



HARRY, ANGEL 2-R (2<sup>ND</sup> RUNG), strode with single-minded purpose across the gossamer surface of heaven. Recently promoted from 3-R to 2-R, Harry carried himself with a new and determined, more mature stride. Since angels do not age, Harry was no older, but promotion brought not just privileges, but *stature*. Along with the increased level of respect he now received, Harry was now markedly taller than when he had been a lowly 4-R.

In some mysterious way that he could not fully explain, heaven was different now. Ever since the Son had returned home victo-

rious, after His ascension from earth, heaven had been something it was not before. At a glance, everything around him looked the same; the air tasted the same; the faces he passed and met and conversed with were the same. But now, somehow, there was a new intensity to the colors and light around him, as if God had repainted heaven from a brand new palette. Now the air was charged, electric, as if the energy and light flowing from the throne had been increased. And though it was not obvious right away, Harry finally decided that there was even a new, more ebullient spirit in heaven's citizens.

Not only was the Son back, but He was back with a new purpose.

### God and Friend

Harry knelt on one knee on the fringes of the crowd surrounding the throne. While

it is true that he had risen in the ranks, the *people* still came before him and his kind. After the elders and living creatures, arch-angels, seraphim and cherubim, the throne of the Godhead was encompassed by myriad throngs of everyone from earth who had believed. After them came the rest of the angels by rank.

On his rare visits to earth during Jesus' ministry, Harry was surprised by how distant and small Jesus had appeared in similar situations there. When He would address only a few hundred people from a hillside, for instance, from the back of the crowd Jesus would appear small, His voice a mere wisp to those furthest away. Harry was more accustomed to the rarefied atmosphere of heaven, in which the Voice from the throne rang clear and distinct to those even *millions* of souls away. And no matter how many mil-

Last  
in a  
Series

lions came between, the perspective for every worshipper was as if he or she, alone, were knelt in intimate proximity before the throne.

And, once again, Harry marveled that humans put up with such limitations.

As always when he was before the throne, Harry struggled to satisfy two conflicting urges. The most natural and customary attitude when knelt before the Godhead was one of subjection, with his face to the surface. The sheer power and blinding glory emanating from the navel of heaven had that effect—be the worshipper human or angel. But at the same time the Godhead was so *beautiful*, so magnificent, that it drew one's gaze toward it. Even in the humility of worship and praise, there was an overwhelming desire to gaze longingly, lovingly at the eternal Radiance.

And there, to the right of the Father, was Jesus: the Son, and—dare he think it?—his *friend*. Immersed in the visible spectrums of glory that bathed the throne, the Son's posture leaned slightly toward the Father. So inclined, His lips moved continuously, silently, speaking words heard and understood only by the Godhead—the prayers and yearnings of His children, translated by the Spirit into the holy, unutterable language of God. Here was their advocate, their high priest, personally speaking their petitions to the Father.

Gazing upon the scene, Harry was once again overwhelmed by the two emotions Jesus always evoked in him: awe and love. The Son was undiluted God. He was timeless, pure, unapproachably holy. Yet He was also Jesus. He was tender, compassionate, undeniably touchable.

He was God, *and* He was friend. And these two, seemingly contradictory truths continued to tear at Harry. Before earth, when the Son was still what He always had been, it was natural for Harry to revere Him as deity. While Jesus was on earth, in flesh, it was perfectly natural for Harry to think of Him as a companionable friend. But now what was he to make of the one seated at Father God's right hand?

## Reunion

The dark speck appeared suddenly in his line of vision. *What in heaven's name?* He thought. He extended his finger, as if to scratch away the offending fleck of dust. But it wasn't there; it was far in the distance.

Harry strode toward it, determined not to permit any such blot from appearing in *his* precinct. But as he drew closer, and the black speck gradually became an ugly, yet oddly familiar cube standing heavy and dark in the vaporous lightness of its surroundings, Harry smiled.

He found the side that contained what he was looking for: a frayed loop of hemp rope protruding from the entrance rectangle. But he hesitated. *What if He isn't in there? Is this just an empty relic left over and discarded?* He thought he couldn't bear the disappointment if the strange dwelling was empty.

*Pull the rope, Harry.* The voice inside his head rang clear and true, and Harry quickly did as he was told, swinging wide the crude door.

"Hello, Harry!" Jesus said, smiling at him. "It's sure good to see you."

Without even thinking, Harry fell into the warm embrace of the Lord.

## Family

"You can't choose between the two," Jesus explained, after listening patiently to Harry's quandry. "I don't want *them* to."

"Them?"

"Harry..." Jesus frowned.

The angel slapped his forehead. "I did it *again*," he wailed. "I can't believe I did it again!"

"You don't *need* me," Jesus continued.

"You are what you are, and you will always be that. Nothing in you changes because of what I did on earth.

"But they need me, Harry. And I want them to see me for all that *I* am. I am everything of the Father, but I am also everything of them. They need not choose between the two."

"They have such small minds," Harry pointed out. "It won't be easy."

"Their minds may be small, but their hearts are large. They have the capacity to understand, and to decide for themselves."

For the first time, Harry was envious of humans. He was beginning to see that there was something unique about humans. They could have a relationship with Jesus that he never could. He could be a friend of Jesus, but they could be a brother, a sister. As friendly and intimate as his relationship with the Son was, He never could be a part of Jesus. But humans could be *family*. He didn't yet understand everything that that meant, but he did realize that it was some-

thing he never could have.

"Harry, long ago, down on earth when I was a boy, do you remember Joseph and Mary? Do you remember how you marveled at how, even with all their differences, the two were still so dependent on each other?"

Harry nodded silently.

"They loved each other so much," Jesus said, smiling at the pleasant recollection of His earthly parents. "They were *bonded*, Harry, joined together not just physically, but spiritually. They were one."

Jesus took the angel by the shoulders and gazed into his eyes with an intensity uniquely His. Harry once again felt the fierce heat of the Son's emotions wash over and through him. He wanted to turn away, but couldn't.

"My friend," Jesus said with quiet strength, "that is how it is with those who are mine. With those who believe in me I am bonded—fused together as one. They are as much a part of me as I am of them. Because of this, I will be *everything* to them. Because I am God, they will worship me. Because I was flesh, they will know me—as friend, as brother, as husband. They need nothing more. Only to believe."

For the very first time in his existence, a tear spilled down Harry's cheek as he looked into Jesus' face. A great sadness came over him as he realized that he never could have that relationship with Jesus. He never could be *one* with Him.

"Oh, don't cry," Jesus comforted him. "Soon you will make 1<sup>st</sup> Rung, and then I will have work for you down on earth. You are to be my special emissary."

"S—special?" Harry stuttered excitedly.

Jesus removed the mud structure, and the two of them were back in the vaporous beauty of heaven. "Harry, there will be some very special people down there, and I have chosen you to minister to them in my name."

"R—really? Special?"

Jesus smiled at his friend. "Really. Do you think you can handle it?"

Harry drew himself up to his full height. "For *you*, Jesus—anything."

And arm-in-arm they disappeared into the pristine reaches of a place where miracles are born, and life begins for all who would believe. dsj