

The Everlaster

A Novel by Michael Horne

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Part III

Weapons Of Mass Creation

Chapter 17
The Gift Of The Bright Blood

*In which the Everlaster has a lot of
thinking to do.*

The dark and dilapidated church was soundless. The girl lay still, her hair like a puddle of liquid copper on the ground around her head. Around her body was a puddle of crimson. Fractured sunbeams fell on her and the statue that stood by her side.

The cheeks of this statue bulged, like a cupid's might on a fountain. But no water squirted forth. The fingers of one hand were bent like claws, as though they should have held something. The other hand was open, as if it had just let something go. Across the palm of this hand fine cracks suddenly appeared, as if being drawn by an invisible pencil. Along the inside of the fingers they spread. Then palm and fingers burst into dust and flakes, and a living fist met the air; a fist purple with blood.

Fissures travelled the arm of the statue, forked out across the body, until, in one instant, the air became filled with stone shards as the statue exploded.

The Everlaster stood in a cloud of dust, dust that settled on the floor and on Merry's unseeing eyes.

He moved straight to her, his cheeks still bloated with the blood of Woe. Merry's heart and breath had stopped, and not hesitating in his movements, he pulled her top up to fully reveal the terrible wound in her chest. He pulled her body out of the pool of blood and placed it down again in the purple puddle Woe had left.

As Merry's naked back lay in the wetness, the Everlaster lowered his face over her wound and slowly let the blood in his mouth fall into it.

As he dribbled Woe's blood to cover all parts of the wound, her flesh began to move. Split bone reconnected, the divided tissue of organs and muscle wove back together and broken nerves and veins realigned.

He poured more blood from the floor to her wound with his hands. Eventually Merry's chest could not be seen for the purple that lay over it. With a hand the Everlaster wiped it away and revealed her flawless white skin.

But her body still lacked breath or beat, and her warmth still fled into the stones beneath.

The Everlaster held her head and kissed her mouth and poured into it the small amount of Woe's blood that he had let remain. And before he even removed his lips he felt the warmth flow through her.

Just as the final ray of light was seeping from her universe, Merry saw an explosion of blue. It felt to her like an electric shock. She was pulled from the bottom of that darkness, pulled at the speed of light, toward sound and touch again.

Her spine arched as her empty lungs filled with air, her eyes and mouth wide open and gasping.

The Everlaster helped her sit up and gather her wits till he saw she was okay. Then he hugged her. It seemed the best thing to do.

When she had regained her senses, Merry realised the Everlaster was naked. "Where are your clothes?" Her words were slow and quiet.

"They got turned to stone. My invincibility does not extend to my apparel."

Merry felt about her body nervously when she saw she was covered in blood.

"Don't worry," the Everlaster assured her, "that's not your blood."

"Oh," she said, relieved.

"That is," and the Everlaster pointed at the big dark puddle a little way down the aisle.

Merry gasped. "I felt like I was dying."

“You were stabbed through the chest but I helped you with Woe’s blood.”

“Woe’s blood heals people?!”

“Only the blood from her left side. The blood from her right side destroys. You were very lucky.”

“Lucky?! How’s getting stabbed in the chest lucky?”

The Everlaster wanted to smile, but instead put on a stern expression. “I told you not to use the staff. It’s cursed. Bad things happen to those who use it, and the more you use it the badder the thing.”

“Where’s Ayina?” Merry suddenly wondered, looking around her.

“Woe’s taken her.”

“O no,” Merry covered her face, in sadness.

“I know,” he said, “but come. Woe might tell someone we’re here. We should get away. There are woods by the graveyard we should be safe in for a while.”

The Everlaster helped Merry slowly to her feet. She teetered with dizziness then recovered. “How did you know Woe’s blood would heal me?”

“I met some of her ancestors many, many years ago.” He stilled Merry’s enquiries with a gesture of his hand. “It is a very long story, and would take three days to tell. And festivities should accompany the telling. We don’t have time for all that.”

The Everlaster walked her out of the church with an arm around her shoulder.

It felt good to be amongst trees again and to hear only the birds. All the scenes she had witnessed still raced through Merry’s mind but the peacefulness of nature brought some calm to her tumultuous thoughts.

“I’ll make sure you get home okay,” said the Everlaster, pacing through the trees, “then I’m sure you’ll be reunited with your friends. The police will most likely be taking them home.”

“Home!? We’ve got to save Ayina.”

He laughed weakly. “How?”

“What?”

“How?”

“You’re the Everlaster, you should know. Tha’ meant to be super smart.”

“Am I?” he puffed air through his lips in wonder. “Wow.”

“Stop a minute, will yer?” Merry grabbed the man’s arm and he stopped walking and turned to look at her. Merry looked away in embarrassment at his nakedness. “I know you’re probably really busy,” pleaded Merry, “doing important stuff. What ever it is tha does” He played with a dock leaf as Merry talked, stripping off bits and rolling them up. “But you’ve got to try and help Ayina, cos her world’s in danger.”

The Everlaster looked at her with wet eyes, his long hair obscuring half his face. “There’s nothing I can do,” he said through pouting lips.

“But Ayina only came here to find you? She must’ve had a good reason to. She said you’d help ‘em in their war.”

“They’re silly to think I could still have an impact in this day and age.”

“Tha’re one whose silly,” said Merry, with anger and desperation bubbling up.

“Thou art far too young to understand the subtleties of the universe.”

“O, yeah, I bet I’m smarter than thee.” And she punched him in the stomach.

“Fie!” The Everlaster grabbed her wrist. “Look at you. Always resorting to force. Sometimes the best action is to take no action. I told you not to use that staff and look what you did.”

“I had to stop Woe, didn’t I.” All of a sudden, Merry was feeling hurt and unsure of herself.

“No! Not if it meant doing something when you had no idea of its effects. I said the staff did bad things you couldn’t see, but you ignored me. You could have killed anyone with that thing, and what did it achieve in the end? Woe has Ayina, and that evil staff, and you got killed. If you’d done nothing, Woe would have Ayina but she would not have killed you or have taken possession of the staff.”

Merry was sobbing. “But you’ve got to do somert. I meant to help.”

A torrent of tears and emotion fled out of her and the Everlaster held the girl to him. “I know,” he said, softly and soothing, “you’re a good person.” As he held her tight, he squeezed his own eyes shut to stop the tears, and said too quietly for her to hear, “please don’t make me care again... please.”

When Merry finally composed herself she looked up at him, her eyes blue and sparkling like the Mediterranean sea; her eyelashes red-golden rays like the dawn. “You’ve got to try, right? My Aunty Rosemary says if you can help someone in need it’s a crime not to. She says she hates rich people who spend money on mansions and posh cars when they could be saving starving and ill people. She says if it takes a million pounds to let a child live happily for just one day, then you should give that million. If you save one life then its worth it.”

“Its worth a lifetime of struggle,” the Everlaster nodded. “You’re Aunty sounds like a very wise woman. From her words reach steps to heaven, but most people here don’t believe in heaven.”

“Heaven? You mean where people go when they die.”

“No. When people die they die. Heaven is where people go when they live. Unfortunately we Earthling’s haven’t arrived there yet and at this rate never will. Each century sees more evil not less.”

“I don’t know what your job is as Everlaster but if I was immortal I’d keep trying forever and ever to make things better.”

“You have such enthusiasm, because you are so young. But for millennia I have witnessed masters beating slaves, fathers killing sons, rich men robbing beggars, and I have wondered how can it ever be stopped. And today things are worse than ever. But I can’t even help the Fairy, never mind humanity, when I don’t know where she has been taken.”

At those last words four shining dots emerged from Merry’s hair. They took to the air and hovered in front of Utnapishtim and Merry, performing a number of twirls and loops before aligning themselves into a square and projecting an image of writing between each other.

The writing said: WE KNOW AYINA’S EXACT POSITION. SHE IS NORTH 47.34 MILES TRAVELLING APPROXIMATELY 107 MPH

“What are they,” asked Utnapishtim.

“They’re Ayina’s sprites,” said Merry, suddenly brightening. “She said they connect with her brain so that she senses what they do, and they store information.”

“They never had them the last time I saw the Fairies.” The Everlaster noted. As he watched the four particles dancing before him he realised things were different now. And even if they weren’t he knew he had to do something, even if all it did was make this girl happy for a day. “I thought I could do nothing so nothing is what I did. I turned my face from the ugliness of the world when I should have worked to make it beautiful, no matter how small my effort may have been, no matter how small the influence I may have had. I will help you rescue the Fairy, and we shall succeed, whatever it takes.”

Having resolved to rescue Ayina, Merry and Utnapishtim’s first obstacle was his nakedness. They had to find him some clothes before he got arrested for indecent exposure.

They walked for a while until they came to a row of houses whose back-gardens looked onto the woods. One of the gardens had

clothes drying on the line. They crept up close behind the cover of the trees.

“They’re ladies’ garments,” said Utnapishtim.

“That dun’t matter. People’ll just think you’re a drojje. It’s better than being naked. Yer can’t get arrested for it.”

“No. I’ll just get arrested for stealing.”

“Yer not stealing if yer send ‘em back when yer done.”

So Utnapishtim vaulted silently over the fence. He stopped before the washing line and, to Merry’s alarm, stood for ages looking at the clothes. What are you waiting for, thought Merry. Utnapishtim was moving to take a black skirt when he spotted a red summer dress further down the line.

What a lovely shade, thought the Everlaster as Merry chewed her nails, like the sunsets after Vesuvius exploded. He snatched the dress from the line and was back beside Merry in a second.

They ran a few yards into the woods before Utnapishtim put the dress on. It stopped just above the knee. Merry was pleased at the fit, “it’s a good job yer a bit small for a man.”

“Now we should get away from this town,” said the Everlaster. “I know a place where we can go while we send two of these sprites to find out where the Fairy’s been taken. You can do that, can’t you?” he asked the four lights bobbing beside Merry. Between them they projected the word YES.

“The other two will stay with us so we can see what the sprites find. You’ll keep one and I the other, just in case we’re separated. That way we can find each other again.”

With their instructions received two of the sprites vanished into the sky. How long it would take them to find the Fairy, Utnapishtim did not know

Chandler Dahl was walking down the corridors of SGR’s British headquarters deep in thought. He felt very smug. Not only had he just received confirmation that the Fairy was in SGR hands,

but this morning all the workers of Tiverton Preedy had returned back to work and the finishing touches were being made to the missiles there.

I can't believe how effective Woe has been on those workers, Chandler thought to himself, and the manager up there even says they concentrate on their work harder than ever before I wonder how many employees Woe can effect like this in say six months our turnover will be spectacular it's a shame Woe didn't have the same effect on those kids they still tried to protect the Fairy but children are irrelevant they'll grow up just like their parents with power like this soon there'll be no strikes or back-chat from any of them and they'll give us the respect we deserve the thanks we deserve for the jobs and money we give them without us they couldn't exist.

Chandler Dahl had arrived at the door to the Seer's chamber, deep in the heart of their London complex. He was hardly aware of the security guards letting him inside. He stepped in, mind still racing:

Evolution the strongest survive that is the rule of Capitalism of this world we have the Seers and Woe and we are the strongest which means we are the best people to lead mankind into a great new era we will deliver man from evil there are those who want to stop us Anarchists and Socialists and other misled fools but they know not what they do when we have finished the workers of this country and the world will unite take to the streets not to strike or to demonstrate against us but in celebration to thank us thank *me* for bringing them prosperity I do all the work around here...

Chandler Dahl was handed a steaming cup of coffee when he entered the chamber. He did not acknowledge the underling who had brought him it.

The chamber looked quite different to the previous two occasions, because today was a weekday, a trading day.

Apart from the Seers there were eight people present, only three of whom were scientists. A lot of equipment and computers had been moved in around the elementary sextant. Projected in mid-air were three large, semi-transparent holographic displays. On the

displays were lists of numbers and words that kept steadily changing. They showed the stock exchange and the currency markets.

All six Seers were combining their powers to see into the future. They could only see a few hours ahead, and even then it was slightly vague, but that was enough for the markets. The Seers could tell if a company's share price was about to rise or fall, and the other men in the chamber were in constant contact with SGR stockbrokers at the stock exchange to tell them what to buy and sell.

Chandler gazed at the numbers as a lover would gaze upon the object of his affection. He saw in the churning randomness a pattern, and that pattern was wealth. The increasing wealth of SGR and his own little chunk of it. SGR had more wealth than the worlds poorest 3 billion people combined. They were as rich as the poorest 94 countries all put together. Some of those countries, in fact, were virtually owned by SGR. They owned and controlled banks, transport systems, schools. They owned the houses, factories and offices of entire states. The people of those countries would vote for politicians believing themselves to be influencing the destiny of their own country. But all the decisions that mattered, that affected the lives of billions, were taken in the boardrooms of SGR and, thought Chandler his eyes narrowing, those of SGR's rival firms.

The vast majority of planet Earth and all that stood upon it was now owned; owned and therefore controlled; by five ultra-companies, of which SkweezumGrabaal&Runne was the largest.

"You wanted to see me?" Chandler Dahl asked Emmett Liptrot.

"We're having a problem, Mr Dahl," he said. "The Seers are having great trouble seeing. They've been unable to advise our stockbrokers."

"Are they ill? Is there a malfunction?"

"No, they're operating perfectly. We've been talking to the Seers, studying the data, and we've come up with a theory."

"What?"

“We believe it may be to do with the Fairy. You see, the Seers work by observing the movement of every particle of matter and energy in the world and surrounding space. That’s a phenomenal amount of information, which is why they can only see very short term. They can concentrate on a small aspect of reality, such as the stock market, and see where everything’s heading at that moment. Our computers, and the elementary sextant, take that information and calculate where everything will be in a few moments time.

“So now, the problem. The Fairy arrived two days ago from the alternative dimensions. She is trillions of bits of information that have suddenly been thrust into our own dimensions. It’s sent ripples through our world that are sending our predictions awry. The Fairy is an alien; unpredictable uncertainty. Until the ripples she has caused die down I don’t think the Seers can do any predicting.”