

An adventure with Jessica and Angelina into a new world where they meet characters who encourage them to become. It's fiction but transformational when you read *Did You Get My Message?*

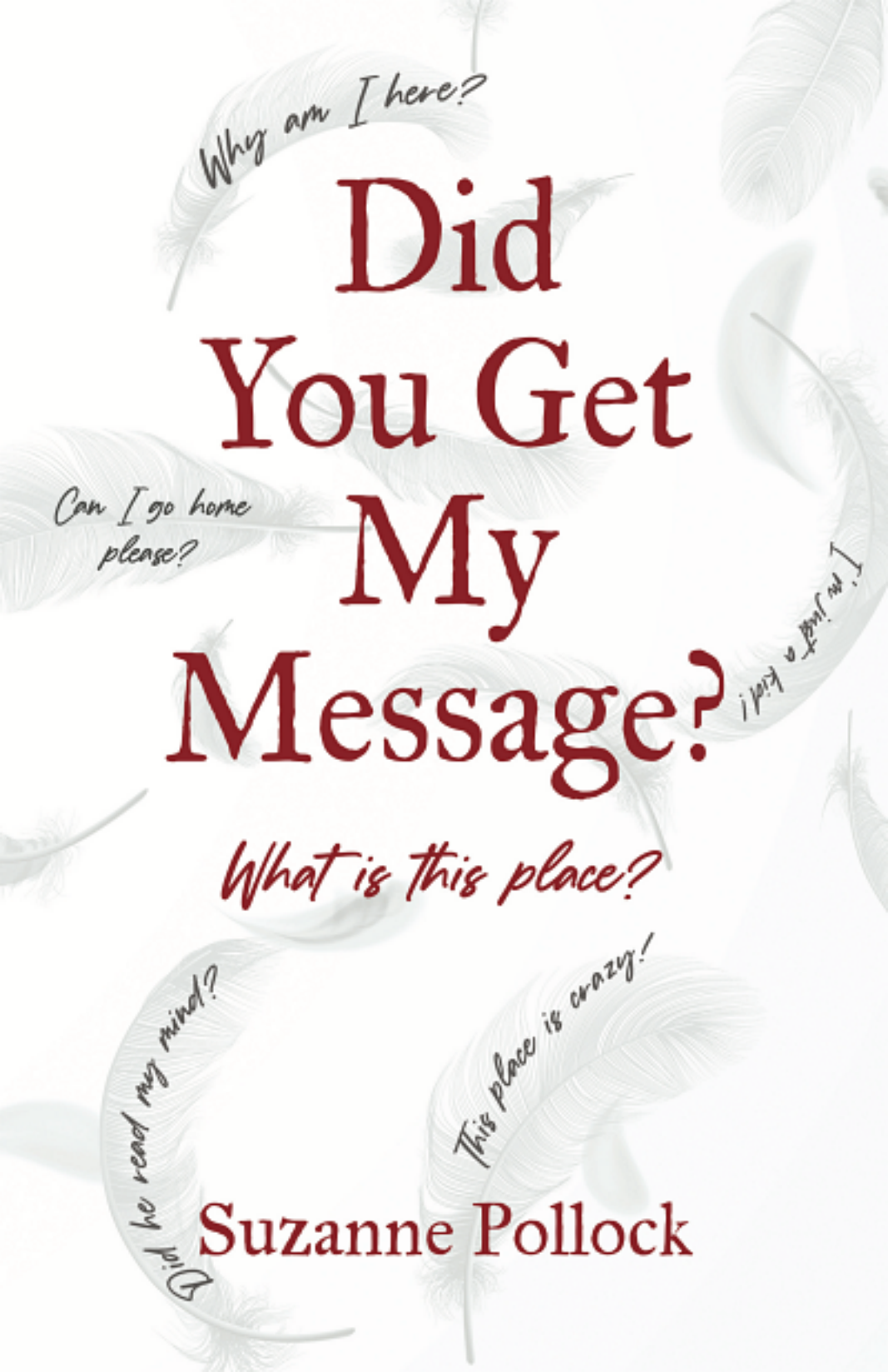
Did You Get My Message?

By Suzanne Pollock

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Why am I here?

Did You Get My Message?

*Can I go home
please?*

I'm just a kid!

What is this place?

Would he read my mind?

This place is crazy!

Suzanne Pollock

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Chapter 1:

The First Steps

“Are you serious?”

Angelina glanced at her friend Jessica as seven odd-looking boys stepped in front of them, blocking the entrance to the store.

“Excuse us, please.” Angelina enunciated deliberately, but the boys stood firm. Jessica barged into the group, knocking them aside. Their leader, dressed in an orange shirt with a big J written across it, summoned his buddies to surround the girls, ready for a fight.

Angelina pushed the leader with the big J backwards as if he were a speck of dust. “‘Move it’ is what that English phrase means. Understand it now?”

Jessica held her nose and sputtered, “What is that smell? Whew! You guys’ stink!”

Big J rushed at her in fury. Jessica whipped around, striking him with both arms in a karate-like move, kicking at anything within inches. She moved with lightning speed as her friend simply tripped the boys, then hit them on the head. Angelina gave her a wink, but when she turned to resume action, there was not a boy in sight.

“Where did--? Oh, well. We sure took care of them. Guess the fraidy cats left.”

Jessica patted Angelina on the back. “Hope we don’t see them again. They were weird looking with those tiny ears and huge eyes.” She circled her eyes with her fingers to resemble a bug.

“Yeah,” agreed Angelina, “and they were long overdue for a bath!”

They laughed and grabbed their favorite giant orange cones filled with old fashioned cookie dough ice cream from the freezer section. They licked the creamy delight and looked around for a clerk to pay, but suddenly the building and its contents began to melt away. Jessica and Angelina spun around, stunned, while the orange cones dripped into thin air.

“Wait! What’s happening?” Jessica questioned as Angelina grabbed her hand and pointed ahead. Through the cloudy haze, they saw two humongous gates.

“Look! Let’s go! Maybe we’ll be safe there.”

Angelina tugged at Jessica, but she didn’t budge.

“Well, you’re sure adventurous all of a sudden,” Jessica commented. “How do we get there? There’s no road. In fact, why should we go there in the first place? I don’t like it. This place is pretty creepy.”

Just then below their feet, a rope bridge appeared, stretching toward the golden gates. Bravely, Angelina took the first step, motioning to Jessica to follow. They both grabbed onto the twisted rope rail and cautiously walked the swaying bridge. Focused on the gates ahead, they felt the breeze of something fly nearby and heard a voice call to them. “Welcome. You’ll love it here.”

The girls froze. Jessica yelled, “What was that?”

When they looked behind them, there was a vast nothingness. Angelina began running toward the gates, calling over her shoulder, “Hurry up! Come on!”

With a shake of her head, Jessica followed her friend toward the unknown. As they approached, the gates flew open, leading them toward a huge building.

Faces appeared at windows, waving, and calling, “So glad you’re here, Jessica and Angelina. We’re glad to see you.” A feeling of warmth flowed over the girls, but they were confused. *Where are we? What’s this place?*

“Who are these people and how do they know our names?” asked Angelina.

A billowy cloud formed under their feet, and the girls took a couple steps as a tall lady dressed in an elegant purple gown appeared and stepped in front of them. She motioned to them, and they noticed the palm of her hand was purple.

“Excuse me, girls, but we’d like you to come this direction.” The girls followed as Angelina whispered, “Is she a queen or something? She’s beautiful.” Jessica pointed to the iridescent wings peeking out from the folds in the lady’s flowing gown and whispered back, “Maybe she’s a fairy godmother who lost her wand.” The girls giggled behind their hands as they followed her. The lady questioned them as they

passed door after door. “Are you hungry? Would you like to rest a few minutes?”

The lady laid her purple palm on a door that opened silently, ushering them into a room saying, “Welcome, girls. I’m Gabriel, God’s messenger archangel.”

The girls scoffed, and Jessica started for the door. “Sure. And I’m Mrs. Claus. Let’s get outta here, Angelina.”

Gabriel’s arm stretched across the doorway, blocking their exit. “In a few minutes, Michael will come to explain things further. Meanwhile perhaps you’d like to rest a few minutes.”

Gabriel vanished as the girls ran for the door which shut on its own. Twisting the doorknob, they discovered it wasn’t locked but it wouldn’t open. Looking around the room, the girls saw two rope hammocks beckoning to them. Angelina asked, “Jessica, what’s holding them up? How can they be free standing?”

Jessica shrugged. “I’m tired. Rather, I mean I’m really tired of this place. I need to rest so I can map out a plan to get out of here.” She grabbed the rope hammock and pulled herself in as Angelina looked on, surprised.

She started to swing and laugh and motioned for Angelina to join her in the other hammock. After the girls rested awhile, Gabriel reappeared and motioned for them to follow her to a new room that was lined with tables filled with foods from every nation. They were hungry and started filling their plates, but then looked up to see groups of humans smiling and whispering to one another. When they looked closer, they first noticed young and old with confused faces. Feeling quite anxious, Angelina touched her shirt and breathed slowly to calm herself. Jessica pointed to another group across the room who looked quite different.

“Yikes, Jessica! What happened to them?” Angelina grabbed her arm as the two walked to the middle of the room, staring. They couldn’t believe their eyes. “It can’t be... They’re losing their hair and look at their legs,” Angelina stammered. “I can see right through them!” exclaimed Jessica. “They look as small as children, but their faces look older. This is just weird and scary! I don’t like this place one bit! Angelina, we have to...”

Jessica's mouth dropped open, but no sound came out. She watched Angelina's face grow pale and her plate of food began to shake, spilling the contents into mid-air, then disappear from sight. Backing toward the door, the girls linked their arms to steady themselves. Angelina was now white as a ghost. She pointed, and her voice quivered as she said, "Jessica, look how happy they are. Their faces are glowing, their eyes sparkle and look at their hearts, all pulsating slow and steady and they're—they're smiling!"

Jessica stammered, "The hearts—I've never seen anything like this before. The hearts are beating outside their bodies! You know this can't be happening, Angelina! A heart can't beat outside a... It's not possible! We need to go home!" Suddenly the faces, the food, and the pulsating hearts all vanished, leaving them standing on a small cloud in total silence.

"What's happened? Where did everyone go?" Angelina and Jessica turned round and round then shouted, "Hey! Come back here!" They paced around the cloud's edge, trying to figure out how to escape. They shook their heads in disbelief at how fast things appeared and then disappeared without a clue. They were certain this was NOT a place they wanted to be.

In the next moment, a large man dressed in a suit of bronze armor with matching bronze warrior helmet walked toward them. He moved as if he were gliding. A huge sword was strapped at his side and knee boots covered his feet. The girls felt like midgets as he stood before them, gazing down with soft, kind eyes. When he spoke, his voice was warm and reassuring so that Jessica and Angelina felt calm and no longer afraid. The girls looked from him to one another in wonder as his confident, reassuring presence made them feel at home on the cloud.

"Hello, Jessica and Angelina. My name is Michael the Protector. We are so glad you are with us here at God's Place. We have lots of work to do. Are you ready?" Wide-eyed, the girls shrugged, and Jessica replied, "It depends. If it's harder than making my bed, I choose to go home now. My mom makes me do that."

Michael did a double take but ordered, "Follow me." *Follow him where?* Reluctantly they followed him and noticed his bronze-colored

palm. Jessica whispered, "Let's make a run for it when we get a chance." Angelina nodded.

As Michael strolled beside them, he explained. "In the next few days, you will be trained as a specialist. Since you are new here, everywhere you go and everything you do for a few days will be determined by your hand color." Michael pointed the tip of his sword toward them and instantly the palm of their hands turned into a bronze circle then immediately back to purple circle. "Wow. This is cool," Angelina commented, but Jessica scowled. "What can I use a purple or bronze circle on my hand for?"

"Purple is the color of Gabriel," Angelina remarked. Michael continued, "The next few days as a NewB, these colors are yours to use for your journey. Remember Gabriel and I will help you anytime. Good luck. I will see you again soon."

Michael disappeared, leaving Jessica and Angelina gazing at their palms. "Hey, what's a NewB?" asked Angelina, puzzled.

"Bronze, then purple-shmurple. This place is crazy," Jessica muttered. They went back to searching for an escape route while standing in the middle of the cloud with nowhere to go. And then Jessica spotted them. The big guy with a J on his orange shirt and six other guys pointed at them, laughing, and screaming as they surrounded the girls with dozens of slithering, slimy arms. The smell of rotten eggs and stinky feet made the girls gag as they dodged up, down, and sideways holding onto one another as the weaving arms grabbed for them.

A pulsating light suddenly filled the area, making the seven guys scream in anguish as Gabriel gathered the girls in her arms. The seven guys scattered, roaring in anger as they slithered away. Shivering with fear, the girls followed Gabriel into the living room of a small building, which seemingly appeared out of nowhere.

Angelina whispered to her friend, "What?" First no street, then a golden gate, then food, and it disappears, and now a living room with a fireplace. I don't understand." She glanced up to see the comforting smile of Gabriel.

"Girls, you are safe here. Let's sit here for a while as I have many messages to convey and explain to you." Reluctantly the girls sat down

beside Gabriel on a sofa facing a blazing fireplace. Before Gabriel could speak, Jessica asked, "Who are those seven guys and why are they after us? Where are we? What is this place? Why are we here and when can I g-g-go...", she stuttered, took a deep breath and said again, "When can we go home?"

"Home? Is that where you want to go?" Gabriel asked. Both girls nodded with a pleading look. "I'm sorry, girls. This is your new home. We need you and welcome you to..."

"Where are we?" Jessica interrupted, now shouting. "I don't want to stay here! I want to go home now!" The fireplace suddenly began spewing crackling embers toward them. They ducked behind the couch in fright as the fire crept up the far wall, and the room grew very hot. Upset and frightened, the girls watched Gabriel raise her hand to extinguish the fire.

She looked sternly at the girls and commanded, "Sit down, girls. I can see that you're still under the influence of John."

"Who's John?" Jessica demanded.

"He's the leader of the seven guys you met before." Angelina and Jessica exchanged looks, recalling the attacks and the awful stench. The archangel spoke in a quiet but authoritative voice. "Let's try this again. This is your new home. We need and want you here, and we are sure you will do the best work for HIM that is possible. You will be safe here, welcomed and loved as never before. Do you understand?"

Jessica shook her head. "We're safe, but where is 'here' exactly?" Both girls wanted answers, but it seemed the answers they got were not the ones they wanted.

Clearing her throat, Gabriel said, "You'll understand later." Then she pulled a piece of paper from the pocket of her dress. "I am so pleased to learn from this memo that both of you attended church regularly."

"What? That's none of your business! Where'd you get that information?" Angelina shouted as they inched toward the door. Angelina's eyes spit anger as she yelled, "We don't want to stay here now or ever! You must return us to our homes at once!"

Gabriel stood in her elegance, and her warm eyes penetrated the girls as she spoke softly. "I need to make myself understood. This is

where you live now. I know you do not understand, but I promise you will. And I also promise you will be loved here. Please have a seat.”

Gabriel smoothed the wrinkles from her purple gown and looked at the memo as Jessica interrupted, “Yeah, about that church thing, I was there but not really sure why.” Gabriel glanced up from the memo, asking, “Jessica, do you believe in God?”

“Of course. Why?” The elegant lady turned to Angelina, who retorted immediately, “Yes, I believe in God too, but what’s that have to do with us not going home?”

Angelina refused to sit. She glared at Gabriel, too furious to speak further, stomped her foot, clenched her fists, and turned her back on Gabriel who sighed. “It’s so hard to shake off the manipulation of the seven guys. I know you don’t understand right now, but— “

Not willing to listen any longer, Jessica stepped toward Gabriel with eyes blazing and arms raised to fight, yelling, “It’s you that don’t understand! I do not want to stay here. So, Gabriel, wave your magic palm and send me home! Now! Right now!”

Jessica jumped at Gabriel who then disappeared, leaving Jessica floating on a small cloud into nothingness. As the cloud floated away Jessica called, “Help me, Angelina! Help me! Please!”

Terrified she would never see Jessica again, Angelina tried to grab her, but they could barely touch fingertips. Tears welled in her eyes as Angelina pleaded with her, “Say you’re sorry, Jessica! Please! I don’t want to lose you! Tell Gabriel you’re sorry and maybe she’ll come back. Say it! Say it now!”

Furious, Jessica floated out into the atmosphere on that cloud that diminished in size the further away she went. Within moments she could only see the outline of her friend and saw no way to change the situation as she looked around. Jessica began to panic. She could barely hear Angelina. Helpless and seeing no other option, she took a deep breath and whispered, “I’m sorry, Gabriel.”

Instantly beautiful Gabriel reappeared beside Angelina and extended her purple palm, pulling Jessica toward them as she spoke. “I know this is hard, girls. You must trust me. Soon you will know everything. Jessica, I promised you two things. Do you remember

them?” Gabriel raised her palm to stop the cloud’s movement and waited for Jessica to answer.

Unnerved and not sure her legs would hold her up much longer, she was now within a few feet of them. Jessica looked into Gabriel’s eyes and answered, “You promised I would understand, and you promised I would be loved.” Gabriel smiled, and at once Jessica was in the arms of her friend “Now, let’s get to work,” suggested Gabriel. With a girl on each arm, Gabriel walked as she chatted. “Jessica, this memo tells me you were just elected co-captain of the basketball team at school, and Angelina, you are the new president of the National Honor Society. Congratulations, girls.”

Still shaken, the girls nodded but didn’t reply. She continued. “With this kind of leadership and your beautiful hearts, Michael and I are so excited for the work you will help us with here. Welcome to the first steps of your journey.” Stopping in front of a carved door, she held her purple palm to the door and nodded to the girls to do the same. The door opened and they entered a giant room filled with new faces, young and old, from every race and nation. The girls froze, but Gabriel urged them forward. Once again the girls stood amid those smiling faces with pulsating heart beats.

The girls just stared. No words came from their gaping mouths. Butterflies danced in their stomachs. They tried to hold hands, but their hands shook uncontrollably. Too scared to run even if they could have escaped, they watched Gabriel greet these beings with warmth and love. Looking closer they saw everyone had a purple circle on their palms too. Jessica wondered if her purple palm might be used as an escape device, but just then, larger-than-life Michael stepped forward as quiet descended upon the room. Despite the gleaming sword and bronze suit of armor, his voice was kind and warm.

“Welcome, NewBs, to God’s Place. This is like no other place in the universe but let us reassure you that you are wanted and needed here. You each have special missions to accomplish. It no longer matters who you were, where you have been, how much money you had, how much power you had, or how beautiful you were. You are now one of God’s chosen NewBs. God chose you for a New Birth. You

were brought here to continue one thing: God's love. I mean, really, truly you are His love, and I mean every inch of you."

Jessica looked at Angelina and whispered, "Nope. That's not true. I don't have any magic powers." She glared at Michael and muttered, "The only thing different about me is I'm just a girl walking around with a purple palm. What good will that do me?"

Instantly Michael stood in front of the girls. "No, NewB Jessica, you are wrong. You have begun the process of a new birth. I do not need to see your whole self, and most of all, God does not need to see you as you were. The only, and I do mean the only thing God needs is your heart. The thoughts of your brain affect your heart, so God wants every cell of you to become His love. Do you understand, Jessica?"

Totally confused, she shrugged, looking away at the others. Michael's bronze suit shimmered as he returned to the front of the class. "NewBs, you will report here right after breakfast every morning for fitness class. Everyone here represents God, and we must be very fit: mentally, spiritually and physically to complete your assignments each day."

The very regal Gabriel greeted the NewBs as Jessica clenched her teeth, still angry at Gabriel about the ride on the castaway cloud until Angelina leaned over and whispered, "Remember she saved you and really, both of us. Don't be angry. It might help us get outta here."

She nodded recalling their narrow escape from the seven guys.

Gabriel smiled as she spoke. "NewBs, Michael has told you how glad we are you have joined us. I would like to say that many of you are confused and even some of you want to return to your old home. I am sorry, deeply sorry that will not happen."

She paused looking at Jessica, "Well, that's not exactly true. Yes, indeed you will return to your old world, but you will not stay, nor will you ever be the old you again. Confusing? Yes, I know. After fitness class tomorrow we will begin our work for all the world. Right now, I'm going to give you a guided tour of this magnificent place."

Jessica and Angelina fell in behind Gabriel. Jessica leaned toward her and said, "Thank you for saving me, Gabriel. I feel safer now."

Gabriel touched her and the palm of Jessica's hand glowed purple briefly. Turning to Angelina, Jessica whispered, "But I'd feel a lot safer

if I was home.” She stared at her glowing palm. “I think I’m Gabriel’s slave now.”

“No, Jessica. That’s not what it means,” objected her friend. “I’m sure of it. There’s a reason we can’t go home. Everything we’ve seen so far is different from our little hometown. Different ideas and new goals so we must become or change to be of value. You understand that, right, Jessica?”

Jessica wasn’t convinced, but she didn’t have time to comment because the tour had started. The group turned the corner only to see an exceptionally large room filled with small fluttering objects. Michael reached into the air to retrieve one and read it aloud. “Dear God, please help me get out of this mess. Patrick.” Michael chuckled as everyone stared.

Without thinking, Jessica called out, “Who’s Patrick? What wrong with him?”

“Oh, Patrick contacts us quite often. He’s always getting himself in trouble. Sometimes he fights, sometimes his mouth gets ugly, and sometimes he doesn’t do what he’s supposed to.”

Angelina chimed in, “So why did Patrick reach out to God? Does he think God will get him out of trouble every time?”

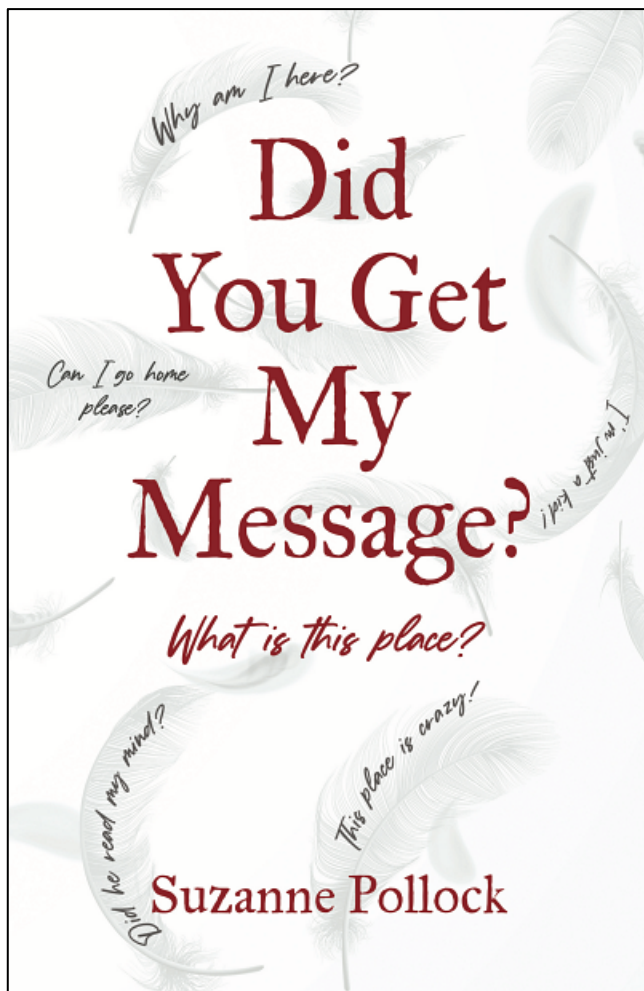
Michael turned toward her, “That’s where all you NewBs come in. Remember I told you we had to stay fit? Well, every one of these floating items is a message from people all over the earth, and we help God solve their problems. You will be messengers, and believe me, you will be ready to rest in your hammocks at the end of the day. You will be terribly busy.”

The NewBs looked at one another, still not understanding.

Michael turned to Gabriel as he prepared to leave. “Would you finish the tour for me? Usually, I would send Josephel to help Patrick make better choices, but this time I think he needs a protector.”

Waving the fluttering paper, he added, “I’ll be back, but first I need to go help Patrick.” He sighed. “Again.”

“Who’s Josephel?” whispered Angelina. Jessica shrugged. Without another word, Gabriel led them up a staircase into the clouds. Holding up their purple palms, the NewBs followed her into a glistening stained-glass cathedral.



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