

Peter van Oossanen

**THE PROTECTOR
HIS LOSS AND RETRIBUTION**

**SEQUEL TO
'THE PROTECTOR: HIS ORIGIN AND RISE',
THE HISTORY OF A MAN WITH
SUPER-HUMAN ABILITIES AND HIS QUEST
TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE**



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This book is dedicated to Lilian and Perry. I have respect for their choices in life.

All geographical features described or referred to in this book are real and exist. These include rivers, mountains, valleys, islands, beaches, and glaciers. All man-made features on this planet referred to or described, are also real and exist. These include cities, suburbs, towns, farmland, highways, roads, streets, paths, (hiking) trails, airports, railway stations, golf courses, universities, campuses, schools, hospitals, police stations, industrial estates, other public buildings, and houses. Some of the events that this book refers to or describes are part of Earth's history, but the majority are fictitious, as are all of the characters that play a part in Sam Stanton's quest. Any resemblance to existing people, either in name, appearance or behavior, is totally coincidental.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| <i>Timeless (poem)</i> | 6 |
| <i>Preface</i> | 7 |
| 1. Bereavement | 9 |
| 2. Reprieve | 17 |
| 3. Resumption | 31 |
| 4. Kidnapped | 49 |
| 5. Taken Hostage | 59 |
| 6. Los Angeles | 69 |
| 7. Relapse | 83 |
| 8. Countermeasure | 93 |
| 9. Breathing Space | 109 |
| 10. The Inquiry | 127 |
| 11. Deliberations | 143 |
| 12. San Francisco | 153 |
| 13. Afghanistan | 165 |
| 14. All Together | 193 |
| 15. The White House | 207 |
| 16. Detective Work – Las Vegas | 219 |
| 17. Premonitions – San Diego | 235 |
| 18. The End of the Road | 247 |
| 19. Defiance | 265 |
| 20. Retribution | 275 |
| 21. Limitless and Free | 283 |
| 22. Prime-Even | 297 |
| 23. Resolutions | 313 |
| <i>List of People That Play a Role in Sam Stanton's History</i> | 323 |
| <i>List of Abbreviations</i> | 326 |

Timeless

In the midst of all the commotion,
the details of our lives, our devotion,
as the world turns in one motion.

But beyond the chaos
is such a bliss we miss.

Beyond what we see
into the Galaxy.

Truth with no bending.
Stories without an ending.

Balance untainted.
Time unwasted.

A blink of the cosmic eye.

And what does it see?

I'll promise neither you or me.

With gravity at our feet its destiny we meet.
Grounded to the Earth like we're blind from birth.

We were never meant to really see,
The full beauty of the Galaxy.

A spectrum of colors.

A rainbow of feelings.

Black holes swallowing.

Dark twisted healings.

Sun's shining moon,

guide our night to light.

Reminding us to fight each fight.

Stephanie Nik

PREFACE

This book is the sequel to 'The Protector: His Origin and Rise' by the same author. It presents an account of Sam Stanton's continuing fight against injustice, crime, corruption and oppression, as he all the while rescues people in need. His fight has cost him dearly, as readers will find out when they turn the page to the first chapter. For me, this first chapter was very difficult to write. The emotional bond between an author and the characters he created through writing a history of events, such as depicted in 'The Protector: His origin and Rise and in this subsequent book, is greater than many will generally acknowledge. But because I want my readers to obtain an impression of the cruelty and ugliness of the world of crime and corruption that has infested our society I had no alternative but to depict it in the way that I have. Sam only barely escaped its consequences. He tried to commit suicide on three occasions but in each case some remnant of positive thinking caused him to change his mind. The love of those around him finally extracted him from his unbearable sorrow. I wish that I could have presented the wickedness of the criminals that held Los Angeles in its grip for more than a year differently. I toyed with the idea of doing that as I was writing the first chapter, to relieve the pain I felt, but I persevered, and I will leave it up to my readers to decide if the loss of the woman and her children that Sam fell in love with in 'The Protector: His Origin and Rise' is too much to bear.

I wish to impress the importance of reading 'The Protector: His Origin and Rise' before reading this book. It will provide for a better understanding of how Sam Stanton became the designated executant of the plan that had been drawn up by the people that were concerned about the direction in which society on our planet is heading. It is also of importance for grasping the way in which Sam was prepared for his task and the instruments he was given to accomplish it. He chose to accept the role he was always predestined to take, believing he could achieve the goals that had been set before he was born. When his foster mother asked those that had set him on his task about the danger he would be in if he were to accept the role he was offered, she was told that this would be no more than that faced by a police officer in performing his duty in Los Angeles. This was by no means the case, as the events portrayed in these two books show, because of the deviousness and the severe evilness of the criminals who were tormenting Los Angeles and threatening all major cities in California and beyond after deciding to expand their operation. Sam had no means of knowing the measure to which he needed to exert himself both mentally and physically to obtain

those goals and what the cost thereof would be to him personally. He would later say that he wished he had never consented to adopt the role he was asked to fulfil.

A reading of 'The Protector: His Origin and Rise' first will also lead to a greater appreciation of the means Sam was given to assist him in his work. These means were highly technical in nature and I have not fully repeated descriptions of the physics or the engineering aspects of their functioning in this book.

I can only hope that when my readers turn to the last page they will have enjoyed the time spent reading about Sam's history and perhaps have shed a tear in the process.

Wageningen, January 2021,
The Netherlands,
Peter van Oossanen

1. BEREAVEMENT

The explosion was enormous, killing all the house's residents instantaneously. It happened in the black of night while everyone was asleep. Bombs had been planted at various locations on the exterior walls of the house and these had been detonated simultaneously, causing them to cave inwards and the roof of the house to fall in pieces on the resulting rubble. The windows of the surrounding houses shattered. The explosion and the noise of breaking glass caused everyone in the neighborhood to wake up.

The single occupant of the house next door, on Ambazac Way in Los Angeles, was Sam Stanton. When he woke and realized what had happened he was seized by sheer terror. He was to marry the woman next door the following week. He had fallen in love with her and her two children during the previous months. He ran outside and was the first to arrive on the scene. On seeing the house reduced to a pile of debris about nine feet high he feared the worst. Ignoring the fire that had started where the kitchen used to be, he started removing bricks and roof tiles from the location where he knew the bedrooms to be, as fast as he could. When other neighbors arrived they assisted him despite knowing it was futile. Emergency services arrived soon after. They ordered everyone present to stand back while they commenced their work. Sam paid no attention to them and frantically continued digging. Four strong men were needed to pull him away from the unstable heap of rubble which had started to slide, causing danger to him and everyone close by. Some hours later the mutilated bodies of the woman, her two children, and her mother were uncovered. Sam was horror-stricken when he saw them. He pushed everyone aside to be able to take each of them in his arms.

The woman Sam had fallen in love with was a well-known actress. Her name was Michelle Bennett. Millions of people around the world knew who she was. Sam had saved her from criminals when they tried to kidnap her after she had inadvertently become a witness to a drug transfer, but not before she was struck on the head by the butt of a gun by one of them. Sam had taken her to hospital and protected her there, realizing that her life was in danger for being able to identify the men she had seen. He had subsequently saved her from an attempted shooting and also averted an attempt to kidnap her children. The kidnapping had been intended to forcefully prevent her from identifying the men involved, with the threat to kill the children if she did. Sam had then taken her children and her mother Beth to a safe house, and herself later

when she had recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital. Their feelings for each other had steadily grown during the events that occurred and culminated in a passionate kiss when, at the end of five days of acting on set of a movie in which Michelle starred as leading lady, Sam had again saved her from being shot. Sam had also come to love her thirteen-year-old daughter Suzanne and her eight-year-old son Tommy.

Sam was inconsolable on discovering that the woman and her children whom he loved so much were dead. After the bodies had been released by the police he accompanied them to the funeral parlor, where he remained until the funeral. Michelle's father, who had left Beth years ago, and whom Sam was to meet for the first time the following week, had flown to Los Angeles from Great Falls in Montana to organize the funeral. It was a big affair with many of Michelle's friends in the world of film and entertainment attending. Thousands of onlookers, whom the police had to keep at a distance, were present. Sam couldn't attend, not because he hadn't received an invitation, but because he knew that if he did, he would emotionally break down. He also knew that he couldn't because of who he was.

When he was two weeks old, Sam had been left behind by two men at the front door of the farmhouse which belonged to John and Mary Stanton. Mary had been diagnosed with primary infertility two years earlier and since discovering that she was unable to fulfil her life-long wish to have children she had become distressed. When she and her husband had found the baby boy they decided to keep him. Since no one knew about her infertility and because no one had visited the farm in a relatively long time they were able to make family and friends believe that she had given birth to Sam. Unbeknownst to them, the boy was the subject of an experiment initiated by an advanced race on another planet. They had been observing the development of society on Earth for centuries and on finding that crime and corruption had infested every aspect of life they allowed one of their own to grow up with a couple that were unable to have children of their own. Their choice had fallen on John and Mary who owned a farm in the Salinas Valley in California. The men returned when Sam was in his senior year at King City High School. They informed him and his foster parents of his origin and told him that on completing his education at university in engineering and medicine they would return to hand him some of their inventions with which he would be able to effectively help people in need and to combat crime. Sam gladly accepted the role that he was requested to fulfil and when he had completed his education the men returned and gave him a close-fitting suit, resembling a wetsuit which covered him from head to toe, allowing him to become invisible. They also gave him a vertical take-off and landing aircraft which was coated with the same material used for the invisibility

suit, also allowing it to become invisible. It was able to fly at speeds six times that of the fastest aircraft that man had been able to devise on Earth. The role that Sam had accepted required him to remain hidden from the public eye as much as possible. To allow him to marry Michelle they had decided that he should emerge from his secret existence as Dr. Sam Stanton, son of John and Mary Stanton, and that he would live with her and the children in her house, and that his other self would be based, at times, on the house next door due to his coming and going at all times of the day.

Sam watched the funeral from his aircraft hovering above. When everyone had left he landed nearby and said goodbye to Michelle, Suzanne, Tommy and Beth in turn, allowing his tears to freely run down his face. He was devastated and his grief insurmountable. He returned to his damaged home where he had been asleep when the explosion occurred and loaded some of his belongings onto his plane, to fly to the farm where he had been raised. On arriving he fell into the arms of his foster parents. They tried to console him as best they could but to no avail. He said goodbye to them, telling them that he needed to be by himself in an attempt to overcome what had happened. He didn't say whether he would return. He then flew to an unused cabin he knew about in the Adirondack Mountains in New York State.

One of the men that had left Sam as a baby at the front door of the Stanton homestead was Safroublo, Sam's biological father. He was commander of the spaceship responsible for observing Earth's history as it unfolded. He followed Sam's progress at school and later at university. He would usually do this while remaining invisible, but on occasions, after having visited Sam, John and Mary to inform them of Sam's origin and the experiment, he would decloak to talk to Sam. When Sam had completed his education Safroublo returned to the farm to provide him with the invisibility suit and the aircraft, and to teach him how to use them. This training course lasted some four months during which Sam met Eeflon, his biological mother, who was a crew member on board of the spaceship. Even though the contact with them was far from regular, Sam had come to love them as much as he loved his foster parents. They were instrumental in healing Sam's relationship with Michelle after she had found out that he was an extra-terrestrial and that he was biologically different from men on Earth. This had caused her to become hostile towards him for not having told her who he was.

After Sam had left to fly to the Adirondack Mountains the spaceship returned to the Stanton farm and John and Mary informed Safroublo and Eeflon of what had happened. They were also stricken with sadness at what they heard. All four parents realized that they could do little to comfort Sam because they did not know where he was.

Sam neglected himself severely in the cabin where he now lived. His medical training told him that he was suffering from a condition known as Complicated Grief Disorder, but he couldn't care less. He sporadically ate and drank. When hunger or thirst became extreme he would catch fish in a nearby lake and drink water from a stream that trickled nearby. He neglected personal hygiene. He didn't keep time, and he slept at unusual hours. He started to become suicidal after two months. This started out as an unwillingness to exert himself any longer for the purpose of catching fish and to walk to the stream to drink. He obtained a misguided satisfaction from having achieved doing absolutely nothing for some seven days. On the eighth day his hunger and thirst reminded him of the thirteen days he had been imprisoned in a cell, without food or water, in the house of the leader of the criminal organization known as the Scorpion Cartel, from which he barely escaped. On realizing what he had to endure in order to escape that ordeal, and remembering the subsequent treatment of his condition by the doctor on board of the spaceship, some semblance of positive thinking returned, and he ate and drank. Some days later the urge to die returned, and he decided to kill himself while climbing, which he had loved doing with John when he was young. He flew to El Capitan, a mammoth vertical rock formation some three thousand feet high in Yosemite National Park. Although he had attempted to climb it on two occasions he had not been able to complete the climb successfully. He now attempted to climb it solo without a rope or means of securing himself on difficult pitches. But while doing so the adrenaline rush through his body caused him to view the climb as something he wanted to achieve, as if he could cause Michelle, Suzanne and Tommy to return to him by being successful. Although his degree of rest and fitness left much to be desired he completed the climb and returned to his cabin where erosive emotions again consumed him and he cried himself to sleep because of sheer weariness. A week later he decided to kill himself by flying his aircraft into the stratosphere. While he was being trained to use the aircraft, Safroublo had told him that it possessed an air-breathing magneto-plasma propulsion system and that it could only be used in Earth's atmosphere. It was not a spaceship, he had told him. After entering the plane, he applied a maximum of vertical thrust, forcing the aircraft to lift into the sky at a sickening rate. When the gauge on the console indicating his altitude moved into the red zone, and the propulsion system started to falter, he kept on applying vertical thrust. When the propulsion system finally shut down he started to fall at an ever-increasing speed. The aircraft adopted a cork-screw type motion. He was satisfied with this result initially, but after falling for a minute and a half some remnant of positive thinking again caused him to reconsider what he was doing. He became attentive of the plane's motion to determine when to apply thrust so to stop his descent. He was able to do this just before the aircraft would have crashed.

Some weeks later he flew to Reethi Rah, where he and Michelle had spent a week together away from other people. Michelle had asked him to marry her there. Severe emotions took control of him again on visiting the accommodation they had been in and the bed they had slept in. He also flew to the secluded valley near Anchorage, Alaska, where he and Michelle had walked and discussed their first passionate kiss. He had earlier tried for weeks to subdue any feelings for her because of what Safrour-blo had told him about needing to live an obscure life and not letting anyone find out about his origin, but there was no escape from the love he had for her. They had then decided no longer to deny the feelings they had for each other, and to see where their love would take them.

Sam had been at the cabin some six months when he returned to the cemetery where his loved ones were buried. Michelle's father had meanwhile arranged for headstones to be positioned on each of the graves. Sam talked to Michelle, Suzanne, Tommy, and Beth in turn while he was there. He came away from that visit feeling more disturbed than ever. He then flew to Ambazac Way and saw that all traces of Michelle's house had disappeared. A sign on the property indicated that it was for sale. His own house had been refurbished, presumably by John he thought, and a sign had been put up indicating that it, too, was for sale. Sam then flew to the homestead where he had spent the first eighteen years of his life.

Mary was in the kitchen when Sam landed his plane some twenty yards from the house as he was accustomed to doing. When she saw the dust and sand being blown into the air, on looking through the kitchen window, she knew he had returned. She ran outside to welcome him with joy in her heart which turned into extreme dismay when she saw the state he was in. He was pale and thin, having lost half of his body mass. She could see that he hadn't taken care of himself. His beard and facial hair hadn't been attended to in all the months he had been away. His clothes were torn and filthy. He embraced her when she ran to him. Their tears mingled. Neither of them were able to speak. Mary was the first to recover sufficiently to come into action. She placed her arm around him and led him inside. She said nothing as she ran a bath and assisted him in removing his clothes. She tenderly washed him and dried him with a towel afterwards. She then dressed him with some of his clothes that had remained in the house when he moved to Los Angeles more than eighteen months previously. Both the sweater and pants that she helped Sam with were now much too large and she made a mental note to remodel his clothes as soon as she could. She then sat him down and used scissors to cut the hair from his face, and subsequently used John's razor and shaving soap to remove the remaining hair. Sam allowed Mary to do as she

wanted. She then led him by the hand and walked to the kitchen where she had him sit down at the kitchen table. This caused him to support his head in his hands and to sob on remembering the many happy events that had taken place at the table where he now sat, when Michelle and her family had stayed there all those weeks. There was little Mary could do and she let him be while she prepared his favorite dish. Sam realized that he was hungry as soon as he tasted the food. Nothing had been said since Sam had landed. Mary didn't know what to say, knowing that words were incapable of reducing his sorrow. Anything she could have said would have been meaningless to him. The only way she could be of importance to him now was simply to take care of him as she had when he lived there when he was young. After eating the food that Mary had prepared, Sam said that he was tired and that he wanted to sleep. She guided him to his bedroom, helped him to undress, tucked him in and kissed him. She noticed that he was again filled with emotion. She knew that Michelle had slept in his bed while he slept in the barn during her weeks at the farm.

When John returned from work in the barn Mary broke down and cried. He supported her when he saw that she was unstable on her feet. On asking her what was wrong she told him that Sam had returned and that his plane was parked outside in its usual location, invisible as always. She described the state he had been in when he arrived and that she had tried to help him to bring some semblance of normality to his appearance. She explained that she didn't know how to console him and that anything she said would be meaningless. She was at a loss as to what she should now do and she let her tears run down her face without inhibition. When they talked about the situation later that evening they decided to surround him with all the care and love they could muster but not to say anything until he himself indicated that he wanted to talk.

Sam slept a solid fifteen hours and woke at nine the following morning. Both Mary and John were in the kitchen when he entered. He greeted them and sat down. Mary asked him if he wanted the usual for breakfast to which he said "yes". An awkward silence ensued while Mary prepared coffee and scrambled eggs on toast, a silence which continued while Sam ate. After breakfast Sam finally started a conversation.

"Have you seen Safroublo and Eeflon while I was away?" he asked.

"Yes, Sam," Mary said. "They have been here every two weeks or so to see if you have returned."

"I have decided to leave Earth and to spend the remainder of my life with them when they return. I don't want to go back to where I spent these past six months, and every-

thing here and in Los Angeles reminds me too much of Michelle, Suzanne, and Tommy. I just can't cope anymore," he said as tears once again filled his eyes.

Mary winced as he said this, aghast at the prospect of never seeing him again if he were to leave. She got up from her chair and, putting her arms around him, said "Sam, please don't," as she started to cry.

"I have to, Mom," he said. "I don't know what else to do."

Little more was said that morning. John had been silent, not knowing what to say, not even after Sam returned to his bedroom to stretch out on his bed.

Safroublo's spaceship arrived four days later. Their sensors had told them that Sam's aircraft was parked in front of the farmhouse in its invisible state. When Sam's biological parents arrived at the house Mary informed them of his condition and his state of mind. Eeflon was shocked to hear about this and she cried, holding on to her partner Safroublo for support. But when Mary told them that Sam wanted to join them when they left, to escape the many memories he had of Michelle and her family, she thought it had merit. She told Mary that if Sam left with them, his chance of recovering from the emotions that filled him would be considerably better. The possibility of him returning at some point in the future to resume his work would also be greater than if he were to stay at the farm or somewhere else with nothing on his hands, only thinking about his loss. She tried to comfort Mary who now found that there would be no support coming from Safroublo or Eeflon in attempting to keep Sam at the farm so that she could take care of him. Safroublo intervened at this point to say that he, too, believed that considering everything it would be the best thing for Sam to do. It would provide the discipline that he now needed and the possibility to be involved with something totally different. He would be given certain tasks on board that would occupy him, allowing for a greater chance of coming to terms with Michelle's death. To soften the impact this had on Mary he said that he would return from time to time for Mary and John to see him. This didn't comfort Mary very much because she believed that she alone could provide for the care that Sam now needed. When John returned from work on the farm and heard about the support Safroublo and Eeflon showed for Sam's idea of leaving Mary and John to join the crew of the spaceship, and their reasoning, he agreed with them. Mary found herself alone and unsupported, causing her to rush out of the kitchen to cry.

As if sensing that something was wrong, Sam left his bedroom and walked into the kitchen, surprised to find his biological parents there. He hadn't seen them since

Michelle and her children had died. He embraced both of them, unable to restrain the tears that flooded his eyes. Eeflon held him tight, joining her tears with his. Safroublo rubbed Sam's back but remained aloof as he always did in the presence of emotion. They then sat down to talk and when Mary returned she made coffee and thee. The matter was quickly decided, simply because Sam wanted to escape his present surroundings. Safroublo said that he would take Sam's aircraft on board before they left the following day.

2. REPRIEVE

Sam was ready to leave when Safroublo came to walk with him to the spaceship the following morning. Sam said goodbye to Mary and embraced her, again causing her to cry. John was only just able to keep his composure. They walked to the spaceship together. Sam carried a bag in which he had packed the clothes and personal items he wanted to take with him. When they approached the location of the spaceship a panel opened in its outer surface and a ramp appeared. It was otherwise invisible. Both men walked up the ramp and entered the flight deck where men and women were situated at various locations in front of monitors. They looked up when Sam entered and were shocked to see him pale and thin, wearing clothes that were too large for him. They knew Sam well because of previous events that had taken place in which they were involved. To them, Sam was the ultimate hero because of his achievements, saving many hundreds of people from the catastrophes that had befallen them, and ridding Los Angeles of the crime that had held the city in its grip for more than a year. Tales of his feats had spread far into the galaxy. They knew of his love for Michelle and her children. They had also come to respect and love her when she visited Sam every day for many weeks in the spaceship's infirmary while his wounds were being taken care of by Ulnam, the spaceship's doctor.

After boarding, Eeflon led him to a lower deck and assisted him in removing his clothes and changing into the blue and yellow uniform everyone wore. She guided him to a cabin and showed him his bed, desk and cupboard, and the adjoining bathroom. She told him that he would share the cabin with Brofin, the youngest of Safroublo's crew, whom Sam knew well. She then led him to the flight deck where all twenty-two crew members said hello to him in turn. When Ulnam saw him she realized that he was suffering from acute dehydration and malnutrition. She told Safroublo that he shouldn't be rostered in for duty until he had recovered sufficiently and that she wanted to treat Sam in the infirmary. They debated for some minutes, ultimately deciding that Sam would benefit more by the discipline and the work that Safroublo wanted him to do. He explained that if Sam was to be hospitalized again after having been hospitalized for many weeks prior, it would only make matters worse because of the memories he had of Michelle visiting him there every day while he was recovering from the wounds that he had incurred during his escape from the cell where he had been imprisoned for thirteen days without food or water. Ulnam understood the motivation for his decision, leaving her with few options other than to personally oversee what Sam ate and drank.

Although the spaceship was cloaked and totally invisible once the entrance panel had been closed, John and Mary waited until the receding humming sound told them that it had left. Mary found it difficult to accept what had just taken place. John needed to support her while they returned to the house.

That same afternoon, while the spaceship was speeding through space, Safroublo told Brofin to take Sam and to start overhauling his plane. It had been more than six months since it had been serviced, and it needed attention. It also needed to be cleaned to free the recurring microstructure of the cloaking metamaterial on its outer surface from dust. This was a major task, and it required five days of hard work to complete. Although the time and date on board was kept by a system with which Sam wasn't familiar, he deduced that everyone on board worked twelve hours a day by Earth's system of time. Sam was exhausted after each of these days. Meals were prepared for everyone three times a day. These were referred to as morning meal, afternoon meal and evening meal. Ulnam personally prepared what Sam needed to eat and drink during those meals. The food wasn't familiar to him but it tasted good. He ate and drank everything that Ulnam prepared.

On the fifth day Safroublo called Sam up to the flight deck where he informed him that they were soon to fly through the wormhole which provided access to their home planet, and that they would land at their capital city in four hours. During his time at Berkeley, Sam had studied the mathematics first developed by Einstein and Rosen which described the possible existence of wormholes, and he was fascinated to actually see one now. When Safroublo's planet came into view he told Sam that it was called 'Prime-Even' and that astronomers on Earth referred to it as Kepler-452b. He told Sam that he had been requested to take him to meet their leaders, which required him to change into full dress uniform. Safroublo requested Eeflon to take Sam downstairs to fit him with such a uniform. She liked nothing better because she had seen little of Sam during the five days he had worked on the upper deck, where his aircraft had been taken on board. When Sam had donned the uniform he walked back to Safroublo's station and watched through the transparent part of the hull to see Prime-Even's capital city as it came into view. He was amazed at what he saw. The city they were approaching was a gigantic metropolis. Most of the buildings had more than one hundred floors and these were all connected at different levels. Safroublo explained that Prime-Even was a circumbinary planet, a planet orbiting two suns that rotate around each other. The sky was blue and green vegetation grew between all the buildings as far as he could see. There were no roads or land vehicles. The sky was crowded with aircraft somewhat similar in

design to what Sam possessed, but smaller. These were flying in strict paths through the air to avoid collisions.

They landed on a huge paved open square, in an area reserved for visiting spaceships. Saffroublo referred to the square as 'Capital Square'. It was devoid of any structures or buildings other than at its center where a huge skyscraper had been erected. Sam had never seen a building as high or as large. He followed Saffroublo from the spacecraft to its entrance. The spaceship was now no longer cloaked. Saffroublo had also changed into his full dress uniform and Sam noticed that his uniform possessed many more distinguishing markings than the uniform he wore. As he walked he felt restricted in his movement, as if walking through water. He remembered what Saffroublo had told him when he was eighteen: that the gravitational force on his planet was some thirty percent greater than on Earth and that this had led to them developing a bone and muscle structure that was denser and ultimately stronger than that of people on Earth. It had explained the reason for Sam's extraordinary swiftness and nimbleness in comparison to other boys of his age and physique when he was at school. Saffroublo had explained that on his planet, their physical capabilities were similar to what the capabilities of humans are on Earth, but on Earth their physical capabilities were significantly greater than those of humans. Sam knew this to be true because he had run the mile at school when he was fifteen in four minutes and six seconds. This had attracted the attention of people from all over California involved in track and field, which was cause for him to never compete in athletic events again.

When Saffroublo handed a pass to officers at the entrance of the building, they were allowed to enter a gigantic plaza which had no other purpose, or so Sam thought, than to constitute a reception area and a location where more than fifty elevators transported people up to the floor they needed to be on. They selected an elevator that provided access to the highest floor where they were received by two women who also wore a uniform, but a totally different one to that worn by Saffroublo and Sam. They were ushered into a large room devoid of any furniture except for a very large round table and some twenty comfortable-looking chairs around it. Very large windows allowed those inside the room to look out over the city. Three older men in yet another uniform were sitting in the chairs at the far end of the table. Saffroublo and Sam were told to sit in the chairs nearest to them. One of the men asked Saffroublo a question in their native language, which Sam found incomprehensible and almost impossible to learn. A discussion ensued between the two, one that Sam was unable to fathom. After some minutes Saffroublo turned to Sam and told him that their leaders didn't speak English and that he would adopt the role of interpreter. He

said that they welcomed him warmly and that they had enormous respect for what he had achieved. They were sorry for what he had to endure, and they offered him their condolences for his loss. Sam thanked them, but he secretly wished he hadn't consented to partake in the experiment they had devised before he was born. That meant that he would never have met Michelle and her family, but also that they would still be alive. He found it difficult to retain his composure after letting these thoughts occupy him. After yet another conversation between the leaders and Safroublo, the latter turned to him and said that they wanted to know if he himself thought that he was making progress in reducing crime in the city he was based in. Sam thought about this question for a while before he answered. He then told Safroublo that he had been successful in eliminating the organization that had held the city in its grip for more than a year, but that it had been much more difficult to do than he had thought. He added that if he could turn back the clock to when he was eighteen he would have said that he didn't want to participate in the experiment, because the little family he loved so much would then still be alive, although he wouldn't have met them. On the other hand, he said, he had been able to save many people from certain death when he rescued them from the catastrophes they had found themselves in, which included saving people from the hands of criminals. Safroublo needed time to explain this to his leaders. This led to a discussion between the three men at the far end of the table. They then directed another question at him which Safroublo again interpreted. He told Sam that they wanted to know if he was prepared to continue the experiment after he had sufficiently recovered, if only for the purpose of helping people in need on his planet. Sam replied that he now preferred joining Safroublo and Eeflon as a permanent crew member if they were prepared to regularly visit his foster parents. He added that his motivation to end the experiment was strong and that he had tried on various occasions to commit suicide to escape from it. When this had been translated, the three men at the far end of the table became very disturbed. They stood up from their chairs and walked to where Sam was sitting, where they embraced him after Safroublo and Sam had stood up. They talked to him in their language for a while and then walked out of the room. The three leaders had become extremely emotional.

Safroublo and Sam now left the meeting room and the women that had taken them there accompanied them to the elevator. As they rode the elevator car down, Safroublo told Sam that no one on Prime-Even had ever committed suicide because their society was a happy one built on truth and honesty. Everyone had a purpose and a task that they were able to freely choose within their capabilities and education. Money and the acquisition of wealth had long ago been abolished and everyone was

equal except for their role in society, which varied depending on their task. Their technology never led to accidents such as was the case on Earth, where planes could crash and trains could derail. Crime had long ago been eliminated and no one needed to be unhappy. If they were, they would be lovingly attended to by people trained for that purpose. Wanting to commit suicide on Prime-Even was the ultimate indication that the person involved was unhappy beyond consolation. When the three men realized that he had been suicidal they apologized to him for having devised the experiment in the first place. They then offered him a permanent position on their staff as compensation for having proposed the experiment. Safroublo told Sam that the offer to become a member of their staff was the highest honor they could bestow on someone.

After returning to the spaceship they flew to a location out of the city. Most of the crew had left to go to their homes and their loved ones while the spaceship had been parked near the central administration building housing the leadership and their staff. Only Safroublo, Eeflon, Brofin, and Sam remained. After parking the spaceship at what Sam considered to be a spaceport, a maintenance crew came on board. Safroublo talked to them for a few minutes before the four of them walked to a field where hundreds of aircraft, such as he had seen in the air when they arrived, were parked. They accessed one of these which Safroublo flew to their home. The flight lasted little more than a minute. He then parked it on the roof of a low-lying building set apart from other homes in a park-like area. It possessed a garden with a wide variety of plants and flowers the likes of which Sam had never seen. After exiting the aircraft they were met by two women. Eeflon introduced them to Sam and then told him that they were his sisters. Sam was overwhelmed when what Eeflon had said sank in. He had been successful in hiding his emotions throughout the meeting with the three leaders, but this revelation caused him to weep. He took both women in his arms and held them tight against him, causing his tears to wet their faces. They were surprised by this degree of tenderness, and it caused them to also become very emotional. They held on to him and wouldn't let him go when he wanted to free his hands to wipe the tears from his eyes. Eeflon knew that Sam would be gripped by strong emotion when he met his sisters since they had never told him that he had sisters, but she was wrong about the measure of his emotion on meeting them. She started to realize more fully the degree to which his feelings affected him. This was so different, she thought, to the make-up of her partner Safroublo who rarely allowed his feelings to surface.

Both of Sam's sisters were younger than he was. Eeflon had taught both of them some English, expecting that they would someday meet him. The eldest now addressed Sam while still holding on to him.
