

Once a Knight

I remember how it all began – my dreams became increasingly more colorful and chaotic, like I was processing some complex formula for recursion, like back in computer science lab 412. And then the white-haired physics professor was at the whiteboard, explaining that he didn't invent the rules, he was just there to teach them to morons like us. Each night, a new bit of crazy dream crept in, and I saw dinosaurs and whales from a museum diorama of times past, and I stared at the reconstruction of a feathered bird that would signify the leading-edge boundary between the age of reptiles and the age of mammals. And the dreams became violent when the world was struck by a meteor – the force of the impact killed just about everything, except for some insects and tiny rodents – they would finally evolve, to become us, if I believed the geology professor. And the species called Human evolved and roamed free in Africa and then wandered to other nations. And then I dreamed of great wars that went back in time to the beginning of our aggressive species: cultures rose in the spring, conquered in the summer, and fell like wheat to the scythe in the fall. Winter brought reconciliation and fragile peace, just in time for the next race to rise up and conquer again. My history professor would be proud of all the battles that I witnessed in my nightly imaginings, the only problem being that they were all in hyper-real, 3-dimensional mode in full high-definition stereo, and they really freaked me out because it was like I was right in the midst of each of the battles, fighting like a maniac with my band of brothers to defeat the conqueror. Fighting and losing, most times; fighting and winning, some times.

My dreams grew evermore colorful, and more powerful, and more meaningful with each passing week – and I remember the night when a voice came to me, and it has never left my thoughts since that moment – a deep female voice – a voice of hope and reason. At first, I wondered why I made her up in my mind, but now I know that the opposite was true, for when she whispered "*Wake up, Simon,*" I knew instantly who sent the dreams to me. The universe and everything crystallized, like rain turning into snowflakes when the temperature hits freezing. And it sent a chill through me that pierced my soul – I sat up!

"*It is time,*" she said.

I was awake! And she was still speaking! I'm not a very religious person, but I asked "Are you an angel of God?"

"*I will explain it all to you, Simon, because it is time for you and your brothers to come to the aid of your people again – and your people are in dire need – there's no time to lose.*"

The clock said 6:15, and it was still dark outside; I heard the garbage truck crawling up the street, eating refuse. What should I do? I've gone totally bonkers. Dreams and voices don't indicate sanity, do they? Maybe it's time for my annual physical – I've been under too much stress lately.

"*No, Simon, you don't need to worry and wonder. I'm real, or at least to you, I'm real. We need to try to stop the destruction of your planet. You've served me well before, and I know I can count on you now. After all, 'Quondam Eques, Semper a Eques'.*"

I knew that my Latin instructor would be proud, because I knew what that meant – it was engraved on my mind, and a flood of ancient thoughts from my suddenly unlocked brain. I remembered – I remembered it all.

I heard quite clearly "*Are you ready for the ultimate quest?*"

The red LED's said 6:16. I knew that it was a cold February morning outside. I craved my morning coffee. But I remembered...I remembered it all...

Chapter 2.

She said *"I will awaken your brothers and bring you together. The ultimate battle must be fought. The dark Force must be stopped!"*

As she said that, I remembered the last time we met – it was 1939. In Europe, a great evil was rising from the ashes of the Great War. In September, the Germans invaded Poland at Mokra. 1,300 soldiers were killed, missing or wounded. The Polish Cavalry Brigade and 7th Infantry won the battle, but lost the war. *"Destructive forces are very powerful,"* she said to me. *"You can't imagine the powers that are involved."* Germany, Japan, Italy, the Soviet Union, the United States, and the rest of the world collided for years until death and destruction were so pervasive that humans were numb. Over 60 million people were killed – either outright or by war-related disease and famine. My brothers gathered and helped the free people of the world defeat the great evil. I remembered battle after battle, and I remembered when I was shot dead in 1945, on a small Pacific island called Bougainville. Our names were Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Murphy, Patton, Marshall, Churchill, Montgomery, Bradley, Arnold, MacArthur, de Gaulle and Nimitz.

And then I remembered the previous time we met – it was 1911. A great war was brewing – a war to end all wars, as they said at the time. The *Battle of Liège* started in August, 1914. by the end of the conflict in 1918, 16 million people were killed and 20 million wounded. My brothers fought in countless battles, but a German tank crushed me to death, in early 1918.

And then I remembered the previous time we met. A revolution in the new American continent was about to break out. My brothers were named Jefferson, Washington, Franklin, Adams, Hancock, Henry, Jones, Monroe, Paine, Lee, Allen and Rush. We fought George William Frederick, King of Great Britain and King of Ireland during the Revolution.

And then I remembered the previous time we met. An English king gathered great fighting men around him and we had a time of brotherhood, interspersed with battles in far-off lands. He was the one who knighted us. I remembered dying on a sand dune in a country called Palestine.

And finally I remembered the first time we met: She woke me early one morning and said *"Wake up, Simon, there's somebody you need to meet today. He is a good man, with great ideas."*

I remembered what she said when I asked if she was an angel of God: *"No, Simon, I was around before the One who invented time – the One who brought order out of chaos with a single thought – the One who invented the rules and the physics of your universe. I am not His angel, but we often work together when necessary: it was I who invented music and love and hope. There was and there is a terrible Force in this universe that is destructive, and I can't conquer it alone. Your Master will be slain because of His teachings. Your brothers will be dispersed, and some of you will be killed. But your Master will make a change that will improve your world, and His words will live on, long after his body dies. Follow this Man and learn from Him."*

Well, I was going fishing that day, but just before lunch, a young man in a robe approached me. Within a few minutes, He changed my outlook on life. I quit fishing and followed Him. We gathered others who understood the young teacher. I remember when they killed him in a most brutal way, and then I remembered my own death, shortly afterwards. As I was dying, my inner voice said *"Don't worry, Simon,"* and it made me feel peace in my last moment.

The red LED's said 6:17. I headed for the shower – I had a world to save!

Chapter 3.

On a cold, snowy day in March, we met in a small house in southern Belgium. A stone fireplace blazed and the words "*Maison du Sorcier*" were cut into the mantle. "*House of the sorcerer*, indeed," I thought, as some ancient part of my brain automatically translated the French runes.

My eleven brothers were all looking healthy. Our inner voice had brought us all to this quiet, out of the way place. We all discussed our dreams of February and agreed that we were all here for a reason. The owner of the house, Mark, called for his wife Marianne to serve lunch, and we ate a hearty meal of beef, cheese and fruit. Good French wine washed it all down. We all knew that we'd done this before – many times. Camaraderie was our middle name: twelve brothers, Knights-in-Arms in various pasts, ready to do the bidding of our inner voice.

After the table was cleared, we chatted, some smoked, and we relaxed – I guess we were waiting for our voice to tell us what to do. Mark spoke up "Maybe she won't tell us anything. After all, it's our world, and our problem. Maybe we have to sort it out ourselves."

That idea went around the room and then died down, and then John said "We've fought together many times, and died many times. We've also swapped souls many times. Remember that old wizard who taught us how to do that? It always multiplies our power when we do that. That's my suggestion."

*** swap ***

Well, we all got caught-up in a hurry. Souls don't know about time and distance, they just know about right and wrong and love and such things. We looked down from wherever we were and saw the band of brothers at the round table, and we knew what we knew – we were here for a purpose "*TBD*."

And then, for days, we waited to hear our inner voice speak – but nighttime only brought peaceful sleep. In the gloomy Belgian daylight hours, we walked through the cold forest behind the house and waited for guidance. After dinner, we watched the nightly news, hoping for some insight into current affairs. Every day we would swap souls and try to sort out our task, but, although the bonding was good, it didn't yield up any clues about our task.

At 3 A.M. on March 15, she whispered "*Wake up, Simon*." The cool bedroom suddenly became exceptionally frigid. "*The world needs you more than ever. What is about to happen is beyond terrifying, and you're needed to prevent it, for there is no re-building, afterwards*."

Crap! That sounded dreadful.

Instantly, the souls of my brothers swarmed around the room, and merged into a unified quantum of energy. She spoke:

"You have seen Romans and Nazis. You have seen dictators and emperors and kings. You have seen great goodness and horrible evil. But now, an Evil Force is urgently knocking at your door – listen to me:

Humans were always very clever; very inventive: since a caveman discovered fire, you have been very creative. You pondered the rising and the setting of the sun; you pondered the moon; you pondered the atom. When you finally invented devices to crack atoms into bits, you were just trying to prevent a war from getting worse. But once learned, knowledge of Good and Evil can't be forgotten. It is likely that you will now reap the dragon's breath, as the price for the secret of the great fire that you stole from the core of the atom.

You were given Free Will, which will now bring about a most horrible destruction to all people – the One who gave your universe His Laws of physics has to abide by His own rule of 'Non-interference due to unintended consequences'.

The dark and evil Force that existed since the beginning, wants to shrink the universe to a single dot and obliterate it – It knows no other way; It has no other goal The One who created Order, wants His Light and His Laws to shine in the farthest parts of an ever-expanding universe – He knows no other way. The conflict is built into you -- you, who are all from a single drop of water; a single grain of clay, will use your different beliefs about the One, to destroy, utterly, his Creation of sentient life, and by that, I mean life that is capable of understanding His Laws and Order. But now there is an imminent threat: your planet will be cracked into bits because some human souls are in constant conflict between these two Great Forces. It tears them apart and brings out the worst in them – these people know no other way. Their actions will soon bring about the fires of Armageddon, and the precious gift of Sentience will leave this universe forever.

Like a mother, I have tried to avoid the dark and evil Force as much as possible, and I don't like to interpret the One's Plan, because it means destroying your Free Will, but I brought you here to stop an almost-inevitable conclusion to the Great Conflict. It is now up to you to decide if the human race, and all animals, plants, birds, fishes and bacteria will die, or live. Afterwards, the universe will still have darkness and light and time and gravity, but no beings that can understand and enjoy poetry. No couples to walk hand-in-hand in heart-bond with each other. It will be a universe that lacks music, love and hope – what a horrible forever!

I will pay a great price for meddling so directly in your affairs, but, as a mother, I feel that it is justified. I cannot and will not get involved more than bringing you this warning. I am not the One who thought of pigs and dolphins and trees and fungus and the passing of time; I'm just trying to take care of my children by reaching out with a warning. YOU must decide IF you want to try to save yourselves from final extinction, and HOW.

As Knights, you know honor, dignity and strength. But you also know some things are bigger than yourselves: most of all, you know Brotherhood and service to your fellow man. This is what you trained for – and I tell you: This is the Final Battle."

And then there was total silence. Our souls grew as brittle and cold as outer-space as we un-merged and went back to our bodies, seated at the old oaken round table, and pondered her words in silence.

It did and it didn't – make sense.

It was and it wasn't – a task.

We could or we couldn't – save the world from destruction.

My brothers looked around at each other and some had a clue about what would be required to prevent Armageddon. But we all knew that nothing would prevent us from engaging the evil Force that was loose on our planet.

Pretty soon, Marianne set the table for supper – she knew her husband's heart and his mind, and she would gladly give all the love and support he needed – we all needed.

After dinner, we started planning our next Crusade. We are Brothers-in-arms – we are warriors. And on our shields, on our swords and written in our hearts is our destiny: '*Quondam Eques, Semper a Eques*' -- '*Once a Knight, Forever a Knight*'!