

Chapter 3

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."—Job 1:6–7

God allowed Satan to have limited power for a season on the Earth. Gremma knew that Satan had been thrown down from the heavens to Earth to make war against those who believe in Jesus. Satan's evil reign was worldwide, and he could travel and cause all kinds of trouble in a war that would continue until Jesus returned in power.

How could a weak grandma fight in this war? She had weapons, but not like guns and knives that require physical skill. Over the years, Gremma had learned to submit to God and to resist the devil by trusting Jesus. She was innocent in the ways of evil, weak in physical strength, but strong in the Lord. Since the battle belongs to the Lord, Gremma had all the strength she needed.

Still, Satan could hinder and harass Gremma and would do whatever he could to block missionary work among the Jaro people of East Africa. The eternal future of the Jaro was a click away from changing. Satan wanted to prevent that massive announcement from Heaven that another people group belonged to the Kingdom of Light.

Satan's tempting evil had darkened the lives of many people on Earth, and one of them worked for the Neighborhood Bank of Eagle Pond. Ed Blither had completed a finance degree from the University of Minnesota 10 years ago, but poor grades and weak interviewing skills had limited his job options. He landed in Eagle Pond, a frustrated young man looking for a way back to the big city.

As a loan officer for the bank, Ed kept an eye on housing and farm loans, often making door-to-door visits to let borrowers know the importance of timely payments. Last year, Gremma took out a loan to build a new garage, but due to a family vacation, she was a bit late on her last payment.

Ed pulled up to Gremma's house. Getting out of the car, he twisted his ankle on a rock in the driveway. He cursed, anger overflowing from a heart sickened by frustration and turning away from God's calling. Ebenezer Scrooge of the *Christmas Carol* had made a ghostly chain of evil selfishness and greed. Likewise, Ed's life had become a poisoned well of brackish water,

deepening and growing more lethal over the years. He pounded on the door, ignoring the doorbell.

Gremma's attention to prayer abruptly stopped. "Oh dear. Who is it?" she wondered aloud.

Getting up more quickly than she should have, her knee buckled. She grasped for the arm of her chair, but missed. "Oh, Lord, help!" Gremma cried out, beginning to fall.

In the timeless space of Heaven, Jesus smiling on the big screen of Theatre One, responded confidently, "I hear you, Little One! The time has come to send the Angel Gabriel into this story."

"Yeah! Bring on the Gabes!" shouted a former Harley biker who loved Jesus. The tattoo on his right arm illustrated that reality: a red heart with the bold black letters of JESUS.

Ruby, seated near him, exclaimed, "Oh, I love it when Gabriel gets to make an appearance! His *Good News of Great Joy* film is a classic, showing right now in Theater 22. I think I will go to that one again!" Ruby smiled with anticipation at the opportunity to marvel anew at the birth of Jesus—God incarnate as a baby, born in a barn. On Earth, Ruby had led many Christmas programs at her church, encouraging hundreds of children over the years to be joyfully amazed at the manger story. Shocking and wonderful—worth seeing many, many times. Eternity was loaded with time, and Ruby would never tire.

Gabriel loved being an angel. He was created by God to shine with glory. Sure, he could fly and travel at supernatural speeds, thus the amazing white wings. But the bright, holy glow of his Creator was his distinguishing feature. The light radiated from his eyes and shimmered around his face and hands. His appearance brought humans to their knees, and, not surprisingly, gave Gabriel his famous opening line, "Fear not!"

"Fear not, little Christina," Gabriel whispered to her as he rocketed into Gremma's house.

As her knee buckled beneath her, Gremma's head fell toward the corner of the coffee table. A direct blow would end her life on Earth.

"Your work is not done here yet," Gabriel spoke as his strong right hand cradled Gremma's head and pivoted her falling body away from mortal danger. Even so, the speed of her fall brought Gremma crashing to the floor, shaking the green glass lid to the candy jar on the side table. The yellow and brown shag carpet cushioned her fall but left a nasty carpet burn growing on her cheek.

"Uh Oh, my. Help!" Gremma called out, too far from her chair to reach her emergency panic button.

As she lay on the carpet, Gremma called out again, hoping that the person who knocked on the door could hear her. Silence. Gremma tried to drag herself back to her chair, but she didn't have the strength. *I will rest a bit before trying again*, she thought.

In Theater One, the audience gasped as the action unfolded. They knew that God was pursuing good and that he would not give his glory to another. Still, the drama brought surprise when pain and hardship, sometimes small and sometimes large, came to God's children. It wouldn't always be this way, though. Some day, Jesus would return, and sin, pain, and tears would be no more. The surprise felt among the theatergoers, however, was not laced with anxiety or sadness. There was only faith and persevering joy that comes with confident anticipation.

"This isn't the end of the story!" said Mary Anne.

Pauline added with a twinkle in her eye, "I wonder what God will do next!"

"Hold on to Jesus, Christina," spoke Harland with tenderness.

Meanwhile, on Earth, Satan had watched Gremma fall, too. "Maybe she's dead," he hoped.