

The ship left much behind, toxins, equipment, and now people. Will they allow evil to return?

Trust in Hope for Our World

By Renee W. Peek

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Trust in Hope for Our World

BOOK 3



Renee W Peek

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Previously...

Years ago, Maddison Bear's Heart joined with a group of environmental defenders. She found that they were able to speak to the earth, known to them as Gaia. In line with the Hopi belief that there would be an end to this world and the dawning of the fifth world, the group recruited Maddison and worked to prepare. They were contacted by another planet inviting them to come. Maddison worked with both groups preparing one to leave and the other to stay, ushering in the fifth world.

Maddison was able to secure a ship, the Fitzgerald, through Tucker Bog a conniving greedy corporate military mogul. It would take 200 of the environmental defenders to the new world, to meet the planet that called herself Adelphi, the sister to Gaia. The mission was sabotaged by Colonel Owen Miller. The ship crash landed, stranding everyone, including those military personnel that were just crewing the ship. The passengers were home, but the military troops had no desire to live their lives out in this world and several struggled with their circumstances, none more than Lieutenant Tempest Brown also known as Gen. She rallied several other of the military personnel to break away and start life on their own terms. But not before stealing all the food, medical supplies and the boats the others made. Sergeant Anna Prasana stumbled into their treachery and Gen callously stuck Anna leaving her for dead.

Anna was saved by their highly skilled healer, but had a long recovery, the community had an even more difficult time restoring their reason to hope, but they did. Their rebuilt their food and medical supplies, found one of the stolen boats, and forgot about Gen and her mutineers.

Then a boat was sighted floating far offshore. Gen and Noah Stevens were found unconscious and near death in the stolen craft. Caring for their injuries the community questioned Noah on what had occurred. Noah Stevens told the story of their cursed adventure. Three of the other men died, Gen was injured so Noah tried to get them back to the others for help. Gen told a different story blaming the theft as well as the attempt on Anna on one of the men that died. It was determined Gen could not be trusted and was a danger to everyone.

The community decided to create a prison for her. They locked her in, and she seemed to accept her fate. But Gen spent her time plotting her revenge. The focus of her hate rested most strongly with Madison Bear's Heart. Maddy was the life's blood of the community. Gen could think of nothing but the most dramatic way to kill Maddy. She staged a fight to the death with knives.

Gen struck a killing blow stabbing Maddison in the chest, cutting her heart. But with the help of healers and Adelphi, the power of the planet itself Maddison Bear's Heart survived.

Recovering from her injury was long and difficult, Maddison finally was able to live life on this beautiful new

world. But the discovery of animals that had died mysteriously caused some of the residents to believe they may have brought with them a contaminant of some kind, the truth of it was far worse. A ship from earth followed them. The ship of Storm De Wees one of the great destroyers of earth. He was determined to rape and possess everything he could find of value on their new innocent world as well.

With his right-hand man Lance White and his daughter Timo De Wees, they started mining, logging and experimentation on animals. The residents had little chance of stopping him. They had no technology and no weapons, but they had hope and the power of the planets. Timo De Wees had never interacted with the natural world since her mother died, she was separated from that life working for her father. She spent her days looking at screens and inside. When she encountered this living world something awoke inside her. She could feel the life and the joy and hope of this living planet. She finally snapped and challenged her father. No one challenged Storm De Wees, he and Lance White beat her into submission, using his diabolical tool called a wand causing excruciating pain. Then took her heart by revealing he was the one that killed her mother for challenging him. She was rescued by Maddison Bear's Heart and the others of this world. They brought her back, giving her hope again and she was determined to bring her father down.

She needed to take on the persona of a good soldier doing her father's bidding in order to stop him. She

struggled with treating this world and her new friends so badly but it was essential to complete their mission, get the ship to take off again so the planets could shield themselves from it ever landing again. Through perfectly performed subterfuge they convinced Storm De Wees his ship would be destroyed by a massive EMP pulse if he didn't move his ship into high orbit. When the ship left, the planets worked together to create a shield forever protecting this world. Or so they thought.

Cast of Characters

Adelphi residents

Maddison Bear's Heart (Maddy, Madds)

Environmental Attorney, from Bemidji Minnesota

Lakota, slender, fit, long dark hair, 32 years old

Wife of Faxon mother of Ke'ala Tamara Navarro (KT Katie)

Major Faxon Navarro (Zon)

Pilot, Mission Commander, from Lajitas Texas

Hispanic, average height, well built, long brown hair, beard, 35 years old

Adelphi speaker

Husband of Maddison father of Ke'ala Tamara Navarro (KT, Katie)

Tamara Akana (Tam)

Marine Biologist, from Kaneohe Oahu

Native Hawaiian, tall, slight, toned, short cropped gray hair, 57 years old

Gaia speaker only in water, empath

Partner with Ke'ala Kekoa

Ke'ala Kekoa (Jimmi)

Astronomer, from Kaneohe Oahu

Native Hawaiian, Short, Round, short gray hair, 64 years old

Gaia speaker

Partner with Tamara Akana, dog Sasha

Sophia Bentham

Doctor, Internist, from Carmarthen Wales UK
Tall, lanky, fit, long brown hair, 40 years old
Gaia speaker, Healer, Empath
Wife of Daniel

Daniel Bentham

Construction worker, from Carmarthen Wales UK
Tall, very muscular, short blond hair, 39 years old
Gaia Speaker
Husband of Sophia

Doctor Ethan De Palo

Medical officer, Doctor, from Melbourne Florida
Cuban, average height, a little heavy, short curly brown hair, 43 years old
Wife Hannah, kids Amelia, and Elijah

Sergeant Anna Prasana

Supply, and Tech specialist, from Odisha India
Average height, well-built, strong, long dark hair, 34 years old
Mother of Alexis

Alexis Prasana

Daughter of Anna, from Odisha India
Tall, thin, energy to burn long curly brown hair, 17 years old
Speaker of planets

Noah Stevens

Crew member, from Bedford Montana
Tall, fit, short brown hair, beard, 28 years old

Nadia Pelayo (Timo De Wees)

Fathers (Storm De Wees) assistant, handles personnel and logistics, from Vlaardingen Netherlands
Tall, fit, athletic, long dark hair, 25 years old
Empath

Collin Jenson

Crew member, from Mabou Nova Scotia
Short, skinny, nerdy, scar on forehead, long curly red hair, 22 years old

Erin Ward

Crew member, from Lucile Idaho
Short, chunky, short blonde hair, 21 years old

Caleb Boutin

Crew member, from Jena Louisiana
Acadian, tall, long brown hair, beard, 19 years old

Beau Boutin

Crew member, from Jena Louisiana
Acadian, tall, short brown hair, beard, 20 years old

Tangaroa Tuhoco (Ro)

Shaman, from Lake Tekapo New Zealand
Māori, average height, long dark hair, 36 years old
Gaia and Adelphi speaker

Isabella Tomah

Shaman, from Gaspé Quebec
Mi'kmaq, small, long grey braid, some years old
Gaia and Adelphi speaker

Mining Camp Residents

Una Horvat

Geo scientist, from Pula Croatia

Average height, short cropped light brown hair, 50 years old

Former Gaia speaker

Willa Carter

Geo scientist, from Big Sandy Tennessee

Short, average build, long brown hair, 23 years old

Bailey Evans

Geophysicist, from Treharris South Wales

Tall, average build, short brown hair, 44 years old

Parker Davis

Geologist, from Glenfinnan UK

Short, slight, short blonde hair 30 years old

Gavin Walsh

Geologist, from Tramor Ireland

Tall heavy build, brown hair, 29 years old

Landon Kelly

Geophysicist, from Dunmore East Ireland

Average height, long, light hair, 32 years old

Lubor Pesek

Head security guard, from Brno Czech Republic

Average height, stocky, muscular short dark hair, 43 years old

Luca Rossi

Security guard, biologist, from Cuneo Italy
Tall, thin, long dark hair, 27 years old

Hugo Diaz

Security guard, from Lugo Spain
Tall, muscle bound, long curly hair, 28 years old

Arlo Diaz

Security guard, from Lugo Spain
Tall, well-muscled, short curly hair, 28 years old

Council Members

Oriana Pelayo

Elder, shaman, from Bonaire Island
Tall, thin, long, dark hair grey streaks, elder Nadia's great
great grandmother

Grey Bird

Elder, Shaman, from South Dakota
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Average height, long grey hair,
elder
Can appear as a large grey bird

Seven sisters

Lakota from the stars

Horses

Bella

Responds to Noah

Stone

Responds to Maddison

Previous characters

Storm De Wees

CEO, Owner of Corporation, (NLFA) from Vlaardingen Netherlands

Tall, heavy set, grey hair balding, 57 years old

Tempest Brown (Gen)

Lieutenant in military, tried to kill Maddison, died

Lance White

Storm De Wees right hand “enforcer”, from Hot Springs South Dakota

Tall, skinny, hawk nose, long dishwater blonde hair, Died

Teresa Pelayo

Timo/Nadia’s mom, from Bonaire Island

Venezuelan ancestry, passed away 12 years ago

Planets

Gaia

Earth

Adelphi

New planet

Brom

Moon

Cirio

Moon

Quay

Moon

Trust in Hope for Our World

La
Sun

Chapter 1

Maddy hurried out of the lake and grabbed the waiting towels wrapping herself from head to toe. Zon had built a small fire on the beach for her daily swims on these chilly mornings. Her pregnancy did not slow her down, it seemed to increase her desire to immerse herself in all the joys and beauty Adelphi had to offer. She was introducing her daughter to the life surrounding them.

As she sidled up to the flames, she saw a worrisome sight, Jimmi and Tam walking down the trail dragging Sophia along. Faxon followed, laughing as he did. Maddy sat in a chair prepared to enter into what was becoming a common event, scolding about her needing to rest more.

Jimmi pulled Sophia in front of Maddison and pointed at the highly pregnant towel clad bundle. “What did I tell you? She should be resting not swimming in freezing water. She has been riding Stone high up in the hills, *and* they’ve been harvesting the wild rice and preparing it, working over a fire for days. Tell her it’s too much, go ahead tell her.”

Sophia knelt down in the sand in front of Maddison and took her hands. She closed her eyes and let her head fall back for several minutes. When she was done assessing the health of her patient, she opened her eyes and smiled at Maddy. “You and the baby are doing wonderfully. Whatever you’re doing keep it up. Just listen to your body, if you are tired rest, hungry eat. You’re getting bigger so

balance is going to be an issue, be careful of that. But I think the daily swim is a wonderful way to get the exercise you need.”

Jimmi was exasperated. “How can you say that? She’s eight months along, that baby needs her energy too. How can she get any, when Maddy is using it up on herself playing all these games?”

Tam finally spoke up. “Maddison, you know we love you and care for you and that little one you’re carrying. We just want you to be safe.”

Faxon stood behind his wife. “We love you both too. We all know Madds is one head strong stubborn woman.”

Maddison reacted to that comment. “Hey, I thought you were on my side?”

Faxon continued, “Calm down woman, I am on your side, and the side of our unborn daughter. These are powerful women, my wife and baby girl, as well as strong, passionate, and intelligent. We need to trust and support them, and just occasionally scold. So since we have the scolding out of the way for today, how about some breakfast?”

The group made their way back up to the house. Maddison changed into some warm clothes and joined them at the table. Zon broached a subject he had already discussed with Maddison. “I am going to be away for a few days...”

Jimmi jumped at that. “You can’t go away, what if Maddy goes into labor?”

Zon tried to calm the round little woman. “She’s nearly four weeks from her due date, so now is the best time. I was hoping Tam and Jimmi, one or both of you would stay with Maddison while I’m gone. On the condition you only scold once a day and don’t interfere with the things she wants to do.”

Tam answered. “I think that would be doable. If we’re here we can see that she really is taking good care of herself, and it may calm Jimmi more, so I don’t have to hear her ranting round the clock. What do you say my love?”

Jimmi was not happy about only scolding once a day. “I will do my best to comply with your condition, but I have some of my own. You will eat what I cook, and you will nap once a day. Neither of those is negotiable.”

Maddy complied. “Agreed.”

o o o o

Zon was lifting packs on his horse as Tam and Jimmi appeared on the trail. Their horses were loaded down with entirely too much for just a few days stay, but with Jimmi that was not unexpected. As they carried their supplies into the house Maddy and Zon got to say their goodbyes.

Maddison hugged her husband. “You be careful out there mister, it’s not just me depending on you, there are two of us these days. And I swear, if you leave me alone with Jimmi any longer than necessary, I will come find you!”

Zon kissed his wife. “I promise to be careful, and I’ll be back as soon as I can. If my memory is correct, I should only be a few days. If I have to spend time searching, it may take a couple more. It’s been over a year since I’ve been out there. That fallen tree will have just the supplies I need to make you a rocking chair. I can already picture you with that sweet little girl in your arms rocking away.”

“Then hurry back so you can start building.”

Zon mounted his horse and headed up the hill into the forest. Maddy watched till her husband was out of sight, possibly trying to avoid Jimmi and what was likely to be her first scolding. There were more people coming down the trail to the house. It was Noah and Nadia a welcome new distraction.

Nadia ran to hug Maddy, “You are getting so big. How long now?”

Maddy smiled, “Just a few weeks. I can’t wait to meet this little one. I only hope she’s on time. Are you two here to trade?”

Nadia pointed to Noah. “We are, Noah is unloading seaweed, and fish. We were wanting to trade for some wild rice and browns. I also have a gift for the baby. I know I’m not very good at this, but I knitted a blanket for her. I hope it’s okay.” She pulled a pink dyed llama fiber blanket from her pack.

Maddison held it up and looked it over, then pulled it along her cheek. “It is beautiful, and so soft, it will be perfect.

Thank you so much, very kind. I should warn you Jimmi is here, so this blanket is going to be inspected beyond belief, prepare yourself.”

Nadia laughed. “I faced her scrutiny when I arrived on this world. She had to verify I was an acceptable companion for *her* Noah. I’m not sure I passed or if I am only with him on a trial basis. She is one tough critic.”

Maddison couldn’t help but smile. “You may be my salvation. She has been relentless in her attacks on me, it will be fun to be a spectator instead of a participant.”

Nadia was not well pleased. “Not fair.”

“Oh come on, you’re young, you can dodge and weave better than I, take one for the old pregnant lady.”

When they made it to the house, Jimmi was directing Noah on where to put all her supplies, while she was already busy making lunch. Tam was setting the table. Maddison went to gather her trade goods for Noah. Tam saw an opportunity to catch Maddison on her own, so she handed off her task to Nadia and followed Maddy out. “Can I talk to you privately please?”

Tam’s tone concerned Maddison. “Of course, is something wrong?”

Tam spoke softly, “It’s Jimmi. I know she’s driving you crazy but there *is* a reason for that. She had a scare a few weeks ago, her heart. Ethan has got her on a med that is working wonders, but it really frightened her, both of us

actually. That's why she has been super-sized Jimmi of late. She knows she won't be here forever, she's trying to get all her worrying and scolding in before she goes."

Maddison was stunned. "Why didn't you guys say anything? How could you keep that from me?"

Tam just shook her head. "Look at you, that's the pot calling the kettle black. We didn't want to upset you, keeping secrets to protect you. You've never done that before, have you?"

Maddy put her hands up. "All right, all right, you got me. Thanks for letting me know now. I'll still fight back, but it will feel less of an attack and more care and concern."

When they got back into the house Jimmi was telling Nadia all the things she did wrong when knitting the blanket, Nadia just grinned at Maddison, and mouthed, you owe me.

o o o o

Jimmi was waiting on shore with towels as Maddison and Tam emerged from the lake. She agreed not to scold for the activity so long as she could supervise. Tam was enjoying the morning dips in the chilly water. She could connect with Gaia while Maddy got her exercise in. This was likely their last time though, as Zon was scheduled to be home sometime today.

Jimmi wrapped Maddison in the towels. "Now get inside I have tea ready to help warm you up."

Maddy had gotten used to Jimmi taking care of her. They had come to an understanding, making the past few days very pleasant. But Zon's home coming was uppermost in her mind, she missed that man.

The three women made their way back to the house for breakfast. Discussions these days revolved around the baby, making sure everything is in place before her arrival. Jimmi approved of the preparations so far. "I think you seem to have things ready. The blanket from Nadia is perfect. I can't believe how quickly Zon built the nurse, he is certainly motivated to be a dad. You haven't told us if you picked out a name yet."

Maddison looked at Tam. "I haven't told you because I have to ask your permission. Zon and I talked and agreed, then we talked to Tam, and she agreed it would be a good name."

Jimmi was getting upset. "Why is everyone in on this but me?"

Maddison approached the angering woman. "We would like to name her Ke'ala, after you, if that's okay."

Jimmi was speechless, she teared up and hugged Maddison. "I don't know what to say."

Tam was pleased, "That might be a first, Jimmi not knowing what to say."

Maddy smiled, "Her full name will be Ke'ala Tamara Navarro. If that is acceptable to you both?"

It was Tams turn to be shocked. “Maddison you didn’t tell me that.”

“Where would the fun be then? You two ladies have been a terrifyingly powerful force in my life. This way my daughter will have that energy, strength and influence behind her no matter what she faces in this life. I love you both so much.”

The hugging and tears were interrupted by Zon’s return. He was shouting as he rode up to the house. “Where is my welcoming committee?” Maddison ran out to greet her husband. He lept from his horse and embraced his wife, He looked at her, “Why the tears?”

“I just told them what we are naming the baby. They approved.”

o o o o

Tam and Jimmi packed up and went home. Maddison helped Zon unload the wood he harvested for the rocking chair. He wanted to get started right away so she took care of the horse and llama while he hunkered down in his little workshop. Over the past few days, she had gotten used to a nap at this time of day, so she continued the tradition while Zon worked.

Waking an hour or so later she went to check on Faxon’s progress. She found him sitting in his shop just staring out the door. As she approached him, he didn’t move, he didn’t appear to be aware of her at all. She had to tap him on the shoulder before he knew she was there. He was

shocked by her presence, “Maddy what are you doing here? I thought you were staying home with Jimmi and Tam?”

Maddison didn’t know how to respond. “Zon, you *are* home, don’t you remember love? You brought the wood back earlier and wanted to get to work on the chair. Are you all right?”

Zon rubbed his face as though he was trying to wake himself. “Wow, I must be more tired than I thought, it was a busy few days. Why don’t I go up and make an early supper so I can get some sleep?” Maddy followed her husband up to the house uneasy about his wellbeing, determined to keep a watchful eye on him.

Maddison looked on as Zon worked in the kitchen, he dropped utensils several times, his motions were clumsy far less coordinated than he typically was. She sat him down and finished preparations, getting him fed and off to bed. Hoping a good night’s sleep was all he needed.

At breakfast the next morning, all seemed well. Zon was his eager energetic self. He ate a hearty breakfast and headed off to his shop. Maddy went ahead and took her morning swim. Peeking in the shop on her way back to the house she saw Zon was busy working on the chair, so she didn’t interrupt.

She took care of some chores at the house. She lost track of time, finally realizing it was late afternoon she made some lunch and brought it out to the lake, shouting for him

to join her. As he walked over to her, she could see his gait was off, not much, but enough for a wife to notice.

She asked how it was going. “What are you working on?”

His voice was quiet and a bit slurred. “Carving the seat. I have it almost where I want then I can start sanding.”

Maddy pointed out her concern. “Honey, are you feeling okay? You seem different. Did anything unusual happen while you were away?”

Zon didn’t need to think. “I have been feeling off. I was so sick to my stomach when I was gone, pain and throwing up. I thought it must have been something I ate or a plant I came in contact with.”

“Did you get a rash?”

Zon lifted his shirt revealing a mottled red area on his chest. “This showed up this morning.”

Maddison’s worry increased dramatically. “Did you drink water from a pond or stream out there?”

“Of course, I always do when I’m out. Nothing unusual about that.”

Maddy took his hand. “Faxon, we have to get you to Ethan. There’s something not right. Would you be willing to go?”

He thought for a bit. “Maybe it’s a good idea, but tomorrow, I’m too tired to go now. It will be dark soon anyway. Why don’t you let him know we’re coming in?”

After Maddison got Zon fed and into bed she contacted the doctor. “Ethan, I need your help.” The doctor’s voice came back on the comm. He could hear the panic in her words. “Maddison what’s going on?”

“It’s Zon, I think he’s been poisoned. His symptoms fit for toxins from metal ore processing. I did research on this years ago. The reagents they use cause all kind of issues when they get in the water. I have no idea how he came in contact. He was up the hill here and drank from the stream. It could be remnants of the De Wees mining operation.

“I want to bring him in tomorrow, but I thought you might be able to access the computers on the Fitzgerald for more information. Here are his symptoms, abdominal pain, vomiting, he has a rash, is slurred and uncoordinated. He can’t focus and loses where he is. It’s not dramatic but it is terrifying none the less. Do you think you can help?”

Ethan did his best to calm her. “Yes Maddy, I have some experience with this. I’ll gather what information I can, I should have some answers by the time you get here. Be careful, if I remember right, hallucinations can be a part of this. Zon is a powerful man, be safe.”

Maddison responded through worried tears. “Thank you Ethan I’ll be careful.”

Chapter 2

Maddison was packing some food for the ride into the clinic when she heard Faxon rousing in the bedroom. She expected to hear him getting dressed but she turned to see her husband coming at her with a bat, shouting. "What the hell are you doing here, get out of my house De Wees!"

Maddy backed away putting her hands up to defend herself. "Zon it's me Maddy, please it's me." He grabbed her arm and dragged her outside throwing her into the yard. She fell hard but scrambled back up trying to get past him to the safety of the house. He was too fast for her. He snatched her by the shirt collar and slammed her into the wall.

He looked her in the eye, "I am going to put an end to you De Wees so you can't hurt anyone anymore." Before she could speak, he struck her across the face with his fist.

She was at his mercy, bleeding badly. When he loosed his grip, she spun around hugging the wall keeping the baby away from him. He brought the bat down hard, striking her on the head and across her back. She slid down the wall falling to her knees.

She thought it was the end. There was nothing to stop him from killing her. But the next blow didn't come, rather she heard him running after some other imagined villain.

Maddison tried to stand but the effort instead brought unconsciousness.

o o o o

Tam was trying to make sense of what Ethan was saying. “What do you mean Faxon has been poisoned? We just saw him, he was fine.”

Ethan’s voice was impassioned. “Please listen to me very carefully. Maddison contacted me two days ago. Faxon was showing symptoms of ingesting a toxin. She said she was bringing him in yesterday, but she never showed, and I can’t get ahold of her. I’m on my way there now but you can get there faster. Please, I think something is terribly wrong. He could be experiencing hallucinations. Tam, he could see Maddy as a threat. There’s no telling what might happen, please get there as quickly as you can. “

The realization of what the doctor was saying hit Tam hard. “My god Ethan, are you saying what I think you are?”

“Tam you need to hurry.”

Noah and Nadia were there with Jimmi listening to Tam’s conversation. The young couple was out the door and on their horses in moments. Tam and Jimmi followed closely behind. They were propelled by horrific nightmare imaginings, at the same time not believing Zon could ever menace Maddison, he loved her and their child more than life. How could he hurt her?

Their fears were actualized when they reached the Navarro Bear’s Heart home. Noah was first to arrive

seeing Faxon sitting in a chair by the lake, he went to engage Zon. Nadia made her way to the house. As she approached, her heart quickened when she saw a smear of blood on the exterior of the house.

Beneath it Maddison lay crumpled against the wall motionless. Nadia saw the severity of Maddy's injuries and knew not to move her. Finding blankets, Nadia kept her warm and spoke softly and encouragingly.

Maddy responded, her voice was weak and hoarse. "Help Zon, he's sick."

Nadia uttered a tremulant gasp. "Maddy, hang on, Ethan and the others are on their way. Try not to move."

Maddison tried to speak but her throat was so dry it was difficult. "I don't think I *can* move. Nadia promise me, no matter what, the baby's life comes first, no matter what."

Nadia just stuttered. "Don't --- say--- don't talk like--- I can't."

Maddison's voice was weak, but she tried to be forceful. "Please promise, please."

Nadia agreed. "I promise."

Maddison dropped back into unconsciousness. Jimmi and Tam were standing behind Nadia, frozen in terror and disbelief. The joy they shared just days before was shattered, crushed, lost.

o o o o

Noah sat down beside Faxon. “Zon are you all right?”

Zon was sitting with the bat in his lap looking out at the lake. He turned to look at Noah, “Who are you?”

Noah spoke calmly. “I am Noah, Noah Stevens, I came to check on you. I heard you were not feeling well. I’d like to help.” Zon took a tighter grip on the bat.

Noah tensed, “What do you have there sir?”

Faxon looked down at the bat. “I made this, it’s to protect my wife. There are bad people that are trying to hurt her. I have to keep her safe. I stopped one of them but there might be more.”

Noah knew he had to get that weapon. “Perhaps I could keep watch for a while you look tired. You could get some sleep.”

Faxon reacted to that. “I am kind of tired, you would keep watch?”

Noah reached out and took the bat, Faxon released it. Noah watched as Zon let sleep take him. Noah found some rope to restrain Zon in case he should wake. He could see Ethan approaching the house with a cart to transport the couple back to the hospital. Jimmi got the doctors attention so he could see to Maddy.

Ethan was appalled at her condition. His first order of business was to verify it was safe to move Maddison. He did his best to assess her injuries. He told Tam to contact Sophia. She should meet them at the hospital. Insuring it

was safe to move her, he slowly and fluidly unfolded her from her crumpled position.

With Nadia's help he gently laid the injured woman on the ground. Jimmi was leading the llamas, pulling the cart closer. Ethan knew Maddison was seriously dehydrated so he started fluids while Nadia fetched the stretcher.

Noah ran up to the group. "Doc I have Faxon restrained. Is there anything else I should do?"

Ethan reached into his bag. "Have you even given an injection before?"

Nadia spoke up. "I have."

Ethan handed her two injectors. "Give him these, first this, in the arm, it's a powerful sedative. Then this in the thigh, it will start to ameliorate the toxins he's ingested. Noah you stay here and help me get Maddison secured for the trip back. I need her rigid and stable on this stretcher. The road back is rough, and I don't want her to move, her injuries are serious."

Tam and Jimmi pulled the blanket firmly over their injured friend as Noah and Ethan tightened the restraints. They moved Maddy into the cart, then proceeded to pick up Zon. Ethan and Noah lifted the heavily sedated man, laying him next to his wife.

The troop started back, but Ethan stopped Nadia and Noah, "I need you two to figure out where Zon was. He ate or drank something that was contaminated. You have

to find the source before something like this happens again. I need to know the exact cause of this, if I am going to save him. There should be clues inside the house here as to where he traveled. Please, it is vital we shut this down.”

o o o o

Sophia and Daniel were pacing outside the hospital when Ethan and the others arrived. They rushed to the cart as it neared the building. No words were exchanged, all hands helped move the patients to beds. Ethan made the decision to keep them in separate rooms. While Sophia assessed Maddy, Ethan treated Zon, getting blood samples to narrow down the exact toxin.

As Tam and Jimmi helped release the restraints on Maddy, she regained consciousness, struggling to move. Sophia held her back. Maddy reached out and found Sophia’s hand, “Protect the baby, no matter what, promise me Sophia, the baby first.”

Sophia didn’t want to answer, but Maddy escalated. “Sophia, promise.” When Sophia agreed Maddison fell silent, her breathing was strained. Sophia reached out and laid her hands on Maddy’s head and chest, letting her head fall back. Maddison’s breathing eased and Sophia released her.

Tam was surprised. “You completed the healing already?”

Sophia did not look up. “No, I eased her pain, and very little more.”

Jimmi was livid. “Help her, you have to heal her.”

Sophia sounded tormented, “She tied my hands. If I perform a full healing, it will likely cause her to go into labor. Her due date is still two full weeks away, that would put the baby at risk. She doesn’t want that.”

Jimmi tried to put Sophia’s hands back on Maddison. “You have to help her. She didn’t know what she was saying.”

Tam pulled Jimmi away. “You know she did, that little girl is everything to her.” Tam looked to Sophia. “Are you saying she’s going to die?”

Sophia explained. “I don’t know, I can target my healing, a little at a time. I will have to move slowly pinpoint and focus on the life-threatening injuries.”

Tam didn’t just hear, she felt the implications of that statement. “Damn it Sophia, Maddison is like a daughter to us. Tell us everything, now.”

The healer moved into the outer room followed by Tam and Jimmi. Sophia directed the two women to sit down. She pulled a chair in front to face them. Sophia attempted to make the situation clear. “Maddison took a serious beating. The delay in treatment dramatically increased the severity of her injuries. I hope, and I can’t emphasize this enough, I hope, I will be able to keep her going till she delivers that little girl. But that isn’t the worst of it, there is a part of this trauma that will have to wait, one of the blows she sustained damaged her optic nerve.”

Jimmi gasped, “She’s blind? My girl is blind?”

Sophia was crying. “I’m afraid so.”

Jimmi got up and started pacing. She turned on Tam and Sophia. “Where were you two in all this? You’ve always known before when Maddy was in trouble, why didn’t you this time. Why didn’t you help her? Why didn’t you stop this?”

Tam tried to calm her partner. “Since Maddison became pregnant, I haven’t sensed her at all, only the baby. Her whole life is that child, that’s what she feels then that is what we feel.”

Sophia looked at them both. “The only thing we should be focused on now is keeping her alive. I can join with her every few hours for a short period. I will need your help. We have to keep watch, someone needs to be with her every minute, should she deteriorate I have to know immediately. Can you do that?”

Jimmi walked back into Maddy’s room. “I’ll take first watch.” Sophia followed her.

o o o o

Nadia was teary as she helped Noah search the house for any indication where Zon had traveled. “I don’t even know what I’m looking for.”

Noah tried to calm her knowing they couldn’t make any progress if they couldn’t concentrate. “I know it’s hard, but we have to just focus on what we’re doing. Maddy and

Zon are in good hands. The best way to help, is by finding out why this happened.”

Nadia sat down and thought. “It hasn’t rained for several days, right? We should be able to track where he went. We saw him leave, so we know the trail he took. His horse and llama, they know where he went, they can help. Let’s pack some food and water, then get the animals moving, this could work.”

o o o o

Maddison woke, she was distressed, reaching her hands out. Tam was sitting nearby she moved to the edge of the bed and grasped Maddy’s hands. “It’s okay I’m here child, I’m here.” Maddison clutched Tam’s hands. “Why is it so dark? Why can’t I see you? Tam, why can’t I see?”

Tam hesitated not knowing what to say. “I’m sorry Maddy, I’m so sorry.”

Maddison intensified. “I’m blind, am I blind? No, no, no, we can’t let Zon know, it will kill him, promise me you won’t tell him. He didn’t mean to, it’s not his fault. He can’t know, he can’t know.”

Sophia heard Maddison shouting and ran to her room. The healer tried to ease the agitated woman to sleep. But Maddison fought back, as she struggled, she began to gasp for breath, her muscles tensed and seized.

Sophia called out for Ethan and told Tam it was time. “We will lose them both if I don’t join with her now, be ready.”

Jimmi contacted Alexis and Anna to come and help. Sophia was joined with Maddison for more than 30 minutes, when the healer's hands fell, she dropped to the floor. Anna and Alexis helped her to a bed. The group waited.

Barely an hour later Maddison went into labor. What was going to be a joyous event, held only uneasiness. Maddy was exhausted but surrounded by those who loved her. Jimmi and Tam held her hands encouraging her along with Anna and Alexis. After six hours it was time to bring this little girl into the world. Maddison coped with the fatigue as her dear friends supported her.

Ethan told Maddy to push one last time, the worn-out woman complied. She dug down wringing out every last bit of strength she had left for her daughter. Drenched in sweat Maddison cried out and fell back into the bed. Ethan held up the tiny little girl for all to see. But Maddy couldn't. Tam swathed the baby in a blanket and handed her to Maddison. All looked on through tears.

Maddy held her daughter, "Welcome to this world Ke'ala Tamara Navarro. All the faces you see here are your family. They would do anything for you. I owe them my life a thousand times over." Maddison's voice hesitated. "Tam, tell me, is she beautiful?"

Tam tried to swallow her tears. "She is, she's as beautiful as her mother." The entire congregation wept.

Chapter 3

Nadia and Noah were able to track Faxon's route. Since he was loaded down with wood the foot imprints of the horse and llama were deep and easily followed. They arrived at a small stream and took samples of the water.

Nadia warned Noah not to touch the liquid. "We don't know where or how he contacted this toxin. Please be careful not to get that on your skin. I hate to admit this, but I know about the chemicals we used in mining operations. I'm the one that ordered them and shipped them. This is really my fault."

Noah could see what was happening. "Stop that right now woman, you are not responsible. But what you know will be amazingly helpful. You can be the answer in all this. Now, let's keep going, he took this path up the hill."

They traveled two days making camp only as the sun set. Nadia's comm came on. It was Ethan checking on their progress. "Do you have anything for me?"

Nadia responded. "We found a stream that he likely drank from. We took a sample, but we don't have anything definite."

"Nadia, I have to ask you if any of these sound familiar, Xanthates, floatation US4575419A, or CA1217580A?"

She had to think for a bit. “I know I read Xanthates and the words floatation differential. But I don’t remember any numbers, I’m so sorry I can’t be more helpful.”

“Truthfully, you have been, any little bit is getting me closer to knowing what I’m dealing with. Keep me informed.”

Nadia was hesitant to ask, “How are they doing?”

Ethan tried to sound upbeat. “Zon has had several treatments and I think he may recover fully. I can’t be sure until I know the exact chemicals.”

The doctor paused for a long time. Nadia pushed, “And Maddison?” Ethan didn’t respond. Nadia continued, “Please tell me, or I’ll imagine the worst.”

Ethan found his voice. “The baby is here, she is happy and healthy. A beautiful little girl. Maddy did well, but...”

“But what Ethan, but what?”

“One of the blows from Zon left her blind. She can’t see.”

Nadia’s knees buckled, “My god Ethan, you can’t be serious. How can that be? How is Maddison handling it?”

Ethan continued, “She’s far more worried about how it will affect Zon.”

Nadia realized the seriousness of that. “How do you recover from something like that? How can they get past it?”

Ethan was resigned. “That’s the question. Now you two be careful out there. Get what you can and return as soon as you’re able.”

“We will, thank you Ethan.” And the comm was silent.

o o o o

Maddison struggled and cried out. “Please Zon it’s me Maddy, please stop it’s me.”

Jimmi ran to calm the nightmare plagued woman. She grasped Maddy’s hands holding them speaking softly till she woke. “It’s all right, I’m here, you’re safe, I’ve got you. You’re safe.”

Maddison opened her eyes. “Jimmi is that you?”

Jimmi helped Maddy sit up. “Yes it’s me, I’m here.”

Maddison collapsed into her arms. “Jimmi what are we going to do? I’m useless, how can I take care of that little girl. And what do I tell Zon? It’s all falling apart.”

Jimmi pushed Maddison upright and faced her dead on. “No you don’t little missy. Feeling sorry for yourself is not an acceptable behavior. You need to put an end to that right now. We’re all here to get you back at it. Sophia can start the healing now. It may take months, and it is possible everything will be just as it was. But no matter what happens, this is the time to bring out that stubborn willful force of nature we all know is in you.”

“You always say the sweetest things, old woman.” Maddison smiled through her tears.

Sophia heard the commotion and came into the room. “Is everything all right?”

Maddison engaged the new voice. “Is that Sophia? Jimmi tells me you might be able to help. Is that true?”

Sophia sat on the edge of the bed. “I hope I can. When Anna was injured, we were able to ameliorate the damage that blow caused. It will take time and effort from both of us, but yes I want to try, if you do.”

Maddy reached out for the healer’s hands. “Let’s do it. Now is good for me.”

They were interrupted by the sound of a crying baby. Tam came in with the tiny girl. “I think she’s hungry.”

Maddy opened her arms. “Let’s take care of this one first, she’s the loudest.”

o o o o

Nadia and Noah found where Faxon had stayed, but they decided to continue following the stream to verify that was the contamination site. The journey was uneventful yet stressful. Feeling the weight of the events they were investigating. They were far more introspective than communicative. The sense that their environment was unsafe had them on high alert, which was fortunate. They heard voices and were able get off their horses to approach stealthily.

Coming up to an opening in the forest, they could see one of the open mining sites. They were shocked to see people working. This had to be a team that was left behind when the ship took off. Nadia edged as close as possible trying to identify the people working. She was able to see some of the chemical containers before she retreated to the safety of the trees. She indicated for Noah to follow her as she ran down the trail. She didn't stop for some distance.

She was horribly out of breath, not so much from the exertion, but from the fear caused seeing these people again. "We have --- to get back. I know --- these people, this is a serious --- situation. We can't be seen --- like this. We need --- to be in uniform."

Noah wasn't following. "What do you mean uniform?"

Nadia was intense. "They don't know what happened. I should be able to get them to stand down if they still see me as the one in command of the people of this world. I know who these workers are, and it is not good. But that doesn't matter right now.

"I saw the chemicals they're using. They're dumping them into a holding pond that is leaking into the stream here. That's how Zon was poisoned. We need to let the doc know. I'm going to assume they're not monitoring our comms, or we would have known about them sooner, but I'm not going to take that risk. We have to get back to the hospital now."

o o o o

Erin and Collin were helping Isabella into the clinic. Ethan had a bed ready for her. She was experiencing some of the same symptoms as Zon. Isabella made it clear she was not happy about being there. “I told you I was just dizzy. All I need is some rest. You didn’t have to bring me here.”

Ethan tried to settle her in. “Since you’re already here just lay back and get some rest. I can keep an eye on you and keep you safe.”

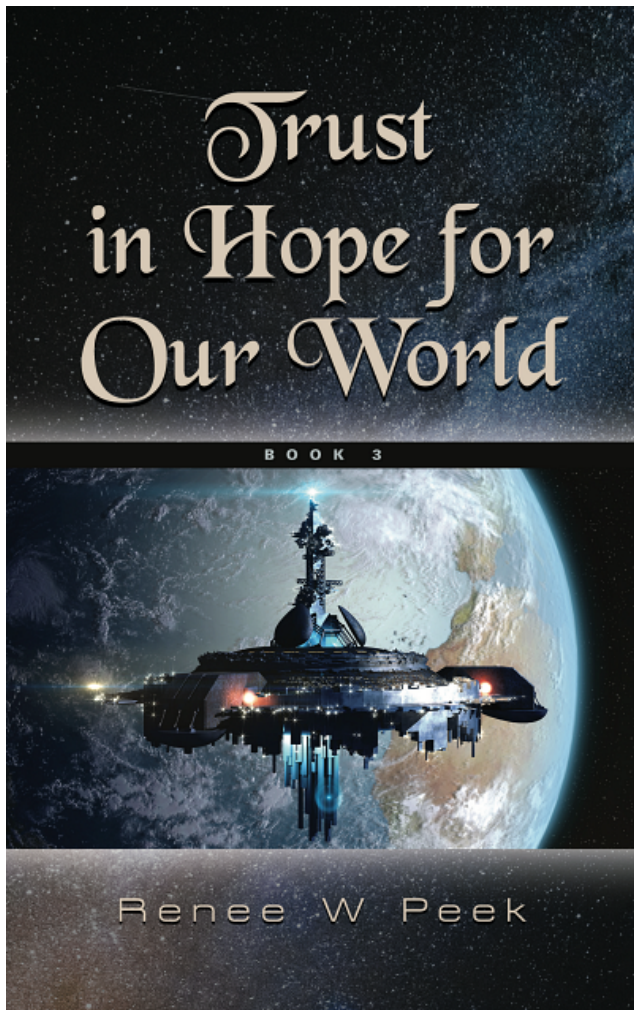
She lay back and was asleep in moments. Ethan started taking blood samples while Sophia questioned the two that brought her in. “Erin, can you tell me what happened?”

Erin was more than happy to answer. “It was so strange at first. We were out hiking, you know just Collin and me. We do that a lot and we see Isabella sometimes, she’s by the waterfall, you know, like usually. But we were there, and she just walked by us and didn’t seem to see us, you know, then we like said hi, but she didn’t say anything. So Collin touched her shoulder, and she turned around and just stared at us like we weren’t there. So I shook her and she said who are you. I mean she knows us, but she didn’t know, you know. Then she just collapsed on the ground, that was scary, so we brought her here. That was the right thing to do, right?”

Sophia was concerned, as Isabella was nowhere near where Zon contacted the contaminate. “It was absolutely right to bring her here, thank you so much.”

Erin wanted to help. “Is there anything I can do? We both want to help.”

“You can wait around for a while. We may need you to gather samples from where you found her. Ethan’s wife Hannah made some food if you’re hungry, just help yourselves.”



The ship left much behind, toxins, equipment, and now people. Will they allow evil to return?

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