lighting device to the wall. The large room was full of crystals. They grew from every wall, the ceiling and the floor. Bill imagined this is how he would feel if he were inside a massive diamond. Lance stopped at the far end of the room in front of a crystal wall.

“What is this place, Lance?” Bill asked as he stood beside him. Lance had to be seven feet tall, as he stood a head and one half over Bill.

“It’s just a crystal cave, Bill,” Lance said. “This wall is what I brought you to see.” The wall was one giant crystal, except for the large crack in the center. The wall was one hundred feet tall and two hundred feet wide.

“Wow!” Bill exclaimed. “That’s a big crystal, Lance. But it’s broken there in the middle.”

“This isn’t just a crystal, it’s a single diamond,” Lance said. “This is the Heartstone. Come over here and look at the crack in the middle.”

They walked to reach the crack which was ten feet wide to two and one-half feet tall. Bill blinked when he thought he could see a field of green grass on the other side of the stone. Most of the view was fuzzy due to imperfections in the stone. Through the open crack, the scene was as vivid as looking out an open window. Past the field of grass, he saw a small stone building and a great stand of tall trees in the distance. “That’s some illusion, Lance,” Bill said. “How does the Heartstone do that?”

“That’s no illusion, Bill,” Lance smiled. “That is my home planet. Come on, you have to climb through with me.” Lance put his hand on Bill’s shoulder.

“That’s another planet?” Bill scoffed. “I thought you just wanted to show me how to stop those monsters from coming back, not go to another world?”

“Bill, I asked you to trust me. I’ll bring you back in no time. But stepping through this is part of the job. The Heartstone cracked during the earthquake. That’s why there was little damage from the strong earthquake. Most of the force was absorbed by the Heartstone. Now that it’s broken, it has opened a way into your world from many other planets and galaxies. I stopped more damage by locking my portal key on your world. I can’t leave it that way forever. Eventually, another world will attach to your portal and more terrible things can come through,” Lance explained.

“Lance, I gave you my word, so I will go. What do I do now?” Bill asked.

“Just climb through the Heartstone, Bill,” Lance said. “When you get to the other side, you’ll be in that grassy field. When I see you there, I will follow. Now hurry, please.”

Bill climbed into the crack and began to move forward. The Heartstone was at least a hundred feet thick, and much of the broken crystal was very sharp. He could feel the crystal cutting through the knees of his pants and his hands. When he had almost reached the other side, his stomach flipped. He felt very woozy and dizzy. He could still hear Lance yelling at him.

Finally, he reached the end of the Heartstone and fell out onto the green grass.